GOOD CHEER FROM GRACE RECEIVED
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"And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind Him, and touched the hem of His garment: for she said within herself, If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned Him about, and when He saw her, He said, Daughter, be of good comfort; your faith has made you whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour." Matthew 9:20-22.

"But as He went the people thronged Him. And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, came behind Him, and touched the border of His garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanched. And Jesus said, Who touched Me? When all denied, Peter and they that were Him said, Master, the multitude throng You and press You, and You say, Who touched Me? And Jesus said, Somebody has touched Me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of Me. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before Him, she declared unto Him before all the people for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was healed immediately. And He said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: your faith has made you whole: go in peace." Luke 8:42-48

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon, upon this Miracle, published in the Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, are as follows—No. 1809, Volume 30—MAY I?; No. 2018, Volume 34—CURED AT LAST and No. 2019, Volume 34—SHE WAS NOT HID—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THE words of good cheer which our Savior spoke to this woman were not given to her while she was coming to Him, for that would have been premature. She had not avowed her desire to be healed. She had uttered no prayer. She had actually as yet sought nothing at the Savior's hands and, therefore, she had not reached the stage at which comfort is fitting. She does not appear to have required comfort in taking her first step—she was resolved upon that and she took it without fail. It is one of the most unwise things under Heaven to comfort people who do not require it. When we are dealing with enquirers, our love may bring them loss if we offer them words of cheer when they need admonition or rebuke. Any comfort which keeps a soul short of Christ is dangerous. A sinner's main

business is to get to Jesus, to exercise *personal* faith in the personal Savior—and we have no right to a gleam of comfort until we have heartily and honestly trusted in Christ. If encouragements to believe are used as a sort of halfway house to rest in before actually believing, they are mischievously used and may ruin our souls!

This afflicted woman did not require to be cheered so soon, for she had such confidence in Christ and such a resolve to put her confidence to the test, that difficulties could not hinder her, nor crowds keep her back. The Savior was in the press—she joined the throng and with a holy boldness mixed with a sacred modesty she came behind Him, only wishing to touch His garment, or even the fringe of it—feeling persuaded that if she did but come into contact with the Lord, no matter how, she would be healed. According to her faith so was it done to her! And *it was after she had been healed that our Lord spoke comfortingly to her.* He brought not forth the cup of cordial till the need for it had fully come. After she had touched Him and her faith had made her whole, a trial awaited her and her spirit was ready to faint—and then the tender One cheered her by saying, "Your faith has made you whole: go in peace."

It happens to many and many a heart that after it has obtained the blessing of salvation and has been healed of the disease of sin, a time of fear occurs. After it has made its confession of faith, a season of trembling follows occurring, perhaps, as a reaction from the joy of salvation, a rebound of the spirit from excessive delight. We eat the heavenly provision eagerly and it is sweet to our taste and yet, afterwards, our long hunger having weakened us, we do not digest the food with ease—and pains ensue for which medicine is required. We fear and tremble because of the greatness of the mercy received and then this word is needed—"Be of good comfort: your faith has made you whole."

We will meditate, first, upon *this woman's need of comfort.* Secondly, upon the *comfort which Jesus gave her.* And then, in the third place we will enter a little further into that comfort and think of *the faith which Jesus Christ declared had made her whole*—the faith to which He pointed her for comfort.

I. Come, then, dear Friend, and attentively consider THIS WOMAN'S NEED OF GOOD CHEER. She felt in her body that she was made whole and yet she stood in urgent need of comfort. This necessity arose from several causes.

First, *she had hoped to obtain the blessing secretly, but she was found out.* She thought that by coming behind the Lord Jesus in the press, she would not be observed. And she anxiously desired secrecy because the peculiarity of her bodily disorder caused her to dread publicity. She aimed at gaining her end and retreating unnoticed into the multitude. Truth to tell, she stole the cure! Her touch was given in stealth, no eye resting upon her. No disciple seems to have spied her out, nor had anyone in the throng perceived the deed, or else when the Master said, "Who touched Me?" one or other of them would have pointed her out. So far she had shunned observation and even the Savior, Himself, had not seen her with His bodily eyes. But faith such as hers could not be

hidden. It was not meet that such a flower should bloom unseen. She is called for and she stands discovered, the center of all eyes.

You, perhaps, dear Friend, have hoped to find salvation and to keep it a secret. You entered the House of Prayer a stranger to the things of God, but very anxious—there you sat and wept—but you tried to conceal your feelings from those who sat near you. You have gone in and out of the place of worship, seeking the Savior, but fearing to be suspected of doing so. Nobody spoke to you or, if anyone did, you evaded all the questions that were put to you, for you were as jealous of your secret as if you carried diamonds and were afraid of thieves!

Now you have believed in the Savior, or at least you hope so, but you court secrecy just as much. You have found honey and you have tried to eat it all alone—not because you grudge others eating it with you, but because you are afraid of them. You did not wish mother or father, kinsfolk or acquaintance to suspect you of being a Christian. You shrank from the blessed charge and desired to be a secret friend of Jesus—a Nicodemus, or a Joseph of Arimathea. To your great amazement you have been found out. Like Saul, you hid among the stuff, but the people have called you forth. Your love to Jesus has oozed out and is spoken of by many! Do you wonder? How can fire be hidden? Your speech has betrayed you. Your manner and spirit have revealed you as odors betray sweet flowers. And now that it is out, you feel a sinking of spirit at the notice you have attracted. Your modesty cries, "They take me for a Christian. Can I live like a Christian? Shall I be able to adorn my profession? They have discovered me in the family—my brothers and sisters see that there is a change in me. Is it a real change? Or shall I turn out to be one of those deceivers who have a name to live, and yet are dead?" Your heart fails you for fear of future backsliding and apostasy. And well it may be, for flesh is weak and the world is bewitching—and Satan is subtle and deceitful. Whatever comfort there is in our present meditation will be meant for you since it is intended for persons embarrassed by being forced out of the shade of solitude into the glare of observation—troubled because they fear that they shall not honor the holy name which is named upon them. To you who are in that condition, Jesus says, at this moment, "Be of good comfort: your faith has made you whole."

This poor woman, in addition to being found out*, had been constrained to make a public personal testimony.* As we have already noticed, her case was a very special one in which privacy would naturally be courted. But that privacy had been invaded—the Savior had looked for her and had demanded, "Who touched Me?" And she, all trembling and afraid, had been constrained to fall down before Him and to tell Him all the truth! Do you wonder that the excitement was too much for her? The people had been astonished as they heard of the wondrous power which had emanated from the Person of Christ, even through the fringe of His garment—and that astonishment, in a great measure, referred to *her*. She was the observed of all observers! Of her cure she had to make a

public acknowledgment. She was equal to the task. Being brought to bay, she did her work bravely and bore full and telling testimony. Take careful note that our Lord did not bid her be of good cheer till she had done so! She trembled before she confessed the Lord's deed of Grace which had been worked upon her, but, as soon as she had made a public avowal, her Lord said to her, "Daughter, be of good comfort."

I have known certain timid ones who have wished to unite with the Church on the sly and to make no open confession either by word of mouth or by Baptism. I have refused to be a party to the breeding of cowards, and they have lived to thank me for what seemed a harsh demand! Yet, when the confession has been made, once and for all, many brave hearts have been full of anxiety. They have confessed Christ before men—they have proclaimed what the Lord has done for their souls—and after it has been all over, they have been overwhelmed with a sense of responsibility and have said within themselves, "What great things will now be expected of me? What have I had the courage to say? Shall I be able to live up to it all?" After the bold, open confession, comes the inward shrinking! Though they are not sorry that they made the admission for, on the contrary, they would make it a thousand times over if they could glorify Christ thereby, yet they know their weakness and tremble lest they should ever behave themselves so as to prove unworthy of the cause of their Beloved Redeemer! If you, dear Friend, have just come out from the world and have newly said, "I am on the Lord's side," do not be surprised if what you have just done should, upon calm consideration, look almost like presumption. A sense of fear is natural when you see to what a service your dedication vows have bound you. At such a time Jesus will give you the comfort of the text, "Be of good cheer: your faith has made you whole." May you have Grace to receive it by faith and to drink in all its consolation!

This, however, is not quite all the reason for the woman's needing encouragement at the moment the Lord bestowed it. This woman, no doubt, *had a very deep reverence for the Lord Jesus Christ.* She had such an esteem for Him that even His garments were thought by her to be saturated with healing energy! And now, when she found herself immediately in His Presence, she trembled and was afraid. She had come behind Him, no doubt, to a great extent out of modesty and humility as well as out of timidity. But now she finds herself face to face with the glorious Lord and He is asking her questions—and in full view of all the people she has to acknowledge her faith in Him. I hardly think that she was afraid of the people, but I do think that her faith was so reverential that she felt an awe at being found immediately in the Presence of the Lord.

Beloved Friend, you have been singing lately—

"Happy day, happy day,
When Jesus washed my sins away,"

and you have joined in meetings where all have been filled with a sacred delight because they have met with Jesus. And I should not wonder if when you have been alone at home afterwards, and you have thought the

matter over, it has seemed too gracious a thing to be really true that the Lord of Glory had lovingly communed with you! As your thoughts of Him have risen in reverential love, you have said, "Is it possible? Is it true? Am I dreaming? Has the Son of God really looked on *me* in love? Can it be true that He who wears the majesty of Heaven, has set His heart upon *me* and has come to tabernacle in my breast? This is a miracle of miracles! Is it, indeed, a fact?" You have felt pressed down by the weight of the Divine Goodness. I remember well, not only the joy I had when I found the Savior, but the horror of great darkness which fell upon me within a very short time after I had rejoiced with unspeakable joy. It was on this account I knew that I had found the Lord—I was fully assured of my salvation and full of joy as to my possession of His love. But then I asked, "Is it not too good to be true? Is salvation altogether of Free Grace? Is there an everlasting love of God and is it fixed on me? Am I, indeed, an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ?" The brightness of the Glory blinded my weak eyes—by floods of amazing love I was carried off my feet! Are you in such a condition? Then it is time for the Savior's gentle words to sound in your heart, "Be of good comfort: your faith has made you whole." When a reverent sense of the Lord's amazing condescension causes us to swoon at heart, He will stay us with flagons and comfort us with apples. This is a sweet melancholy which Infinite Love can soon relieve.

Perhaps the greatest reason for the trembling of the woman in the narrative lay *in a sense of her faulty coming.* When she looked back at the way in which she had approached the Lord, she saw a mass of faults in it—as we may well do in ours. When she had been made whole, her faith would say to her, "The blessed Lord did not deserve that you should come behind Him and touch His garment in that *unbelieving* fashion. See what a Savior He is! What love, what tenderness shines in His face! Why did you not *openly* come to Him? You crouched in the rear—why did you not look Him full in the face and crave His mercy? He would have received you freely—why did you suspect His Grace? You may have wounded Him by doubting His willingness to bless you. You should not have indulged such unbelief." After a seeker has found the Lord and has experienced salvation, he is sometimes tempted to question whether he is really a Believer in Jesus. He reasons within himself thus—"My faith is so mixed with unbelief that I am ashamed of it. Why did I come to Jesus in such a way as I did? It was well to come, but oh that I had come in a more childlike spirit and that I had done Him the justice to have a greater confidence in Him!" Do you, dear Friend, know this experience? If so, to you and to all others who are thus exercised, the comfort of our text is addressed!

Very likely conscience would charge the trembling woman with dishonest stealth in her way of getting her cure. "You felt, at the time, that you had no right to the blessing, but you snatched at it and did not ask the Savior's leave to take it! You thought that you would be healed and then run away—and none would be any the wiser—thus you robbed

the Lord of His Glory. Can a blessing rest on such a way of acting?" Conscience made her tremble and, therefore, the Savior as good as said, "Daughter, do not suspect your faith, for it has made you whole and, therefore, it is good faith. However it acted, it has brought you healing—therefore do not distress yourself about its imperfections, but go in peace." He pointed her for comfort to the fact that however faulty might be the way of her coming, it had healed her and, therefore, she might well be content. Is there not also a word of cheer in this for us? If we have been renewed in heart and life, the faith by which this change was worked cannot but be good!

Perhaps, too, she might have felt that it was sadly too bold of her, a woman unclean according to the Law, to push among the throng and dare to touch the Lord, Himself. Many and many a time my heart has whispered to itself, "How could you be so bold as to trust Christ?" The devil has called it presumption and my trembling heart has feared that it might be so. One thing I know—I am certain that I am healed, even as the woman knew that the cure was worked in her! This I know, that I am not what I once was, but I am made a new creature in Christ Jesus! Yet the question will propose itself, "How can it be that you dared to dash in and seize on mercy, being such a sinner and so utterly unworthy?"

For my own part, I confess that I acted toward the Lord Jesus somewhat like a poor starving dog who saw meat in the butcher's shop and could not restrain himself from laying hold of it and running away with it! Many a butcher would chase the wretched creature and take the meat from him, but our Savior is of a nobler temper. If our Lord Jesus sees us grasp His mercy, He will never take it away from us! He says, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." O you who are quite unfit to come to Christ and altogether unworthy of His favor, you are the very people who may come and welcome! O you who say that you have no warrant to come to Jesus, He would have you come without any warrant but His own Word which says, "Whoever will, let him come." Let your lack of inward warrant be your warrant! You are needy and sinful—let that be your passport! Come along with you and boldly grasp the covenanted mercy! It will not be theft, for Jesus has already given over Himself and all that He has to all who are willing to have Him! Have courage to take freely what the Lord freely gives—

"To sinners poor, like me and you,
He says He'll 'freely give.'
Come, thirsty souls, and prove it's true—
Drink, and forever live!"

Yet it may be that after you have done so—and have obtained the blessing—you will fall into a fainting fit and swoon with fear because you question your right to it. Listen to a word of comfort. "Possession is nine tenths of the law," and it is all the ten tenths of the Gospel! So long as you have Christ, there is no need to ask how you got Him. Yet the trembling conscience whispers, "You had no right to believe. You are not the man who should have ventured trust in Jesus." Then you will need a cheering word and then you will have it, even as our dear Master said, "Daughter, be of good comfort: your faith has made you whole." Let what

Divine Grace has done for you plead your justification for having believed in Jesus! If you are, indeed, changed and renewed, question not your faith, but believe yet more—and you shall see greater things than these!

Thus I set forth the woman's need of comfort. And if anyone else is in a similar case to hers, let him look up and be of good cheer, for her feet have trodden the way of fear before him. Let him say, as Augustus Toplady did—

"If my Lord Himself reveals
No other good I need!
Only Christ my wounds can heal,
Or silence my complaint.
He that suffered in my place
Shall my Physician be—
I will not be comforted
Till Jesus comforts me."

II. May the Holy Spirit rest upon us while we notice THE COMFORT WHICH JESUS GAVE HER. He said to her, "Daughter, be of good comfort: your faith has made you whole."

There was comfort in the loving title. To call her "Daughter" was most kind and tender. I suppose that she must have been of much the same age as our Lord and, therefore, He did not call her, "Daughter," because of her youth. When our Lord said, "Daughter," He expressed His tender consideration for her which made Him feel towards her as tenderly as a father to a child. "Sister" would have been the word if He had only meant human relationship, but, "Daughter," meant careful affection. While Jesus is our Brother, there is a sense in which He is also our Father—and He exercises towards His poor, downcast children, a father's pity and care.

Such a title must have dispelled her fears. To be so near of kin to Him who had worked a matchless cure upon her was consolation enough. Let our tried and cast-down friends rest with us concerning this matter—you have believed in Jesus and you have confessed His name and you are made whole—go your way in peace! From now on you belong to Christ and you are related to Christ as His daughter or son. Do not, therefore, question your right, since the Grace of adoption has confirmed it. If the Lord calls you His daughter, you did no wrong when you touched your Father's garment. If He avows you as His child, be not so unwise as to question the Divine declaration! Your rights and privileges are almost boundless. You may do much more than touch His garment's hem—you may lean on His breast! He gives you greater privileges than those which you have yet enjoyed, yes, favors beyond what you ask or even think! To those who believe on Him, He gives the right and privilege to become the sons of God, even to as many as believe on His name, so that all question about your right to do this or that may be ended, for He calls you His own beloved child and says, "Be of good comfort."

The main point of consolation was that she was cured. Jesus said to her, "Your faith has made you whole," which would bring her comfort in several ways, for, first, *it was a great consolation that her impurity was gone.* So, my Brothers and Sisters, if you have believed in Jesus, you are

no longer regarded as unclean before the Lord. The blood of the Lord Jesus has removed your defilement. You are, "accepted in the Beloved." His blood, like the hyssop of which David sang, has purged you and you are clean. Do not look upon yourself as being what you are not, but know yourself to be whiter than snow in Christ Jesus. In the removal of your guilt and the renewal of your nature, the source of your defilement is destroyed! Do not, therefore, hide your face and stand afar off from God, but come boldly to the Throne of Grace, since Grace has made you meet to come. When my anxious Brother or Sister, you come before the Lord with the recollection of all your past transgressions, you may well be ashamed and confounded and feel as if you should never open your mouth any more—but know of a surety that your sins have ceased to be—they shall not be mentioned against you any more forever! God, even the God of Judgment, has blotted out the record! Humble yourself for having been a transgressor, but let a sense of perfect forgiveness embolden you in coming to your Savior!

Whatever you once were, God views you not as you were in yourself, but as what you are in Christ Jesus. When you come to His Table and feast among His family, do not hesitate to feel at home, although it cannot be denied that you once stood at the swine-trough and hungered after husks. Say within your believing heart, "Whatever I was, my Father has kissed me and put a ring on my hand and shoes on my feet. Therefore I will eat and drink as He bids me and I will not mar the music and the merriment by unbelieving lamentations. My Father rejoiced over me because He had received me safe and sound, and shall I not be glad at being thus received?" God be thanked that though you were the servants of sin, you have obeyed from the heart that form of Doctrine which was delivered unto you—and you are now brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God! Though you were once unclean, polluted and polluting, it may be said of you, "But you are washed, but you are sanctified." Perhaps your old name will stick to you as it did to Rahab the harlot and to Simon the leper—but do not feel degraded since the Lord has turned away your reproach. Hear Jesus Christ Himself say to you, "Daughter, be of good comfort: your faith has made you whole."

Remember that and rejoice in His Presence. You have a right to be among His people, for your faith has made you whole—and this is the mark which all His people wear. You are a sinner, it is true, but you are a sinner saved from wrath through Infinite Love! You are no longer a miserable sinner, so why should you call yourself so? You are a happy, blessed, forgiven child whom the Lord has taken from the dunghill and set among His princely children. Rejoice, therefore, because your faith has made you whole! Is not this a theme for boundless gratitude? Come boldly into the Church! Come boldly to the Throne of Grace for you are so cleansed by the blood of Atonement that you may come unquestioned even into the Holy of Holies! Has not Jesus said, "He that is washed is clean every whit?"

The woman was comforted by being made to see in her cure that Jesus was not angry with her. Our Lord in effect said to the saved woman,

"Have you been afraid that you did wrong in touching Me? Are you fearful lest I should be grieved because you did not believe enough in Me to come and face Me, but must steal behind Me? Do you suspect that I shall blame you because of the littleness of your faith? Now"—He puts it so sweetly—"do not think so, but be of good comfort: for your faith has made you whole." Though her faith dared only to touch the hem of His garment, it was evidently acceptable faith, for because of it the Lord had made her whole! It is clear that the Lord has not rejected our faith when He acknowledges and honors it. He cannot be vexed at a confidence which He has evidently rewarded!

Beloved Friend, has your faith been such that it has made you abhor sin? Has it been such that the things you once loved you now hate—and the things you once hated you now love? Has your faith made a complete change in you? Are you a new man or woman in Christ Jesus? Have you been made morally and spiritually whole? Then be sure that no wrong faith could have worked this good work in you! A faith that produces wholeness or holiness of life cannot have been a mistake! Whether in your coming to Jesus you came behind Him or before Him. Whether you touched His gracious hand or touched His garment's hem. Whether you did it secretly or did it publicly—all these enquiries are interesting, but not essential—for if a change of heart has been worked in you and you are saved, then the Lord Jesus must be pleased with you! He could not have worked a great work in you and yet be angry with you and, therefore, you need not be troubled as to the way in which you came to Him. "Be of good comfort: your faith has made you whole," is a most sweet and effectual way of lulling fears to rest!

Possibly the poor woman may have been haunted by the fear that she would suffer a relapse, but our Lord consoles her by *the assurance that her faith had effectually made her whole.* She had not obtained a little time of deliverance from the evil, so that it would recur again, but she was made *whole.* The Lord gives her a medical certificate! He sends her forth with a clean bill of health! Oh, how sweet it is when Jesus Christ gives to any of us a full assurance of complete salvation so that we are delivered from all fear of the malady's return and can walk abroad free from fear! I know that some Christians think that after Christ has fed us and given us new hearts, the old hearts may come back—and though His Grace in us is a well of water which He promises shall spring up to everlasting life, yet they think that it may dry up to the last drop. Beloved, I do not thus read the Word of God—the very opposite is clear to me in Sacred Writ! The work of God in the soul is a lasting and an everlasting work! If you are once healed by Christ, He has worked in you an effectual cure which will hold good throughout time and throughout eternity! Solomon truly said, "I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever." He who has made you whole will *keep* you whole, for His gifts and calling are without repentance!

The comfort to the woman in the narrative was meant, as we have seen, to meet the trial occasioned by her open confession. She had been

driven to reveal her secret and this, to a large extent, caused her trembling. She would rather have hidden in the crowd, but she was called to the front and made to confess Jesus before all. The Savior, in effect, says, "You need not be ashamed to tell your story for it *ends well,* since you are made whole. You need not be ashamed to let everybody know that your faith has healed you. What does it matter what your sickness was, if you are now recovered from it?" It will be no disgrace to us to confess our guilt if, at the same moment, we are assured of full forgiveness! It is annoying to hear persons talk flippantly of their sins before conversion as though they were proud of them. They seem to glory in them as a Greenwich pensioner might boast of his battles and his broken bones. Such things are to be mentioned with blushes and tears. Say as little as you can about those things of which you are now ashamed, and let what you say be spoken in lowliest penitence. Still, there are times when you are bound to tell out your case to the praise of the Glory of the Grace which so abounded where your sin abounded! And then you need not be afraid to tell your story, for Grace has made it end so well. Let the world know that though foully defiled, you came into contact with the Savior by simply, humbly believing in Him—and that by this simple means you are saved.

Once more, if anyone is conscious that faith has saved him, he may take to himself the good cheer of the text and use it wherever he goes, *for nothing can happen to him so bad as that which has been removed.* "Your faith has saved you," is an antidote for many ills. "I am very poor," says one. So was this woman, for she had spent all that she had upon physicians. But Jesus said to her, "Your faith has made you whole." "I am very sick," cries a friend, "I feel low and ill." But "your faith has saved you"—is not this joy enough? Oh, what a blessing it is to be saved! That you are saved is enough to set all your being ablaze with joy! I am sure that the healed woman felt rich, though she had not two pence to chink together in her pocket! She was made whole by faith and that was wealth enough for her! To be one of the Lord's saved ones is joy enough to bear up the heart under every affliction!

Do you not see that if your faith has changed your character and delivered you from the desperate plague of sin, there remains no longer any impossibility or even difficulty in the way of duty? You have been half afraid to try to teach the children in the Sunday school but, surely, since your faith has made you whole, you can teach a few little children! You have been afraid to address a score of people in a village chapel. But you need not be afraid to try if God has called you—for the faith which has made you whole can give you "a word in season." What is there that faith cannot do? Why, if my faith has had the power to drop the burden of my sin into the sepulcher of my Lord, what is there that it cannot accomplish? If, by that faith, my soul has risen from among the dead and taken her seat at the right hand of the Father in the heavenly places in Christ, what shall stand in its way? If we have to force a passage through a throng of devils, we need not hesitate! And though all the world combined and stood against us, we need not fear! Our faith has made us

whole—who can undo the miracle? A faith which, by Divine Grace, saves us from Hell and secures us for Heaven—what is there that it cannot accomplish? It laughs at impossibilities and marches from strength to strength in majestic serenity! Holy confidence shall win victory upon victory till, at last it shall cry, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day!" I cannot imagine a sweeter consolation than this—"Your faith has made you whole: go in peace." Endeavor to suck the honey out of it!

III. We will close this meditation by considering THE FAITH WHICH OUR LORD COMMENDED.

It made her whole. That is its best certificate of excellence! There is much to note in reference to that faith, but a few brief hints may suffice. Her faith is to be commended because *it outlived a long season of discouragement.* She had been afflicted 12 years —think of that! Patience had indeed had its perfect work in her. But she believed in Christ for a cure and the cure came to her! So will it be with everyone who will believe in Jesus. If there could be a soul found which had been living in sin 1,200 years—if it had faith in Jesus He would make it whole! After half a century of impenitence, he that believes in Christ Jesus is saved at once. Eighty years of sin vanish in a moment when a man trusts in the great Atonement! Come, dear unconverted Friend, and cast yourself at Christ's feet at this quiet hour, for He will not cast you out!

The faith which healed this poor woman had *survived many failures. S*he had been deceived by all sorts of quacks and medicine-men—and yet she had not lost the capacity for faith. It is said that she had "suffered many things of many physicians," and I can well believe it, for if you read the prescriptions of the old doctors, you will quite agree that poor humanity has suffered many things from "the faculty." The way in which the ancient doctors went to work to cure their patients much resembled that which a man would follow who was eager to kill them! Dr. Sangrado, by his bleeding and drenching, has sent many into a premature grave and, in Christ's time, if you needed to be well, the first rule was to avoid all physicians!

I will tell you the names of a few spiritual doctors to whom I beseech you not to go, for if you do, you will suffer a great deal from them, but get no good. There is one whose name is Dr. Self-Confidence, who is in partnership with a relative called Dr. Self-Righteousness. Dr. Legality and his son, Mr. Civility, are another popular pair of cheats. You will find them at home whenever you call—and they will give you bitter doses or silver-coated pills as they see fit—but you will never a be whit the better. There is a doctor about just now who was educated by the Jesuits and practices the Romeopathic system—wafers and wine and water are his specialties—to this school belong Mr. Ceremonies and Doctor Sacraments. None of these can heal a sick soul! Have nothing to do with them, but apply to the Beloved Physician, even the Lord Jesus Christ!

Some of us went to most of these pretenders and gave them a long trial—and though we were disappointed in them all—yet we still were enabled to believe in Jesus Christ! Dear Friend, do the same! Though you have been disappointed everywhere else, yet go and knock at Christ's door and that faith of yours which leaps over discouragement will make you whole!

Her faith *believed in simple touching.* She used no ceremonies—she only believed. It was a faith which believed that she would be healed *without payment.* She took the cure, gratis—she offered no fee. That is Gospel faith which takes Christ's forgiveness without money and without price, just as He presents it in the Gospel! Hers was a great faith, for she believed that Christ could heal her *when He was occupied with healing another.* He was hastening to the house of Jarius to work a miracle there, and yet she believed that He could heal her on the way! Can you, dear Reader, believe in this fashion? Do you know, of a surety, that however Jesus may be now occupied, He can without difficulty at this moment pardon and save you? If you have reached so great a confidence, then give the saving touch and trust Him once and for all!

The poor sick soul had a faith which assured her that *Christ could bless her when His back was turned.* Can you also reach this point? Some of God's own children can hardly trust Him when they see the Light of His Countenance, but this woman could trust Him when His back was turned to her. I would to God that we had, each of us, such confidence in Jesus that we would not doubt, under any circumstances, His power and willingness to save all who trust Him! He must save these who rely upon Him! It is a necessity of His Nature that those who touch Him should receive healing from Him!

Trusting in Jesus is a man's best evidence that he is saved, for it is written, "He that believes in Him is not condemned." Faith has made its possessor whole, whoever he may be! And if you are resting alone in Jesus and His finished work, the life of the holy has begun in you and you may, therefore, "be of good comfort."

—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.

LANDLORD AND TENANT
NO. 3021

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 3, 1907,
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"Set your house in order; for you shall die, and not live."
Isaiah 38:1.

NOTWITHSTANDING that a thousand voices proclaim our mortality, we are all to apt to put aside the contemplation of it. Since we cannot escape from death, we endeavor to shut our eyes to it, although there is no subject whose consideration would be more beneficial to us. Altering one word of the poet's line, I may say—

"'Tis greatly wise to talk with our last hours."

To be familiar with the grave is prudence. To prepare for death it is well to commune with death. A thoughtful walk in the cemetery is good for our soul's health. As Jeremy Taylor well observes, "Since a man stands perpetually at the door of eternity and, as did John the Almoner, every day is building his sepulcher, and every night one day of our life is gone and passed into the possession of death, it will concern us to take care that the door leading to Hell does not open upon us, that we are not crushed to ruin by the stones of our grave and that our death become not a consignation of us to a sad eternity." The most of men prefer to cultivate less fruitful fields and turn their thoughts and meditations to subjects trivial for the present—and useless for the future. "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!"

Knowing this general aversion to my theme, I shall not treat it in a gloomy and heavy manner, but shall try to allure you to it by the use of pleasant and interesting similitudes. The subject shall supply the solemnity and I hope the metaphor will secure your interest. Forgive me, you spiritual, if I seem too flippant—my words are not for you, but for a class whose souls I trust you love—who cannot, as yet, bear the more serious thoughts of wisdom unless they are clothed in parable and picture.

OUR BODY, OUR PROPERTY, OUR FAMILY, THIS PRESENT LIFE AND ALL ITS SURROUNDINGS ARE, IN THE TEXT, DESCRIBED AS A HOUSE. This simile is not at all unusual either in the Old or the new Testaments. The Apostle Paul tells us that "Moses was faithful in all his *house*," that is to say, in his lifelong charge and duty. Our Lord said of the Pharisees that they devoured widow's *houses*, meaning their estates. And Paul, referring to his body, said, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an *house* not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." We will see what instruction we can find in this most simple but comprehensive comparison.

I. This mortal life and its surroundings are likened to a house and the first point of the similitude will be seen if we enquire, WHO IS THE LANDLORD?

The first answer is *that certainly we are not.* To all men, it may be truthfully said, "You are not your own." We are tenants, but not freeholders. We are mere tenants at will without a lease. The earthly house of this tabernacle belongs to Him who built it. He who sustains it keeps the title deeds in His own possession. *Our house belongs to God.* Dear Friend, do you ever think of this? Do you remember, as a matter of fact, that *you and yours are God's property*? He created you and created you for His own Glory. Your soul was spoken into existence by Him. Your bodily powers were all bestowed by His hand. You are the creature of the Almighty! In every vein, sinew and nerve of your body there are traces of the Divine Embroiderer's skill. You are God's in all the most secret goings and issues of your life, for you owe the continued possession of your existence every day to Him. Your breath is in your nostrils, but He keeps it there. He has but to will it and the atoms composing your body, which He now keeps apart from their fellows, would return to the bosom of the earth. You are but a walking heap of dust and the cohesion of the various particles is maintained by the hand of Omnipotence. Let the sustaining power of God be withdrawn and your bodily house would fall in the ruin of death and the utterly dissolution of corruption! All that you have around you is in the same predicament, for food and clothes, house and goods, are God's gifts to you. The strength of hand or the nimbleness of brain that has enabled you to accumulate wealth, or to live in comfort has all come from Him! Day by day you are a commoner at the table of Divine bounty, a pensioner, hour by hour, upon the Infinite Mercy of God. You have nothing and are nothing but as God pleases! You owe all you have and all you are to Him.

It is most useful for each of us to know *what are the rights of God towards us.* Even if we do not acknowledge them, yet candor demands that at least we hear them defined. Sad is the reflection, however, that when we learn these rights, if we resist them, we become willful robbers and so increase our guilt! If we will not have God to reign over us. If, in our spirits we say, like Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord, that we should obey His voice?" it will go harder with us at the last than if we had never heard the claims of God proclaimed. Men and women, how is it that God has made you and yet so many of you never think of Him? Shall I bring against you the accusation which the Prophet of old brought against his people? "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel does not know, My people do not consider." Who among you would retain in your house a tool or a piece of furniture which was of no use or value to you? Who among you would keep so much as an ox or an ass if it rendered you no service? How much less would you nurture it if, instead

thereof, it did you harm—if it had a spite against you and lifted up its heels against you?

And yet, are there not some here who have been forgetful of their obligations to their Maker, who have never been of any service to Him, have never praised Him, have never desired to advance His Glory? And who, on the contrary, have even spoken high and haughty thingy things against Him and it may be words of profanity and blasphemy? O God, how are You ill treated in the very world which is full of Your goodness! How do the creatures of Your hand render unto You evil for good! Your house, which You have let out to man, is made into a castle for Your foes, a temple for idols, a den of thieves, a nest of unclean birds! You are ill requited at the hands of Your unworthy tenants! You Best of beings, you Fountain of love and mercy, what do You receive from many of Your creatures but forgetfulness and disdain?

Bear this in mind, therefore, that the house in which we dwell, in this life, has God for its Landlord, and that we are only tenants.

II. The simile runs further. WHAT IS MAN'S LEASE?

One would imagine, from the way in which some men talk, that we were freeholders, or at least had a lease for 999 years! The truth is, *we are but tenants at will.* We may possess the tenement in which our soul now finds a house for itself, together with its appurtenances and outhouses, for the term of 70 years and the tenure may even be prolonged to 80 years, or even to a longer period in rare cases, but, at no one time is the tenure altered! We always occupy from moment to moment. Our lease is not for three, seven, 14, or 21 years, nor is it even from day to day, or from hour to hour—but from second to second we hold precarious possession! We are tenants at the absolute will of God. The commencement of a day never secures the ending of it to us alive and the striking of the clock, as the commencement of the hour, is no guarantee that we shall hear it strike again. Every second we hold our lives, and goods, and chattels upon the sole tenure of the Divine Will of God! God has but to say to us, "Return, you children of men," and we return to the dust. Flowers are not more frail, moths more fragile, bubbles more unsubstantial, or meteors more fleeting than man's life! What transient things we are! I said, *We are,* but I made a mistake— we are *not.* We but begin to be and before we are, we are not! It is God alone who can say, "I AM." None of the human race should dare to pronounce those words!

Yet how many live as if their tenant rights of this mortal life, and all its goods, were a fixed tenure and entailed upon themselves, irrespective of assigns, or heirs, or superior lord of the manor or freeholder of the soil! "Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue forever and their dwelling places to all generations. They call their lands after their own names." To such people as these, the words of the Apostle James are very applicable, "Come now, you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such-and-such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow.

For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away."

Yet how often we fall into the same error! Have not some of you, my Friends, been laying out your plans for months and even years to come? You have considered where you will spend the summer and where you will live when you retire from your business. Ah, boast not yourselves of tomorrow, much less of summer or of autumn, for you know not what a day, or even an hour may bring forth! O man born of dying woman, ask of God to give you, day by day, your daily bread and let your living and your planning be after the fashion of day by day, for when you begin to reckon for far-off time, it looks as if you had never prayed, "So teach me to number my days that I may apply my heart unto wisdom." O you young ones, say not, "We will give the first and best of our days to the flesh, and offer God the rest." You may have no remaining years to offer! You may be consumed in the morning of your lives! Say not, you men who are in the midst of the world's business, "We will retire soon and in the cool of our age we will think upon the things of God." You may have no evening of old age! Your sun may go down at noon! You may be called from the counting house while yet the ink upon the pages of the ledger is wet and the Bible, as yet unstudied!

Set your house in order, for your Great Landlord may serve an ejection notice upon you and there will be no hope of resisting it, though the wisest of physicians should seek to bar the door! Here is the writ and these are the express words—"You shall die, and not live." Even the most aged presume that they shall live yet longer and the traditions of Jenkyns and of Old Parr, I doubt not, have tempted hundreds to imagine, even when they have been verging upon 80 or 90 that they may still live a few years longer in quiet possession of their tottering tenement whose pillars are shaken, whose windows are darkened and whose very foundations are decaying! We cling with dreadful tenacity to this poor life and the little which we foolishly call our all! It were well if we could cling with such fast hold to the life *that is to come*—for that, alone, is worth clinging to since it is forever—whereas this life is to be but for a little time even at the longest!

What a reflection it is that within a hundred years everyone in our most crowded audiences (unless the Lord shall come), will be soundly sleeping amid the clods of the valley—and not one of all the present armies of men that populate our cities will be in possession of his house and lands, or will know of anything that is done under the sun! We shall have gone over to "the great majority." We shall be, perhaps, remembered, perhaps forgotten, but, at any rate, we ourselves shall mingle no more with our fellows in the market, the street, the places of worship or the haunts of pleasure. We shall depart from sea and land, from city and village, from earth and all that is thereon. Where will our immortal natures be? Where will our spirits be? Shall we be communing among the blessed harpers whose every note is bliss, or shall we be forever gnashing our teeth in remorse among the castaways who would not receive the

mercy of God? We hold our house, then, on no time or tenure than from moment to moment! Remember this, you dwellers in these houses of clay!

There is this clause in the lease, which I am afraid some have never observed, namely, that *the Landlord has at all times the right to enter and leave His own property*. I thank God that some of us have yielded to the Lord this right and now our prayer often is that He would come into our house, search us, try us, know our ways and see if there is any evil way in us—and lead us in the way everlasting. Time was when the last thing we wished for was the Presence of God, when we said to Him, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Your ways." But now, being renewed by His Spirit, we say to Him, "Abide with us." Beloved Friend, are you always ready to open the doors of your heart to God's inspection? Do you delight in heavenly communion? Do you constantly invite the Lord Jesus to come in and sup with you, and you with Him? If not, you are forgetting one great clause in your lease and, let me also say, you are forgetting the greatest privilege that men can enjoy beneath the stars!

It is well for me to recall to your memories that, according to our tenure, *our Great Landlord permits us to call upon Him to execute all repairs.* Our circumstances are apt to grow straitened and He it is who gives us power to get wealth. He daily loads us with benefits. When our bodily tabernacle is shaken, He it is who heals all our diseases. When our sorrows and needs multiply, He it is who satisfies our mouth with good things, so that our youth is renewed like the eagle's. It is well, no doubt, when we are sick, to seek direction from the physician, but it is a Christian action to resort *first* to Jehovah-Rophi, The Lord That Heals Us. "Is any sick among you?" What said the Apostle? Does he say, "Let him use no medicine," as some "Peculiar People" say? No! Does he say, "Use medicine and nothing else," as the most of professors do? No such thing! Does he say, "Let him lie in bed and expect his minister to come and see him," as though ministers, elders and deacons were Omniscient? No such thing!

"Is any sick among you? Let him call"—*that is his duty*—let him call for the elders of the church." And then, as the form of medicine then in vogue was that of anointing the body with oil, "let them pray over him," and let them use the ordinary means, "anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." Have your medicine by all means, or whatever may seem best, but, *beside that*, make *prayer* your main confidence, for it is the Lord that heals us! Jesus is the Beloved Physician. If we had more faith in God and resorted more often to Him by prayer and faith, the prescriptions of the pharmacist might be more often wise and his medicines more frequently useful. The Lord, who made our house, best knows how to repair the tenement and He permits us to resort to Him! When you are sick, my Friend, remember this, and practice it.

III. Thus have we spoken of the Landlord and the lease. Now, thirdly, we come to THE RENT THAT IS TO BE PAID.

We occupy a house which is evidently not our own and, therefore, there must be some rent to pay. What is it? The rent that God asks of His tenants is *that they should praise Him as long as they live.* "Oh!" you say, "that is but little." I grant you that it is. It is but a peppercorn, a mere acknowledgment, but yet there are millions who never pay even that! They offer the Lord no thanks, no love, no service. For the benefits they receive, they make no return, or, rather, they make an evil recompense. The breath that He gives them is never turned to song. The food they eat is not sanctified with gratitude. The goods that He bestows are not tithed, nor are the first fruits of their increase offered to the Lord. Their hearts do not love Him. Their faith does not trust in His dear Son—their lips do not speak of Him and magnify His glorious name. This is most unrighteous and ungenerous. For us to praise God is not a costly or painful business. The heart that praises God finds a sweet return in the exercise, itself. In Heaven, it is the Heaven of perfect spirits to praise the Lord. And on earth we are nearest Heaven when we are fullest of the praises of Jehovah! But how ungrateful are those who are tenants in God's house and yet refuse the little tribute which He asks of them!

The question is raised, *how often ought the rent to be paid?* You know, in law, the time when the rent of a house is due always bears a relation to the tenure upon which it is held. If a man takes a house by the year, he pays his rent by the year. If he takes it by the quarter, he pays by the quarter. And if we hold our house by the *moment*, we are bound to pay by the moment.

So, then, it was but simple justice when David said, "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth." To live in the perpetual exercise of praise to God is, at once, the Christian's duty and delight. "No," says one, "but we cannot do *that*, we have other things to think of." But remember, when the praises of God are not on our lips, they should be in our hearts. The incense was in the censer even when it was not smoking—our praise should abide with us till opportunity permits the holy fire to be applied. Besides, I believe that our God is best praised in common things. He who mends a shoe with a right motive is praising God as much as the seraph who pours forth his celestial sonnet. You in your workshops, you in your families, you on your sickbeds, you anywhere according to your avocations—if you offer, through Jesus the Mediator, the love of your hearts—you are paying the rent of praise unto God Most High! Oh, to be continually doing this!

But, Brothers and Sisters, *I am afraid that we are in arrears.* Those of us who have paid the most rent are still far behind! Yes, you were grumbling this morning—that was not rendering a worthy recompense for benefits received. Shall a living man complain? There are some who do little else but complain. They complain of the times, of the weather, of the government, of their families, of their trade. If, for once, they would complain of themselves, they might have a more deserving subject for fault-finding! The Lord is good and does good—let His name be blessed! Let us, as His people, avow that, though He slays us, yet we will trust in Him.

And if He make us groan under His heavy hand, we will even weep out His praises and our expiring sigh shall be but a note of our life's Psalm which we hope to exchange full soon for the song of the celestial host above! Praising and blessing God in life, practically by obedience, and heartily with gratitude—this is the rent which is due for the house in which we dwell.

Are there not some of you who have not even recognized that you belong to God at all and who, up till now, have been paying rent and rendering service to another master? I am often amazed in my soul at what men will do for that black master, the devil! Why, Sirs, the devil will sometimes summon men to one of his meetings at the street corner where the gas is flaming, and they will cheerfully obey the summons. They will meet in such places with companions who are rude, boisterous, selfish, vulgar and everything else that is undesirable and call them "jolly good fellows." If the devil would pick out some fine brave spirits for them to meet—men of wit, genius and information—one would not wonder so much at the readiness with which the dupes assemble, but the congregations of Satan are usually made up of men and women of the lowest and most degraded kind and you people know it! When they are beckoned off to the assembly of the scorners, they go with the greatest readiness. And what is done at this gathering of the foolish? Well, they commune together in stupidities at which it must be hard to laugh and, meanwhile, they pass round the cup of liquid fire out of which they cheerfully drink and drink, and drink again, though each successive goblet is filled with deeper damnation! These willing slaves drink at their master's bidding though the cup makes their brain reel, sets their heart on flame and makes them unable to keep their feet! Yes, and when he still cries, "Drink, yes, drink abundantly," these faithful servants swallow down the poison till they lie down like logs, or roar like demons! They will keep putting the cup of death to their lips till delirium tremens comes upon them and possesses them as with Hell itself! Thousands obediently render homage to Satan by drinking away their lives and ruining their souls.

How much further they go in serving their master than we do in following ours! Into Hell itself they follow their accursed leader! They pay him his revenues without arrears and yet his taxes are heavy and his exactions are most oppressive. Why, we have seen great lords hand all their estates over to Beelzebub! And when he has set up before them an image in the shape of a horse with a blue ribbon, they have bowed down and worshipped it and offered their all at his shrine! I wish we could meet with some who would do as much for Christ as these have done for the devil. Any kind of fashion which may rule the hour draws a mad crowd after it. No matter how absurd or ridiculous the mania, the worshippers of fashion cry, "These are your gods, O Israel." Yes, Satan is marvelously well obeyed by his servants. His rent is regularly paid and yet he is not the rightful owner and has no title to the house of manhood! Yes, men will even run after him to offer their homage. They will throw down their lives before his Juggernaut car of profligacy and cast themselves beneath

its wheels, while the golden chariot of Christ, paved with love for men traverses their streets! And they have not a word of acclamation or of praise for that Prince of Peace. O come, you servants of Jesus, and be ashamed of this! Come and render to your Lord your full service! Throw your hearts' enthusiasm into your religion! Be at least as earnest for God as others are for the devil! Be at least as self-denying and self-sacrificing as they are who run the mad career of sin! Pay your rent to the great Landlord and let the arrears be made up!

IV. But I must not linger. The next point to be considered is MAN'S DUTY WITH REGARD TO THIS HOUSE OF WHICH HE IS THE TENANT.

The text says, "Set your house in order." This shows that *we are not to destroy it, nor to injure it.* Our body should be the temple of the Holy Spirit. Nothing should be done by us that may injure our body, for, in the case of the Believer, it is a precious thing, ordained to rise, again, at the Last Day, since Chris Jesus has bought it, as well as the soul which it contains, with His own blood! Nor are we to waste our substance, for this is the accusation which, of old, was brought against the unjust steward, that he had wasted his master's goods.

We are to set our house in order, that is, *our own house.* Some persons are very busy setting other people's houses in order and oh, how fast their tongues will go when they are sweeping out their neighbor's kitchen, or dusting his cupboard! *Set your own houses in order,* Sirs, before you attempt to arrange the affairs of other people!

Again, the tenant himself must do it. "Set your house in order." You must not leave it to a priest. You must not ask your fellow man to become responsible for you. You mast make personal application to Him who can set all in order for you, even to Him who came into the world and died for this very purpose. If you need oil for your lamps, you must go to them that sell and buy for yourselves, for your fellow virgins can give you none of their oil. Set your own house in order. This is the chief business of every living man as a tenant under God.

What kind of order is my house to be set in? My conscience will help to tell me that. An enlightened conscience tells us in what kind of order our heart, our family and our business should be. By its teachings, we may learn how all the departments of the house should be ordered. It cannot be right that the body should be master over the soul—conscience tells us that. It cannot be right that the memory should retain only that which is evil. It cannot be right that the affections should grovel in the mire. It cannot be right that the judgment should put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. Conscience says that the heart is never right till the whole man is in Christ—till, by a living faith, we have embraced Jesus as our full salvation and have received the Holy Spirit as our Sanctifier. We are never right till we are right with conscience and conscience tells us that we are never right till we are right with God! "Set your house in order." Obey the inward monitor, listen to the still small voice and prepare to meet your God!

Do you ask, *"What is God's order?"* You can see by reading the 20th chapter of the Book of Exodus what His thought of order was when He wrote the Ten Commandments. You can learn what His order is under the Gospel, for we read that a new Commandment has Christ given to us, that we love one another. And yet again, "This is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ." Dear Friend, is your house, in this sense, right with God? If, at this moment, you had to surrender possession, is everything ordered as you would wish it to be? If the arrow of death should now fly through this sanctuary and find a target in your heart at this moment, is it all right, *is it all right,* IS IT ALL RIGHT, as you would wish to have it when God's eyes shall look upon you in the Day of Judgment? What if in a single moment we should see the heavens on a blaze and the earth should rock beneath our feet, and the dead should rise from their sepulchers? What if, instead of this Tabernacle and its gathered crowd, we should now suddenly see the King, Himself, upon the Great White Throne and hear the archangel's trumpet ringing out the notes, "Awake, you dead, and come to judgment!" Is everything with us as we should like to have it for the blaze of that tremendous day and the inspection of that awful Judge? Happy is that man who can say, "I have committed all to Christ—my body, soul and spirit—all my powers and all my affections! I have committed all to Him by faith and prayer, so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly for it is all right even now." "Set your house in order." Then conscience and God's Word will be your guides as to what is needed.

But I am afraid that in you, my Friend, *very many things need careful attention and rearrangement.* Oh, that every day each of us lived a Christ-filled life, for then we should not need to be told to set our house in order! I, as pastor of this Church, though I trust I am not an idler, have never been able to look upon my own work with any sort of satisfaction. I am obliged to stand where the publican stood with the prayer, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," upon my lips, for my work is too vast and I am too feeble! Is there any man here who can say that he fills his sphere to the full without an omission or transgression? If you can say so, my Brother, I envy you, for it is not long before you will be in Heaven! If that is not a self-righteous estimate, or a vainglorious opinion of yourself, inasmuch as you are so meet for Heaven, you will soon be there—depend upon that!

But, whatever there may be about us now, dear Friends, which is not what we feel it ought to be, let the call come to each one of us at this moment, "Set your house in order." The vain regrets in which we sometimes indulge, we often mistake for true repentance, but let us remember that—

"Repentance is to leave
The sins we loved before,
And show that we in earnest grieve
By doing so no more."

As believers in Jesus Christ, if there is anything deficient in us, if there is anything excessive in us, if there is anything that is contrary to the

Lord's mind and will, may the Holy Spirit come and correct it all, so that our house may be set in order!

Thus have I shown you in what manner our houses should be kept. But I am afraid that many of your houses need a great deal of setting in order. *Some of your houses need sweeping.* The dust and filth of sin are lying all over the floors! You need the precious blood to be sprinkled, or else if the Lord begins to sweep with the bosom of the Law of God, it will happen, as Bunyan tells us, that the dust will be enough to choke your prayers, or blind the eyes of your faith! May the Gospel come and sprinkle the water of Divine Grace and then may Christ come in and sweep your house! But you need more than *sweeping—your house needs washing.* Every floor needs cleansing and there is no one but the Lord Jesus Christ who can do this. Nothing can make you clean but His blood! In many of your houses the windows are very filthy and the light of the glorious Gospel cannot enter so as to bring with it an intelligent conception of the things of God. Oh, that this may be set right! The very drainage in some men's houses is neglected. Many a foul thing stagnates, ferments and pollutes their souls. Ah, what is there that is in order in the unregenerate man? To everyone in that state, the text calls loudly, "Set your house in order." But, Sirs, unless Christ comes to help you, it is a hopeless task! Unless Christ and His Holy Spirit come to the rescue, your houses will remain out of order—everything filthy and everything disarranged—and when the great King shall come and find it so, woe unto you, woe unto you, in the day of His appearing!

V. We shall close with the last thought, which is this, WE ARE BID TO SET OUR HOUSE IN ORDER BECAUSE WE ARE SERVED WITH A NOTICE TO QUIT. "Set your house in order; *for you shall die, and not live."*

This is not a reason for setting a house in order which bad tenants would care to consider—they wish to leave the house in as dilapidated a state as possible. But a just tenant desires to restore to his landlord his property unhurt. So is it with the man who is right with God. He wishes that when he dies, he may leave here on earth no trace of injury done to God, but many memorials of service rendered. He does not wish to leave the house as Satan left the poor possessed demoniac, rending and tearing him because he was coming out of him, having great wrath because his time was short. No, the honest man who loves his God desires to leave everything behind him that shall honor God and nothing that shall dishonor Him. Whitefield used to tell a story of a young man who could not live in the house where his old father had dwelt, because, he said, "every chair in it smelt of piety." He was a wicked, godless, rebellious man without Christ and he could not stay where his father's holiness would force itself upon his memory and rebuke him. Oh, I would like to make every chair in my house like that, so that when my boy comes into possession of it, he will think, "Why, there my father sat to study God's Word. And there he used to kneel in prayer. And now I have his house, I must imitate his ways."

A dear man of God, who has now gone to Heaven, took me into his study, one day, and said to me, "You see that spot?" "Yes." "Well, that is the place where my dear wife used to kneel to pray and that is where, one morning, when I came to look for her, as she did not come down to breakfast, I found her dead." "Oh," he said, "that is holy ground!" And so it was, for she was a very gracious woman. Oh, that we may so live that everything we leave behind us may be like Abel's blood that cried from the ground! May our habits and manners be such that, after our death, everything associated with us may be perfumed with holy memories! God make it so! God make it so! Are you sure it will be so? I must appeal to some of you Christian people—are you not too negligent? Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God? Might there not be much amiss with you if you were now called away? I beseech you, set your house in order!

Beloved Friend in Christ, do try that everything may be in order for your dying, and everything now prepared for your departure if it should happen tonight. *Do it for the Church's sake.* So live that when the church misses you, there shall be left behind you your gracious memory and your holy example to inspire those who will mourn your departure. So live that *the world* may miss your zealous efforts for its good. May all be so ordered in your life that you may never lead others astray by your example, but bequeath it as a legacy of encouragement to your successors! Order all things well *for your children's sake.* They will be pretty much what their parents were. Sovereign Grace may interpose, but, ordinarily, the mother shapes the child's life. May your life be such that it shall be a fair mold for your child's future existence!

Set your house in order, my dear Brothers and Sisters, even though you are leaving it, *because you are going to a better one if you are a Believer in Christ.* The old clay shed will be taken down and you shall dwell in marble halls! You shall leave the hovel for the mansion! The traveler's tent shall be rolled up and put away in the tomb to be exchanged for "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Oh, let it not be said that you were so bad a tenant, in the first house, that you could not be trusted with a second, but may Divine Grace cause you so to set this house in order that you may leave it without reluctance, and enter into the next with joy, leaving your first house behind you without shame, in sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection! May you cheerfully leave the first house and joyfully surrender the key to the Great Landlord because you know that, go where He will in all its rooms, He will see the remembrances of His own Grace, the marks of His own workmanship, the beauties and adornments of His own Holy Spirit! Then, conveyed by ministering spirits to a better country, you shall become possessors of a heritage undefiled which fades not away!

I desire, in closing, that all of us may offer the key of our house to the Great Landlord and acknowledge that we live on sufferance as His tenants. A dear Brother told us, the other day, when he was speaking of his being over 70 years of age, that his lease had run out and that he

was now living by the day. Let us each, in all things, carry out his remark and live by the day! Let us remember that "now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." Let us not act as if we expected to remain long in these lowlands. It is a dreadful thing to see men who profess to be Christians, unwilling to die! Should it be so that when we feel ourselves ill, and likely to die, we should have a host of matters to arrange and many regrets to express? Dear Brothers and Sisters, begin your regrets earlier, while there is time to retrieve the past! Regret now, and ask for Grace, now, to do all that is in you for Him who loved you and bought you with His blood!

As for you who have no redeeming blood upon you, I do not marvel that you live to yourselves. O you who despise Christ, I do not wonder if you despise yourselves so much as to be the slaves of pleasure! But you who are the elect of God, who are bought by the blood of Jesus, who are called by His Spirit, who profess to be His people—you have nobler things to live for! I pray you, make us not to be ashamed of you by living as if you were mere worldlings who have their portion in this life. Live for eternity! Live for Christ's Glory! Live to win souls! Behave as occupiers under a Royal Owner should behave. With such a Landlord, the best in the whole universe, be also the best of tenants and always be mindful of the time of your removal to another land! Let my last words remain with you, and that they may, I will quote them from a book in which wisdom is set forth in goodly sentences.

"Gird up your mind to contemplation, trembling inhabitant of the earth.
Tenant of a hovel for a day, you are heir of the universe forever!
For neither congealing of the grave, nor gushing waters of the firmament,
Nor expansive airs of Heaven, nor dissipative fires of Gehenna,
Nor rust of rest, nor wear, nor waste, nor loss, nor chance, nor change
Shall avail to quench or overwhelm the spark of soul within you!
"Look to your soul, O man, for none can be surety for his brother:
Behold, for Heaven—or for Hell—you cannot escape from Immortality!"

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

GOD'S INNUMERABLE MERCIES
NO. 3022

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 10, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 22, 1868.

"I know not the numbers thereof."
Psalm 71:15.

THE writer of this Psalm describes all the dealings of God with him under the head, "righteousness" and, "salvation." That description is perfectly accurate, for all that God does for His people is, first of all, in faithfulness to His promise. As He has spoken, so He does. Never, even in the sharpest trial, can the heir of Heaven accuse God of being unfaithful to what He has promised. He told His disciples that they would have to endure tribulation—and when it came, they proved the truth of His prophecy—and everything that God does to us, whether little or great, whether sharp or kind, will prove to have been done in accordance with His faithful Word.

And then the Psalmist calls the dispensations of God's Providence by the name of salvation. And this term is also the right one, for everything that He does for us who are His people tends to our ultimate salvation. He is working out our deliverance from inbred sin as well as from outward temptation and trial. Very often the darkest days that we have are bright with Divine Mercy, even though we cannot discern the brightness. There is a good reason, a necessity, for all that He sends to us and that reason is to be found in the fact that He intends to present us "faultless before the presence of His Glory with exceeding joy." Open your diaries, Beloved, and write across the record of your daily experiences, "All this is being done to us in righteousness and all this is working out our full salvation." Never read the book of your life's history without putting that headline upon every page! Emblazon that motto as an illuminated picture at the beginning of every distinct chapter of your life—and believe that it is all righteousness and all salvation from first to last!

Having thus comprehended all God's mercies under these two heads, the Psalmist adds, "I know not the numbers thereof."

I. In considering these words, let us think, first, of THIS THING WHICH WE DO NOT KNOW, NAMELY, THE NUMBER OF GOD'S MERCIES.

Have you ever tried to count them? Probably you never did that for even any *day* in your life. I would like you to undertake that task and to jot down every mercy you receive from God in a single day—from the moment when the eyelids of the morning are opened till the moment

when the curtains of the night are drawn. If your judgment were sufficiently enlightened to discern all the items, you would find that your arithmetic would fail to tell the total of them. But, Brothers and Sisters, the days of most of us have been many and there are some here who are approaching the longest period of human life. If the mercies of *one day* would surpass their computation, what shall we say of the mercies of all these days in which they have been living as gentlemen-commoners upon the bounty of God, pensioners upon the loving kindness and faithfulness of the Most High? Truly, they may say, in the retrospect of all the loving kindness of the Lord, "We know not the numbers thereof."

Let me now—not by way of attempting to help you to count the mercies of God, but by way of showing you the utter impossibility of even numbering them—just remind you, first, of *the Divine Promises which have been fulfilled to* you. They are very many. As you turn over the pages of Sacred Writ, you see them sparkling like grains of gold in the bed of some African or Australian river. God's Words of promise are there in great abundance, each of them as mighty as those Words of power which built the skies and, in your experience, from first to last, these Words of promise have been fulfilled. It would be a colossal task for you to write out all God's promises that have been fulfilled to you. Take your Bible and put a pencil mark in the margin for each one that has been proved true to you. Your task will be blessed to your memory and will move you to gratitude. And the most of God's promises have been fulfilled to us over, and over, and over again! We have taken these promissory notes into the great Bank of Heaven and we have received what was promised in them. But we have taken them to the bank, again, for, strange to say, after the Lord has fulfilled His promise today, that promise still stands good for tomorrow and right on until the end of time! Reckon up the multitude of God's promises and think of the many times in which those promises have been fulfilled to you and others of His children, for this will help you to realize how innumerable are the mercies of God!

Think of the mercies of God in another form, namely, *the many deliverances which have been vouchsafed to you.* You have had deliverances when you knew nothing of your danger, when the Lord—

"Watched over your path
When, Satan's blind slave, you sported with death."

You have had deliverances from sickness when, had death come to you, you would have died unforgiven. You had deliverances, perhaps, in childhood, from many temptations which would have been your lot had you been born under less happy auspices. Then came the great deliverance when your soul was released from the bondage of sin and Satan—and how many deliverances are wrapped up in that one? David says that God delivered him from all his fears—and that day when He delivered us from all our sins, He emancipated us from every yoke of bondage that had rested on us. O happy day of glorious liberty when Christ made us free indeed! Well may, each one of us, sing—

"Oh happy day, that fixed my choice
On You, my Savior and my God!

Well may this glowing heart rejoice,
And tell its raptures all abroad.
'Tis done! The great transaction's done!
I am my Lord's and He is mine—
He drew me and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice Divine.
High Heaven that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear
Till in life's latest hour I bow
And bless in death a bond so dear."

From that day onward, our march through the wilderness has been a series of remarkable deliverances and salvations! You have been delivered, dear Friends, from pride—you have been brought low when you were exalted above measure. You have been delivered from depression of spirits—your eyes have been delivered from weeping and your heart from fainting. You have been delivered in your seasons of bereavement. You have been succored in your times of pain and sickness. You have been delivered during the rush of business and you have been delivered in the time of solitary temptations. You have been delivered from self, from sin, from Satan, from the evil that alarmed you and from the more insidious mischief that sought to fascinate you! Until now the Lord has held you up and you have been kept in safety even while passing by the dens of lions, or fighting with Apollyon down in the Valley of Humiliation. Can you count all your deliverances? I feel sure that you must say with the Psalmist, "I know not the numbers thereof."

Let us think for a minute or two, just to stir up our gratitude to God, of *the innumerable mercies attending our very existence.* Any physician can tell you what a wonderful thing our life is. Dr. Watts truly wrote—

"Our life contains a thousand springs,
And dies if one is gone!
Strange, that a harp of thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long!"

The operations of Nature are conducted in a most intricate manner. The continuation of our life depends upon the slenderest thread—yes, often, upon particles of matter which are so minute as scarcely to be perceived by the eyes! As the blood circulates through our system, there is a risk of death at every beat of our pulse. As the air is inhaled by us, there is a further risk every time our lungs are inflated. I am not an anatomist, neither is it a part of my duty to dissect the fabric of the human body—but those who have searched into it have told us that life is a continued miracle from the cradle to the grave. We cannot even imagine what innumerable mercies, from the crown of our head to the souls of our feet, are concerned in our continuing to still be in the land of the living!

Think, again, of *the numberless mercies connected with happy existence*—any one of which taken away would make life sadder—many of which removed would make life an intolerable torture. Can you ever pass a lunatic asylum without thanking God that your reason has not left her throne? Can you pass by a place where idiots are dwelling without thanking God that your mind has not become lowered till it has

almost ceased to be? Can you go by our great hospitals without blessing God that you are not tossing on a bed that grows hard through unceasing pain? Can you look upon the many diseased folk whom we see in our streets and not thank God for the health you enjoy? I like to feel grateful for every minute that my teeth do not ache, or that my head does not ache, for some of these lesser pains do so distract us that we can scarcely attend to our daily duties! When we have to endure these pains, we think how grateful we should be if they were gone—but when they are gone, we are apt to forget the mercy which has removed them!

Think, dear Friends, of the mercies which have made life happy for you in your domestic circle. "Ah," say some of you, "but we now have sore sorrows there." Yes, it may be so, but you ought to think how long you had almost unalloyed happiness! If a man lends you something and after a long while takes it back, you ought not to mourn because he takes it, but to thank him for letting you have it so long! Think of the ten thousand mercies that cluster around a happy fireside. What music there is in that blessed word, "home!" Yes, and with all the troubles that a family may bring, those dear little prattlers bring a world of happiness with them and you ought to be thankful if they are still spared to you—and not only spared, but in robust health, firm of limb, clear in intellect and many of them hopeful and promising in moral and spiritual things! Truly, if I were to attempt to record the mercies that make life happy here below, I would need a vast volume written within and without with thanksgiving! And even then I should have to make the Psalmist's confession, "I know not the numbers thereof."

Take another measuring line. Beloved Friends, think of *the preventing Providences of God* and you have quite another vista opened before you. Walking in the street yesterday, you might have fallen and injured yourselves, for another did so. Sitting even in your house, the deadly fever might have entered—it did go in at a neighbor's door or window. In travelling, you might have been killed as many others have been, or have been mangled and scarcely escaped with life. We talk of Providences when we have hairbreadth escapes—but are they not quite as much Providences when we are preserved from danger? I have told you before what the old Puritan said to his son who had ridden several miles to meet him. "Father," said the son, "I have had a remarkable Providence! My horse stumbled badly three times, yet did not throw me." "Ah, my Son," said the father, "I have had a still more remarkable Providence than that, for my horse did not stumble once." We do not think, as we should, of the preventing Providences of God which keep off evil from us. It is a mercy that so many of you are not brought to poverty—that when so many others are out of work, you workingmen are not among the unemployed, but are able to provide for your families. We could probably all make a long list of trials from which we have been preserved and, after making out the list, we would still have to say, "We know not the numbers thereof."

But when I turn to a still wider field, the best arithmetician must find his powers in vain. Think of *the bounties of God's Grace.* Your sins,

though many, are all forgiven and every forgiveness a mercy—do any of you know the numbers thereof? The evils which sin has worked in you, all remedied by the Great Physician, or to be ultimately removed by His gracious hand—do you know the numbers thereof? Think now, you are the elect of God—trace the streams of His love up to that Eternal Council in which He planned your redemption and then say, with David, "How precious, also, are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand." Besides that, you have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ! Do you know the number of mercies included in that one word, "redeemed"? It includes that mercy of mercies—God descending to take our Human Nature into union with Himself! It includes the whole life of Christ and His death upon the Cross—yes, and His Resurrection, and Ascension, and the Glory of His Second Coming—for all this has to do with your redemption! Truly, you know not the numbers thereof! You have also been called by Grace. You resisted God's calls, perhaps hundreds of times, yet were the sweet persuasions of the Holy Spirit continued until you were at last constrained to yield! And repentance was given to you, faith was worked in you—you were made to pray and your prayers were heard and answered. Do you know the numbers of all these mercies?

Further, the work of sanctification has gone on in you by the power of the Holy Spirit. Every good thought you have ever had, every right word you have ever spoken, every holy action you have ever done has been a mercy from God to you! He gave these blessings to you, or else you would never have had them—and I challenge you to try to count this great budget of mercies! Besides all that, you are this day an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ! You have Heaven in reversion, assured to you by the faithful promise of God who cannot lie! Sit down and take your pen and count your mercies if you can. Even as you count them, your mercies multiply—and every beating pulse increases the innumerable multitude of them so that you must utterly despair of counting them! To what shall I liken them? To the countless odors that rise from the garden when the summer's sun is smiling on the innumerable beauties that are gathered there? Shall I liken them to the drops of dew that sparkle on ten thousand times ten thousand blades of grass? Shall I liken them to the innumerable birds and insects that fly in the air, or to the fishes without number that swim in the seas, or to the beasts untold that wander on the mountains or range the woods and forests? Shall I liken them to the innumerable leaves of autumn that fall when the frost comes, or to the shells or sands upon the seashore, or to the stars of Heaven which no man can number? I know not whereunto to liken God's mercies to you, for all comparisons fail me—and I can only wonderingly say with the Psalmist—"I know not the numbers thereof."

II. Now, turning from that to another point—as we know not the numbers of God's mercies, we need not be surprised that THERE ARE OTHER MATTERS WHICH ARE ALSO BEYOND OUR KNOWLEDGE.

To know the numbers of certain things would not be so difficult as to know *their value.* My God, I know not the numbers of Your mercies and I do not even know the value of any one of them! If I were to take one of them and try to estimate its worth, I would find that it would exceed all my powers of computation. I have never been able to weigh one of them in the scales and especially Your loving kindness in working by Your Grace in my soul. To have been washed in the precious blood of Jesus—angels, can you tell what a priceless gift this is? Devils, call *you* tell—for you are still covered with sin! Lost spirit in Hell, can you even imagine what it must be to be a forgiven soul? Bright spirits before the Throne of God who have washed your robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb—do not even you, who have experienced this wonderful bliss, continue to marvel at the greatness of it? Then, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we need not be surprised that we do not know the value of the mercies which our God has so abundantly bestowed upon us!

It is even more to be regretted that *we have never felt due gratitude for the mercies of God to us.* We might be forgiven for not being able to number that which reaches almost to the infinite. That would be an imperfection rather than a sin, but alas, we have been so ungrateful that we have not been thankful to God for the favors which He has so liberally showered upon us. They have been buried in forgetfulness and yes, have gone on, from year to year, as if we owed nothing to the Lord, but had received all His good gifts by mere chance! How many men are like the swine that eat the acorns which fall from the oak, but never thank the tree on which they grew, or the God who made it grow? They receive the benisons of Heaven, but thank not the God of Heaven for them as they should. The mercies of God are uncountable—the ingratitude of man is unaccountable! We, Christian men and women, cannot tell how it is that we can be so stolidly indifferent when we ought to be so devoutly thankful to God for all His goodness to us.

And, Beloved, as our gratitude has never kept pace with God's goodness, I am also sure that *our praises have not.* How many tongues there are that are blistered through their murmuring and complaining because of the hard lot which God has given them? There are some of us who have learned too well how to make discord, yet who know little about harmonious *praise*. Yet our God is a good God. Let us say so and stand to it—and repent that we have not said it more often and proclaimed it more publicly among the sons of men! God has been so gracious to us that we cannot count His mercies! May we be pardoned for our past silence concerning them—and henceforth may our mouth be filled with His praise and with His honor all day.

And, my dear Brothers and Sisters, as we have fallen short in our praise, I am sure that we have fallen much more short of anything like *a proper return for God's goodness in our conduct and conversation.* If we had been His slaves, we could not have served Him worse than we have done though we are His children. If He had been a tyrant to us, we could scarcely have done less for Him than we have done although He is our

Father! I have often felt that I could blot my diary with tears again and again, and again, as I have said to myself—

"What have I done for Him who died
To save my guilty soul?
How are my follies multiplied
Fast as my minutes roll!
Much of my time has run to waste,
My sins how great their sum!
Lord, give me pardon for the past,
And strength for days to come!"

Let these practical reflections abide in your memories, dear Friends. You do not know the number, or the value, or the weight of God's mercies. You do not feel the gratitude for them that is due. You do not give to God the praise that is fitting, nor live the life that is consistent with His goodness to you. Here are reasons for deep humiliation and for seeking the Grace that will enable us to mend our ways.

III. Now, lastly, while there are these things which we do not know, THERE ARE SOME THINGS WHICH WE DO KNOW, which ought to increase our thankfulness.

First, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you and I know very well *the source from which all these mercies come to us.* We cannot count them, but we know that they all spring from the eternal love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord towards His own people. We can trace every one of these sacred drops of mercy to the Fountain of God's discriminating, distinguishing Love. He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. It was according to the greatness of His loving kindness to us, before the earth was, that He chose us to be a people to show forth His praise—a people to be "filled with all the fullness of God." Let us trace even our common mercies up to this source and let us especially see the love of God in every spiritual gift that we receive, for so shall we be moved to praise and bless Him more than we have ever yet done!

Further, we know *the channel through which every mercy comes to us.* It comes through our blessed Lord and Mediator, Jesus Christ. And—

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

I like to see the mark of my Master's sufferings upon every jewel with which He adorns my spirit—to know that if I am righteous, it is in His righteousness! If I am washed, it is in His blood! If I am saved, He is my Savior! If I am fed, He is my food. If I am glad, He is my crown of joy and if I ever enter Heaven, He will be my bliss forever! All-in-All is He to His people—everything comes to us through Him—so that we have a reason for gratitude in the way in which the mercy comes to us as well as in the mercy itself! We do not know the numbers of God's mercies to us, but we do know that every one of them comes to us by way of the Cross and bears the mark of the Redeemer's blood upon it!

We do not know the number of God's mercies, but we do know *the rule of them.* That is to say, we know that they are always sent in love. If they seem to be stinted, it is love that stints them. And if they are increased, it

is love that increases them. The whole of the day God's Love is shining upon us and when the natural sun has gone to its rest, there is no harmful moon to smite, us, but the same Love of God makes it light within our soul. If the Lord chastens me, it is because He loves me. If He takes away your child, your husband, or yourself, Believer, it is because He loves you! The rule of every mercy is the great rule of our Father's wisdom, our Father's faithfulness, our Father's affection!

We know, also, with regard to all God's mercies, *the design of them.* We know that they are all sent to us to be tokens of His Love and helps in our journey to Heaven. In addition to the mercy and the love that gives it, and the way by which it comes, there is a blessed end that sanctifies it all. The Lord said to Israel, concerning the Angel whom He promised to send with them, "He shall bless your bread and your water." Oh, to have the common mercies of life so blessed that they become spiritual helps to us! It can be so, for it is the design of God—in all that He sends to us—to bring us nearer to Him.

Then, we know, over and above all this, *the grand climax of it all.* I know not the numbers thereof, but I know, my God, that when I shall have received my last mercy on earth, I shall receive my first enjoyment in Heaven! When I shall have had the last blessing of this mortal life, I shall have the first blessing of the life everlasting! When the goodness and the mercy that have followed me to the brink of Jordan shall cease, I shall have angels there to escort me up to the celestial hills, and to admit me to my Savior's Presence where there are pleasures forevermore! It is an endless chain, Beloved! When it has seemed to conclude in one place, it begins in another. David said, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." And what did he say next?—"And I will dwell in the House of the Lord forever." Forever to behold the face of their Father, in His House above, is the portion of all the children of God!

After all that I have said, I hope you will all say that a Christian's life is a happy one. It is! It is! We have our cross to carry. We have our daily sorrows, losses and trials—but each one of us can say, with Dr. Watts—

"I would not change my blest estate,
For all that earth calls good or great!"

We enter our Master's service and accept the cross and all He gives us. We take the road to Heaven with all its thorns and briers. Yes, let what will come, He is so good and blessed a God who has made Himself to be His people's portion that if the rod is a part of the Covenant, then blessed be the rod and the hand that wields it—and let the Lord be praised from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same!

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, since God is never wearied in giving, let us never be wearied in serving Him! Let us be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord! Since He never stays His hand in bestowing mercies upon us, let us never stay our patient endurance of any of the ills of life that He is pleased to send us. And since His mercy will continue with us as long as we are here, let us never cast away our confidence in Him! Let us stay ourselves upon Him and fall back into His arms when we are weary. If we faint, let us faint on His bosom.

I wish that all of us here, constantly receiving, as we do, so many mercies, had more thought of the hands and heart from which they come. Alas! Alas! With many, "the ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib," but these people do not know God! Feed a dog and he will get to know you. But there are men and women who know not the God who made them and in whose hands their breath is! Let this text abide with you—"The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God." You have not done anything amiss, you say. You do not drink, or swear, or lie, but, "all the nations that forget God" are to have the same portion as "the wicked" will have. Beware, you that forget God! And if you would remember Him, the easier way to do that is to see His love in the death of His Son, Jesus Christ! Think of Jesus bleeding for sinners. Trust yourself to Jesus and so you shall be saved, for, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life."

May God bless you all, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 71.

This Psalm, written by an old man, is especially suitable for an old man. It is numbered seventy-one and it may suit those who have reached that age—but it is also appropriate to us all in prospect of the days of feebleness that will come to us, sooner or later, if we are spared to grow old.

Verse 1. *In You, O Lord, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion.* "Stand by me, O Lord, for I only stand as You uphold me—and if You should leave me, after I have trusted in You—what could I say or do? Therefore, O Jehovah, since I put my trust in You, 'let me never be put to confusion.'"

2. *Deliver me in Your righteousness, and cause me to escape.* "I am like a poor dove taken in a net—I cannot get away. Stretch out Your hand, O Lord, and tear the net and so deliver me, and cause me to escape. I cannot do anything for myself, except pray to You to deliver me."

2. *Incline Your ear unto me, and save me.* "My prayer is weak. Therefore, O Lord, bend Your ear down to my lips, that You may catch my faintest words. Listen to my lisping, O Lord, and save me."

3. *Be You my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: You have given commandment to save me; for You are my rock and my fortress.* If David wrote this Psalm after the rebellion of his wicked son, Absalom, I think there is an instructive illustration here. You remember that when the troops went out from Mahanaim to fight with Absalom, David commanded the three captains of the host—Joab, Abishai and Ittai—"Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom." They might slay his followers, but he commanded them to spare him. Alas, David's command was ineffectual, for Joab slew Absalom! But God's command was certain to be obeyed, so the Psalmist wrote, "You have given commandment to save me," with the full assurance that he

would be saved. And all God's people can say to Him, "You have commanded angels and men, 'Touch not My anointed, and do My Prophets no harm.'" And each Believer can say to Him, "You have given commandment to save me; for You are my rock and my fortress."

4, 5. *Deliver me, O my God, out of the hands of the wicked, out of the hands of the unrighteous and cruel man. For You are my hope, O Lord GOD: You are my trust from my youth.* Happy is the man who can truthfully say that, "You are my trust from my youth." God does not cast off His old servants, as men often do. Those who give Him the best of their days will not find that He will desert them when the feebleness of age creeps over them.

6. *By You have I been held up from the womb: You are He that took me out of my mother's womb: my praise shall be continually of You.* We do not think, as often as we should, of what we owe to God for His care over us at the time of our birth. Our mothers returned thanks on their own behalf and ours, but, as we look back, we are bound to return thanks, too, for that kindly care of God in our most extreme weakness—when the little candle of life was scarcely lighted and might have been so easily blown out. Then, as God took care of us in our first infancy, do you not think that He will take care of us when we get into our second childhood? We are never likely to be quite as weak as we were then, but, as the Lord guarded us at that time, will He not guard us in those dark days which are already looming before some of us? Of course He will! Therefore, be of good courage, for He shall strengthen your heart and your praise shall be continually of Him.

7. *I am as a wonder unto many.* A prodigy to some, a monster to others, a marvel, a mystery, a riddle to all, but here is the solution to the problem that puzzles so many.

7. *But You are my strong refuge.* Even the weak are strong when God is their refuge! The most defenseless are safe when God is their defense. Wonder not at the mysterious life of a Christian, for this Truth of God explains the mystery—"You are my strong refuge."

8. *Let my mouth be filled with Your praise and with Your honor all day.* What a blessed mouthful, and what a sweet mouthful this is—and what a blessed means of keeping the mouth from saying unkind, slanderous, or murmuring words!

9, 10. *Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength fails. For my enemies speak against me and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together.* When the lion is sick, every cur is bold enough to bark at him. Men were afraid of David when he was strong, but when he grew feeble, they began to howl at him and gather round him like a pack of hounds around a wounded stag. Worst of all, they uttered this monstrous lie, which was most grievous to David's heart.

11. *Saying, God has forsaken him: persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him.* If they had possessed even ordinary compassion, they would have said, "Since there is none to deliver him, let us not attack him. If God has forsaken him, he is in misery enough, so let us try to comfort him." But, instead of doing this, they acted after the fashion of

their father, the devil, who has no tenderness and nothing of a compassionate spirit within him.

12. *O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help.* Notice the still more intense grip of faith in the second clause. The Psalmist first says, "O God," then He says, "O *my* God." It is grand pleading when we so grasp God with the personal grip of faith that we cry, "O my God, make haste for my help."

13, 14. *Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered with reproach and dishonor that seek my hurt. But I will hope continually, and still yet praise You more and more.* Hoping and praising are among the very best styles of living. Hoping honors God in secret—and praising honors Him in public. Oh, for more of these two good things!

15. *My mouth shall show forth Your righteousness and Your salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof.* When David spoke of those who hated him without a cause, he said that they were more than the hairs of his head. He could not count them, but he went as near to doing so as he could. But when he began to speak of God's mercies as displayed in His righteousness and His salvation, he did not draw any comparison, or attempt to number them. This is a calculation in which we are utterly lost—our system of numeration fails us altogether when we come to deal with the loving kindness of the Lord!

16. *I will go in the strength of the LORD GOD: I will make mention of Your righteousness, even of Yours only.* He did not reckon that any other righteousness was worth mentioning—and certainly not his own. The best of men, those who have been the most noted for their good works, have always been the first to feel that they had no works in which they could put any trust! One godly man, when he was dying, said to a friend, "I have been trying to separate my good works and my evil works from one another, but I have found the task too great for me—so I have thrown them all overboard and now I will float to Heaven upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ alone."

17. *O God, You have taught me from my youth: and until now have I declared Your wondrous works.* [Mr. Spurgeon delivered a remarkable discourse upon this text, illustrating the theme from his own early experience. See Sermon No. 2318, Volume 39—GOD'S PUPIL, GOD'S PREACHER—AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] I pray very earnestly for you young people, and I beg you to pray for yourselves, that you may have the great privilege of being able to say with the Psalmist, "O God, You have taught me from my youth." They make good scholars who go to school early and keep at school long—and have such a blessed Schoolmaster as the Psalmist had—"O God, *You* have taught me." David's mother taught him much that was good, but it was still better for him to have God as his Teacher. Then, after being a scholar, he became a pupil-teacher. He still went on learning, but he also began to teach—"Until now have I declared Your wondrous works." All God's scholars ought to be pupil-teachers, always learning more and more from Him, and then teaching others all that they learn.

18. *Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not; until I have shown Your strength unto this generation, and Your power to everyone that is to come.* Old men ought to tell younger men what God has done for them. There is great weight in the testimony of a godly man of ripe experience. Full of years, he speaks of what he knows, and testifies of what he has seen, tasted and handled of the Truth of God. We need many a Nestor in the camp of Christ, whose valor in former times and whose experience in days of battling for the right may inspire with valor the younger men to whom he speaks!

19. *Your righteousness, also, O God, is very high, who has done great things: O God, who is like unto You?* The more we know of God, the less we think of all others. We sink ourselves out of sight and all other creatures seem to be as nothing in comparison with our God.

20. *You, which have shown me great and sore troubles, shall quicken me again, and shall bring me up again from the depths of the earth.* This we shall experience in part even in our present lifetime, but we shall much more fully experience it on the Resurrection Morning—

"When Christ His risen saints shall bring
From beds of dust, and silent clay,
To realms of everlasting day."

21. *You shall increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.* Think of poor old David talking like this when he was driven into exile and many of his former friends had forsaken him—"'You shall increase my greatness.' I shall get good out of this evil. I shall rise by this fall. I shall be a gainer by these losses."

22. *I will also praise You with the psaltery, even Your Truth, O my God.* "When I have proved Your Truth. When my joyful experience has proved that every promise of Yours is true to Your servant, then I will praise both yourself and Your Truth, O my God."

22, 23. *Unto You will I sing with the harp, O You Holy One of Israel. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto You.* That is the best kind of praise to God when our very lips are happy in singing—when we do not merely speak the sound, but when the meaning wells up from our heart and our lips are glad to sing it out.

23, 24. *And my soul, which You have redeemed. My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all daylong: for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame that seek my hurt.*

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JOHN MARK—OR, HASTE IN RELIGION
NO. 3023

A SERMON
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"And they all forsook Him, and fled. And there followed Him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked." Mark 14:50-52.

THIS little episode in the narrative of the Evangelist is very singular. One wonders why it is introduced, but a moment's reflection will, I think, suggest a plausible reason. It strikes me that this "certain young man" was none other than Mark, himself. He was probably asleep and, awakened by a great clamor, he asked what it was about. The information was speedily given, "The guards have come to arrest Jesus of Nazareth." Moved by sudden impulse, not thinking of what he was doing, he rises from his bed, rushes down, pursues the troopers, dashes into the midst of their ranks as though he, alone, would attempt the rescue when all the disciples had fled. The moment the young men lay hold upon him, his heroic spasm is over—his enthusiasm evaporates, he runs away, leaves behind the linen cloth that was loosely wrapped about his body—and makes his escape. There have been many, since then, who have acted as Mark did. And it seems to me that this digression from the main narrative is intended to point a moral.

First, however, you will ask me, "Why do you suppose that this certain young man was Mark?" I grant you that it is merely a supposition, yet it is supported by the strongest chain of probabilities and will sufficiently account for the manner in which he has inserted it. Calvin, following Ambrose and Chrysostom, thinks it was John, albeit few modern critics attach much weight to that conjecture. I find that the more perplexing critics of the modern school ascribe this transaction to Mark for these reasons—it was usual, among the Evangelists, to relate transactions in which they themselves took part without mentioning their names. This commonly occurs in the case of John, for instance. He bashfully keeps back his name when there is anything to his credit and he does the same when it is to the reverse. I could quote one or two instances of this practice in the Gospel of Luke and it is not at all remarkable that such a thing should have occurred in the case of Mark. Whoever it was, the only person likely to know it, was the man himself! I cannot think that anyone else would have been likely to tell it to Mark and, therefore, I conceive it to have been he—for he might scarcely have thought it worthy of recording if it had been told him by someone else! And it is not likely that anyone to whom it had occurred would have felt it was much to his

credit—and been likely to relate it to Mark with a view to its being recorded!

Again, we know that such a transaction as this was quite in keeping with Mark's general character. We gather his character partly from the Book which he has written—the Gospel of Mark is the most impulsive of all the Gospels. You are aware and I have frequently mentioned it to you, that the word *eutheos,* translated, "straightway," "forthwith," "immediately," is used a very great number of times by this evangelist in his Book. He is a man who does everything straightway—he is full of impulse, dash, fire, flash—the thing must be done and done at once. His Gospel is of that description. You do not find many of Christ's sermons in Mark. He gives you just a sketch, an outline. He had not perseverance enough to take the whole down and he scarcely finishes the narration of the death of Christ. His Book seems to break off abruptly, yet he is the most picturesque of all the Evangelists. There are pieces of imagination and there are Hogarthian touches in the sacred Biography he writes, that are not to be found in Matthew, or Luke, or John. The man is a man of fire! He is all enthusiasm. Poetry has filled his soul and, therefore, he dashes at the thing. He lacks perseverance and will hardly finish what he takes in hand, yet there is a genius about him not altogether uncommon to Christian men in this age—and there are faults in him exceedingly common at the present time.

Once more, the known life of John Mark tends to make it very probable that he would do such a thing as is referred to in our text. When Paul and Barnabas set out on their missionary enterprise, they were attended by Mark. As long as they were sailing across the blue waters and as long as they were on the island of Cyprus, Mark stuck to them. No, while they traveled along the coast of Asia Minor, we find they had John Mark to be their minister—but the moment they went up into the inland countries, among the robbers and the mountain streams—as soon as ever the road began to be a little too rough, John Mark left them! His missionary zeal had oozed out. At a later period, Mark was the cause of a sharp contention between Paul and Barnabas. Paul would not have Mark with him any longer. He could not tame him—he did not believe in these impulsive people who could not hold on under difficulties. But Barnabas, knowing him better—for Mark was his sister's son—and feeling a kinsman's lenity to his faults, insisted upon it that they should take John Mark. The altercation grew so violent between Paul and Barnabas that they separated on this account and would not proceed together on their Divine mission! Yet Barnabas was right, but I think that Paul was not wrong. Barnabas was right in his mild judgment of Mark, for he was a sound Believer at bottom and, notwithstanding this fault, he was a real, true-hearted disciple. We find him afterwards reconciled entirely to the Apostle Paul. Paul wrote to Timothy, "Take Mark, and bring him with you, for he is profitable to me for the ministry." And we find Paul affectionately mentioning, "Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas," which shows, on the one hand, the Apostle's Christian candor and

kindness and, on the other hand, that Mark had retrieved his character by perseverance.

Tradition says that Mark became the Bishop of Alexandria. We do not know whether that was correct or not, but it is likely enough that he was. Certainly he was with Paul at Rome and the latter part of his life was spent with Peter at Babylon. See what a man he is. He goes to Rome, but he cannot stay there long. He has done his work in Rome. He is one of your fidgety people who do things all of a sudden, so away he goes to Alexandria! But I think he must have found a very congenial friend in Peter. He would be a blessing to Peter and Peter would be a blessing to him, for Peter's disposition was cast in something of the same mold as his own. You may have noticed that Mark gives the most explicit account of Peter's fall. He enters very fully into it. I believe that he received it from Peter *viva voce*, and that Peter bade him write it down. And I think the modest spirit of Mark seemed to say, "Friend Peter, while the Holy Spirit moves me to tell of your fault and let it stand on record, He also constrains me to write my own as a sort of preface to it, for I, too, in my mad, hare-brained folly, would have run, unclothed as I was, upon the guard to rescue my Lord and Master, yet, at the first sight of the rough legionaries—at the first gleam of their swords—away I fled, timid, faint-hearted and afraid that I should be too roughly handled." For these reasons the supposition that this "certain young man" was John Mark appears to me not to be utterly baseless. There is no hypothesis in favor of any other man that is supported by equal probabilities. Very well, then. We will assume that he was the man and use the incident as the groundwork of our discourse. We have some counterparts of him, here, and we shall try to expose them and make use of Mark's blunder for their correction, in respect both to *hasty following* and *hasty running away.*

I. First, here is HASTY FOLLOWING.

John Mark does not wait to robe himself, but, just as he is, he dashes out for the defense of his Lord. Without a moment's thought, taking no sort of consideration, down he goes into the cold night air to try and deliver his Master! Fervent zeal waited not for chary prudence. There was something good and something bad in this—something to admire as well as something to censure.

Beloved, *it is a good and right thing for us to follow Christ and to follow Him at once.* And it is a brave thing to follow Him when His other disciples forsake Him and flee. It is a bold and worthy courage to take deadly odds for Christ and to rush, one against a thousand, for the honor of His dear hallowed name. Would that all professors of religion had the intrepidity of Mark! Would that all who have been careless about religion might emulate his haste and be as precipitate in flying to Christ by faith as he was in running to the rescue in that hour of assault! The most of men are too slow—fast enough in the world, but, ah, how slow in the things of God! I declare that if corporations and companies were half as concerned about worldly things as the Church of God is about spiritual things, instead of a railway accident every three or four months, we would have one every hour! And instead of a revolution every one or

two centuries, it would be well if we did not have one every year, for, of all the lazy things in the world, the Church of Christ is the most sluggish! Of all people that dilly-dally in this world, I think the professed servants of God are the most guilty.

How slothful are the ungodly, too, in Divine things! Tell them they are sick and they hasten to a surgeon. Tell them that their title-deeds are about to be attacked and they will defend them with legal power—but tell them, in God's name, that their soul is in danger—and they think it matters so little and is of so small import that they will wait on, and wait on, and wait on, and doubtless continue to wait on till they find themselves lost forever! Let me stir up those who have not believed on the Lord Jesus Christ to look diligently to their eternal state. You have tarried long enough. The time that you have been out of Christ is surely long enough for the lusts of the flesh. What fruit have you gathered in your impenitence and sin? How much have you been bettered by neglecting Christ and minding worldly things? Has it not been all a dreary toil? It may have been decked out with a few transient pleasures, but, putting the ungodly life into the scale, what does it come to? "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Do you not confess this? Why, then, tarry any longer? Have you got any happiness in being an enemy to God? Then why not be reconciled to Him? Oh, that the Spirit of God would make you see that the time past has sufficed you to have worked the will of the flesh!

Besides, *how little time you have to spare!* Even if you have much, Jesus demands that you repent now. "The Holy Spirit says, Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." The Gospel invitation is not for tomorrow, but for today. The warnings of the Gospel all bid you shun procrastination. Is not this Satan's great net in which men, like the silly fishes of the deep, are taken to their eternal destruction? O you dove, pursued by the hawk, tarry not, but fly at once to the dovecote—to the wounds of Jesus and find shelter there! Jesus calls you. Come to Him while He calls you. Why will you delay? His cause needs you. Young men, there are some of you who will spend the best of your days in Satan's cause—and when we get you, as we hope we shall—we shall have to baptize into Christ your shriveled ego, your palsied weakness! Let it not be so, I pray you. In these days of error and sin, Christ needs for His Kingdom men who are strong and vigorous, young men who are strong, as John says, and "have overcome the Wicked One." Gladly would I turn recruiting sergeant and enlist you for my Master! Oh, that you were on His side now! You cannot be too hasty here. If now the weapons of your rebellion are thrown down. If now you "kiss the Son, lest He be angry," you will have waited already too long! You will not—you cannot come to Christ too soon. Hark! Hark! I hear the chariot wheels of Death! He comes! He comes! And the axles of his chariot are hot with speed. He stands aloft, driving his white horse. The skeleton rider brandishes his awful spear and you are the victim! God has spared you up till now, but He may not bid you spend another Sabbath here. I hear the mowers scythe everywhere, as I pass along, making ready to cut down the grass

and the flowers thereof. Death's scythe is being sharpened! He reaps his harvest every day and, whether you are prepared or not, you must be cut down when God's time shall come!

Fly, then, I pray you! And though you are, like John Mark, unfit and unprepared, remember that you may come to Christ naked, for He can clothe you! You may come to Christ filthy, for He can wash you! You may come all unholy and defiled to Jesus, for He can put away your sin! Come! The Spirit of God seems to me to say to you, "Come." I pray that He may bid you to come and "lay hold on eternal life." I do not know how it is, I sometimes feel for many of my Hearers—especially for those of you whose faces I have seen for years—an awful earnestness even when I am not in this pulpit. And I think then that if I could get at your ear, I would plead with you. Think how many like you I have buried! How often do I stand at the grave's mouth, till sometimes, when, week after week and twice each week, I stand there, I fancy myself talking to dying men, and not to living men at all—talking to a company of shadows that come and go before me—and I stand still, myself a shadow, soon to flit like the rest. Oh, that I could talk to you as I then feel, and pour out my soul to you! We need a Baxter to bring men to immediate decision—Baxter with weeping eyes and burning heart—Baxter who says, "I will go down on my knees to entreat you to think upon eternal things." Baxter, who cries and groans for men till they cry and groan for themselves! Why will you die? Why will you let that fatal procrastination kill you? Why will you put off seeking the Savior until your day is over? Why will you still waste the candle which is so short? Why will you let the day go when the sun already dips beneath the horizon? By the shortness of time, by the sureness of death, by the certainty of eternal judgment, I beseech you to fly to Jesus and to fly to Jesus now, even though it should be in the hurry of John Mark!

Now I change my note, for there is a haste that we must reprove. The precipitate running of Mark suggests an admonition that should put you on your guard. He came all of a sudden by his religion and there are some people who do this who might as well have no religion at all. That, however, was not the case with Mark. He was a genuine Christian character, yet, with nine out of ten of these people, I am afraid it is far otherwise. Let me address some here who have all of a sudden come to Christ. I do not want to throw doubts in their way as to their sincerity, but I do want to incite them to examine themselves.

I am afraid *some people make a hasty profession through the persuasion of friends.* You walk with your friend and he says, "I have joined the church—why don't you do so?" He is not wise enough to put to you pointed questions which would let him see whether you are converted or not, but he unwisely presses you to make a profession when there is no Grace in your heart. I pray you, as soon as you know Christ, speak out for Him and come out and show your colors. But I also beseech you never profess to follow Christ merely through the persuasion of friends! I trust no pious mother would ever recommend you to do so. I am sure no wise father would ever urge it upon you. They would bid you

fly to Christ at once, but, as to making a profession of faith, they would have you see first whether the root of the matter is in you—and when they are persuaded and you are persuaded that it is—they will throw no stumbling blocks in your way.

Young people, I pray you, do not be deceived in this matter. How many have we seen, in revival times, who have been induced to come forward to "the penitent form," as it is called. That night, oh, how much they felt because their natural sensibilities were strongly worked upon! But the next morning, oh, how little have they felt! When the agencies that stimulated them have been withdrawn—when the meetings that stirred the embers, and the preacher that fanned the flame no longer exert any transient spell over them—their disenchanted souls sink down into a profound stupor! In many churches there are so few making profession of religion that there is not much danger of this evil—but here, where we receive so many every week, there is need for wise discrimination! I do beseech you never to sit down with a religion that comes to you merely through your being talked to by your acquaintances—

"True religion's more than notion—
Something must be known and felt."

Nor are there a mere few *who get their religion through excitement.* This furnishes another example of injudicious haste. They hear religion painted as being very beautiful. They see the beauty of it. They admire it—they think what a lovely thing it must be to be a Christian. Feeling this and misled by a sort of excitement in their minds, they conclude that this is repentance. A false confidence they write down as faith! They eagerly infer that they are the children of God, whereas, alas, they are but the dupes of their own emotion—and still "the children of wrath, even as others." Beware, I pray you, of a religion which lives upon excitement! We ought to be filled with enthusiasm. A fervent love should make our hearts always glow. The zeal of God's House should be our master-passion. Men never do much in politics till they grow warm upon a question and, in religion, the very highest degree of excitement is not only pardonable, but praiseworthy. What, then, is it, which we deprecate? Not the emotions of spiritual life, but an exclusive dependence upon impulse! If you try to live upon the spell of a man's words, upon the imposing grandeur of a multitude assembled together, upon the fascination of congregational singing, or even upon the heart-thrilling fervor of Prayer Meetings, you will find the lack of substantial food and the danger of an intoxicated brain! As it was with the quails which the children of Israel ate in the wilderness, God's bounties may be fed upon to your injury. No, dear Friends, there must be the real work of the Holy Spirit in the soul or else the repentance we get will be a repentance which needs to be repented of!

I well know a town where there was a certain eminent revivalist whom I greatly respect. It was said that half the population had been converted under his ministry, but I do not think that if the numbers were counted at the present moment, there would be found a dozen of his converts. This revival work, where it is real and good, is God's best blessing, but where it is flimsy and unreal, it is Satan's worse curse! Revivalists are

often like the locusts. Before them, it may not be quite an Eden, but certainly, behind them, it is a desert when the excitement is over. I like rather to see the Word so preached that men are brought under its power by the force of the Truth, itself, and not by excitement—by the Truth of God being laid down in so clear a manner as to enlighten the judgment, rather than by perpetual appeals to the passions, which ultimately wear out the sinews of mental vigor and make men more dull in religion than they were before.

Beware, I pray you, of getting the mere religion of poetry, enthusiasm and rhapsody. Many profess Christ and think to follow Him without counting the cost They fancy the road to Heaven is all smooth, forgetting that the way is rough and that there are many foes. They set out, like Mr. Pliable, for the Celestial City, but they stumble into the first bog and then they say that if they can but get out on the side nearest to their own house, Christian may have the brave country all to himself for them! Oh, the many we have seen, at divers times, that seemed to run well, but they ran in the strength of the flesh and in the mists of ignorance! They had never sought God's strength. They had never been emptied of their own works and their own conceits and, consequently, in their best estate they were vanity! They were like the snail that melts as it crawls—not like the snowflake upon the Alps which gathers strength in its descent till it becomes a ponderous avalanche! God make you to be not meteors, but stars fixed in their place! I want you to resemble not the *ignis fatuus* of the morass, but the steady beacon on the rock! There is a phosphorescence that creeps over the summer sea, but who is ever lighted by it to the port of peace? And there is a phosphorescence which comes over some men's minds—very bright, it seems, but it is of no value—it brings no man to Heaven.

Be as hasty as John Mark, if it is a sound haste, but take care that it is not a spasm of excitement—a mere fit—otherwise, when the fit is over, you will go back to your old haunts and your old habits with shame. You will be like Saul among the Prophets one day and hating the anointed king the next! So much, so earnestly would I warn you against hasty followings of Christ!

II. It only remains for me to notice briefly THE HASTY RUNNING AWAY.

I do not know that the persons who are readiest to run away are always those who were the fastest to make their profession. I am inclined to think not. But some who do run well at first, have hardly breath enough to keep the pace up and so turn aside for a little comfortable ease—and do not get into the road again. Such are not genuine Christians—they are only men-made, self-made Christians—and these self-made Christians never hold on, and never *can* hold on because time wears them out and they turn back to their formed state.

There are two kinds of desertion which we denounce as *hasty running away—the one temporary,* the other *final.* To the members of the Church, let me speak upon the former. My dear Brothers and Sisters, especially you who are young in years and have lately been added to our number, I

pray you watch against temporary running away from the Truth of Christ. Think what a fool Mark made of himself. Here he comes. Here is your hero. What wonders he is going to do! Here is a Samson for you. Perhaps he will slay his thousand men. But no, he runs away before he strikes a single blow. He has not even courage enough to be taken prisoner and to be dragged away with Christ to the judgment seat and bear a patient witness there! He turns tail at once and away he flies! How simple he looked! How everybody in the crowd must have laughed at the venturesome coward—the dastardly bravo! And what a fool will you seem if, after uniting yourself with the Church and seeming to be a servant of God, you shall give way under temptation! Some young man in the same shop laughs at you and says, "Aha, aha, you are baptized, I hear!" And you tremble, like Peter, under the questioning of the little maid, or your employer sees something wrong and he makes some rough remark to you, "Well, this is a fine thing for a Christian soldier!" Cannot you face the enemy for the first time? "If you have run with the footmen and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein you trusted, they wearied you, then how will you do in the swelling of Jordan?"

A religion that cannot stand a little laughter must be a very rotten one. We know some people whose religion is on so unsound a basis—whose profession is so hollow and whose position is so shaky—that they make a great noise when we touch them! Their system is of human construction and rotten—and they know it—therefore are they angry if we do but allude to it! Were it sound and good, then whatever we might say would never frighten them. But, Sirs, how many who have made a fair show in the flesh have been personally and individually tried and found wanting? "Tekel" has been written on the wall concerning them! Their first setting out was hasty and they have been turned aside through a little laughter.

Do you not see, dear Friends, that this will always render you very untrustworthy? If you shrink in this way, the Church will never trust you. I hope you will be a leader in God's Israel one day, young man. We are looking to you, if not to be a preacher, yet to be a Church officer one day. But who will ever ask you to do anything when you cannot keep steadfast and hold your own position? He who has not Grace enough to prevent his running away in the time of tribulation is not at all likely to be made a leader of God's host. The Church will retain you, as it retained Mark, but it will always look upon you with a sort of suspicion. We shall always say, "Where is So-and-So? We know where he was yesterday, but where is he today?" Therefore, abstain from these inconsistencies for your own character's sake.

Besides, how much damage you do the church with which you are connected! All the persecutors and infidels outside the church's walls can never harm us so much as inconsistent people inside. "Ah," they say, "there is one of the people who go to the Prayer Meeting," when they see a man in the pot-house who sits at the Communion Table. "Ah, there is one of your religious people! He can cheat as well as anybody else. He knows how to thumb the yard measure. He knows how to give short

weight! He knows how to promise to pay on a certain day and then get into the Bankruptcy Court! The servants of Christ are no better than other people. They make a great fuss about their purity, but see what they will do!"

And then see what harm this will do to Christ's Church, itself. How many who love God will sit down and weep when they see such inconsistencies in you! Good captains can endure wounds—they can even bear defeat—but they cannot bear to see cowardice on the part of their troops. They cannot bear to see their men running away. If "the men of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turn back in the day of battle," then their leader weeps, for the glorious Cross of Christ is dishonored, the escutcheon is sullied and the banner is trailed in the mud! May the Lord so keep us that our garments shall be always white. That though before God we may have many sins to confess, we may stand like Job and say, "Lord, You know that I am not wicked." May your testimony be so clear concerning the religion of Christ that those who watch for your stumbling and who hate you with a perfect hatred may, nevertheless, find nothing against you, but may be constrained to say, "These are the servants of the living God and they serve Him, indeed, and of a truth."

I urge you not to flee or to flinch. Some of us have had much lying and slander to bear in our time, but are we a whit the worse? No, and if we had to choose whether we would bear it again, would we not do so? We may have had to be laughed at and caricatured, but all that breaks no bones and should not make a brave man wince! Who can be afraid or alarmed when his war cry is, "The Lord of Hosts," and when the banner of God's own Truth waves over his head? Be of good courage, my Brothers and Sisters, and you shall yet win the victory! In the world you shall have tribulation, but in Christ you shall have peace! Value the Holy Spirit above all things. Realize your entire dependence upon Him. Pray for fresh Grace. Venture not into the world without a fresh store of His hallowed influence. Live in the Divine Love. Seek to be filled with that blessed Spirit and then, my Brothers and Sisters, even if the strong man armed shall lay hold of you, you will not flee away—shame shall not overtake you, dismay shall not frighten your souls—and you shall stand in unblemished integrity to the end as the true servants of Jesus Christ!

And now, in concluding, *what am I to say of a final apostasy?* None of God's people ever pursue their wanderings to this terrible issue! No vessel of mercy was ever finally wrecked! No elect souls can run to this fatal length of wickedness! But there are many in the visible church who do draw back to Perdition. Many who profess to belong to Christ are branches that bear no fruit and, therefore, are cut off and cast into the fire! That may be the condition of some here present. It may be the lot of some of you who "have a name to live, and are dead." Let me plead with you. Oh, what a dreadful thing it will be if you apostatize after all! Shall I live to see you go back into the world? I would sooner bury you! Shall I live to see some of you who have professed to find the Lord under my ministry, at last sinning with a high hand and an outstretched arm—and

living worse than you did before? God spare us this evil thing! Let Him chastise His servant in any way He thinks fit but, O Lord, if possible, let not this be the rod—to see professors become false!

Remember that if you do apostatize, you have increased your guilt by the profession you have made—and impressed your character with a more terrible defilement! When the unclean spirit went out of the man and afterwards returned, he brought with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself. And they entered in and dwelt there—and the last state of that man was worse than the first! It would have been better for you never to have known the way of righteousness than having known it, to turn aside to those crooked paths. Think what the dying bed of an apostate must be. Did you ever read "The Groans of Spira?" That was a book, circulated about the time of the Reformation—a book so terrible that even a man of iron could scarcely read it. Spira knew the Gospel, but yet went back to the Church of Rome. His conscience awoke on his dying bed and his cries and shrieks were too terrible to be endured by his nurses! And as to his language—it was despair written out at full length in capital letters! My eminent predecessor, Mr. Benjamin Keach, published a like narrative of the death of John Child, who became a minister of the Gospel, but afterwards went back to the church from which he had seceded—and died in the most frightful despair. May God keep you from the deathbed of any man who has lived as a professing Christian, yet who dies an apostate from the faith!

But what must be the apostate's doom when his naked soul goes before God? How can he bear that awful sentence, "Depart, you cursed one; you have rejected Me, and I reject you; you have departed from Me—I also have cast you away forever and will not have mercy upon you"? What will be this poor wretch's shame at the Last Great Day when, before the assembled multitudes, the apostate shall be unmasked? I think I see the profane and open sinners who never professed religion, lifting themselves up from their beds of fire to point at him. "There he is," says one, "will he preach the Gospel in Hell?" "There he is," says another, "he rebuked me for cursing, yet he was a hypocrite himself." "Aha," says another, "here comes a Psalm-singing Methodist, one who was always at his meetings! He is the man who boasted of his religion, yet here he is!" No greater eagerness will ever be seen among Satanic tormentors than in that day when devils drag the hypocrite's soul and the apostate's spirit down to Hell! Bunyan pictures this with massive but awful grandeur of poetry when he speaks of the back way to Hell. The devils were binding a man with nine cords and were taking him from the road to Heaven—in which he had professed to walk—and thrust him through the back door of Hell. Mind that back way to Hell, professors! You professors of religion who have been in the church for years, "examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith." Examine yourselves, whether you are deceived. Look well to your state. See whether you are really in Christ, or not. It is the easiest thing in the world to give a lenient verdict when you, yourself, are to be tried! But oh, I implore you, be just and true here! Be just to all, but be especially rigorous in judging yourself. Remember, if it is not a

rock on which you build, your house will fall and great will be the fall of it! Oh, may the Lord give you sincerity, constancy and firmness—and in no day, however evil, may you be tempted to turn aside! Rather, may you hold fast by God and His Truth—by Christ and His Cross, come what may!

My soul longs, however many years God may spare me to walk in and out among you, to find you as earnest for God, and as loving towards Christ as you are this day. I glory in you among all the churches. God has given you the spirit of faith and prayer, of earnest zeal and a sound mind. Unto Him be the Glory! But, as a Church, do not backslide. Let not our fervor diminish! Let not our zeal die out! Let us love one another more tenderly than ever. Let us cling fast to one another. Let us not be divided! Let no root of bitterness springing up trouble us. Firm and steadfast, shoulder to shoulder, like a phalanx of old, let us stand fast and so repel the foe and win the kingdom for Jesus Christ our Lord! "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the Presence of His Glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be Glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

PUBLISHERS' NOTE: No Exposition of the passage of Scripture read by Mr. Spurgeon before he preached the foregoing Sermon appears to have been preserved and the subject on which he spoke was so unusual that no other Exposition would have been appropriate to accompany it. As the preacher, in his introduction, referred to various portions of the New Testament where allusion is made to Mark or Marcus, it has been deemed advisable to reprint all the references to John Mark, so that readers may examine them in the light of Mr. Spurgeon's message. Under the circumstances, they are printed without note or comment—

Acts 12:11-25. *And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying. And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in and told how Peter stood before the gate. And they said unto her, You are mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel. But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished. But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go show these things unto James and the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place. Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judaea to Caesarea, and there abode. And Herod*

was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him and, having made Blastus, the king's chamberlain, their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country. And upon a set day Herod arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man! And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. But the Word of God grew and multiplied. And Barnabus and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

Acts 13:5. *And when they were at Salamis, they preached the Word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John as their minister.*

Acts 13:13. *Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphilia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.*

Acts 15:35-41. *Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the Word of the Lord, with many others also. And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Parmphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the Grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.*

Colossians 4:10-11. *Aristarchus my fellow prisoner salutes you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom you received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him) and Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellow workers unto the Kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.*

2 Timothy 4:11. *Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with you: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.*

Philemon 23, 24. *There salute you Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus; Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow laborers.*

1 Peter 5:13. *The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, salutes you; and so does Marcus my son.*

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

CHRIST'S DEATH AND OURS
NO. 3024

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 24, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 14, 1869.

"And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone: but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit." John 12:23-24.

CERTAIN Greeks desired to "see Jesus." They informed Philip of their desire, Philip consulted with Andrew and the two disciples together informed their Master of what seemed to them to be a very important matter. As wise men from the East once came to see Jesus, so now would these Gentiles from the West do the same! Probably Philip and Andrew expected that Christ would display His miraculous power before the eyes of these enquirers, but our Lord, instead of going on from His triumphal procession and the hosannas of the multitude to something outwardly grander, began at once to speak about a glorification far other than either His disciples or these Greeks desired—a glorification which was to follow upon death and burial!

Is it not very noteworthy how our Lord's mind was always dominated by the anticipation of that Baptism of His, that immersion in grief and suffering, that decease which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem? This was the main thought of His whole life and nothing could make Him forget it. In His heaviest moments of trial and in His brightest moments of joy, His heart was equally at the Cross—He was longing to complete His atoning Sacrifice for the salvation of His people. O brave, loving heart of Christ, so firmly fixed in love, so resolute to be pierced for the Beloved—we admire and love You in return!

Surely *we* make too little of our Redeemer's death. I fear that even we, who preach most concerning it, dwell too little upon it. That we who pray, plead it too little. That we who sing, praise our Lord too little for His wondrous death and that we who live upon His Grace, yet think too little of the channel by which it flows to us! Christ's death is *His* Glory and it ought also to be ours. All other topics in Holy Scripture are important and none of them are to be cast into the shade, but the death of the Son of God is the central sun of all these minor luminaries! It is the great Alpha and Omega, the first and the last! It is not only eminent, it is preeminent with us. I could almost wish that we had broken every other string of our soul's harp but that which resounds the music of His Love. Silence, you other voices, and let the voice of His blood be heard in our souls! If we were bound down to this one subject—chained to it and

never allowed to take another, but compelled simply to stand and incessantly cry, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world"—it would be an enlargement, rather than a narrowing of our ministry! Here is a theme fit for seraphs! Yes, "Michael the archangel" might find this subject too vast even for his exalted intellect. While we are musing on this text, no other topic shall intrude. Our mottoes shall be, "All for Jesus," and, "None but Jesus." May the blessed Comforter, whose work it is to glorify Christ and to take of that which belongs to Him and apply it to us, give us the power of Christ's death in our hearts!

The verses on which we are to meditate speak of two things—first, *Christ's view of His death and,* secondly, *Christ's view of the necessity and the results of that death.*

I. First, we are to consider CHRIST'S VIEW OF HIS DEATH. He says, "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified."

Now, I freely grant that this passage may refer to Christ's glorification in His Resurrection, in His Ascension and in all His triumph beyond the skies, but, from its connection with the allusion to the grain of wheat, which is cast into the ground to die, it is clear that our Lord was mainly thinking of His death and that He spoke of it as being, in a certain sense, the hour of His Glory. Certainly, to spiritual eyes, the Christ of God was never more glorious than when He was nailed to the Cross of Calvary—not even yonder where the lamps of Heaven glow with supernal splendor, where the harps of angels pour forth matchless music and where Christ, Himself, sits upon the Throne of the Highest, "King of kings, and Lord of lords." A Glory never equaled shone around the Conqueror of death and Hell when He bowed His head and said, "It is finished," and gave up the ghost!

Mark well that Christ said that, "the *Son of Man* should be glorified"—not the *Son of God*—for He was speaking here concerning His human nature. This teaches us that *Christ, as Man, was glorified by enduring bravely, patiently and to the end, what no other man has ever borne.* Without a murmur, He willingly endured all the agony and ignominy that were heaped upon Him. He marched boldly through the tremendous deeps of physical, mental and spiritual suffering which the Atonement demanded. It may be that in some of His bodily pangs, our Lord's anguish has been equaled by that endured by some of the martyrs, yet I greatly question whether that has ever been the case. Rather do I believe that His peculiarly sensitive body which had never lost any of its delicacy of tone through indulgence or impurity, and which was originally of the finest mold, seeing that He was "that Holy Thing" which was born of Mary through the overshadowing power of the Highest—for these reasons it appears to me that Christ may have borne physical pains such as, in their intensity, have not been known by any other son of man! But as for His mental and spiritual griefs, they were an unknown abyss—who can measure or conceive what His holy soul endured? Hart's lines, though very strong in expression, do not go beyond the Truth of God even when he says that Christ, in Gethsemane—

"Bore all Incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, and none to spare."

Yet how gloriously He endured it all even to the bitter end! The gold was tried in the furnace, but no dross was discovered. Mightier than Atlas, Christ bore a world of grief upon His shoulders and yet He neither staggered under it, nor cast off the lead. He went to prison and to death—and all through His way of woe, His mighty soul was strong within Him. And He died triumphing over all! He was unconquered and unconquerable unto the last! Crown Him, O you daughters of Jerusalem, as the King of Sufferers, most mighty to suffer and to save! With His garments all red from the winepress, adore Him as having alone sustained the fury of His adversaries!

Remember, too, that Christ won, on the Cross, the glory of being the fully obedient One. "Being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." It is a great glory to a servant of God to be, through Divine Grace, sincerely obedient to His Lord. But it would be a greater honor if he could be *perfectly* obedient. Upon our Lord, who had voluntarily taken the place of a Servant for us, the petition of His service casts the highest honor. After having, in all points, kept the Law perfectly by His active obedience, He crowned His life's service by His passive obedience and was glorious, indeed, when He went to "the end of the Law for righteousness." First-born of many brethren are You, O You glorious Son of Man, made perfect in Your obedience in order that You might be the Captain of our salvation and bring many sons unto Glory!

Further, *Christ was glorified on the Cross by achieving what no one else could have achieved.* How often do we set forth the Truth of God, which is always fresh and delightful to Believers, that Christ Jesus, on the tree, took all the sins of all who believe in Him—took them to Himself, literally, and carried them as though they had been His own—and suffered for those sins upon the Cross, all that ought to have been suffered by us on account of those sins, enduring that which His Father accepted as an equivalent for all the agony which ought to have been endured by us because of those iniquities? We believe, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, in the literal Substitution of Christ for His people. Christ stood in the Sinner's place and suffered what was due to the Sinner—even the curse of God and the wrath of God! And now He has so suffered for sinners that those for whom He died can have no sin laid to their charge so as to involve them in punishment, since it is a maxim of all courts of justice that the law cannot first punish the substitute—and then punish those in whose place he stood. Every honest man admits that a debt, once paid, is settled forever. So, as Christ paid the debt that His people owed to Infinite Justice, it is forever blotted out and our obligations to Divine Justice are obliterated! This is the joy of joys! This is the Doctrine that makes the Gospel to be God's good news to guilty sinners! This is the glorious Truth of God that sets the bells of Heaven ringing with their loudest and their sweetest music—that Christ has made the sin of His people to cease to be! Thus is fulfilled that ancient prophecy, "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."

The work of Messiah the Prince is "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." And this work was fully accomplished when "this Man, after He had offered one Sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God." O Beloved, herein is bliss, indeed, for us if He did really die for us! Your question and mine must be this, "Did Christ die for *me*?" To answer that, I must ask, "Am I trusting in Him?" If I am, then He did die for me and all my sins are gone because He was punished in my place. My demerit was imputed to Him and He died to put it away. And now His merit is reckoned as my merit! A wonderful transfer has been made by means of the death of Christ—He has taken all the consequences of our guilt and borne them all—and ended them forever! So was He not, indeed, glorified in His death? And you, Believer, may sing this sweet song, on earth and in Heaven, too—

"In my Surety I am free,
His dear hands were pierced for me!
With His spotless vesture on
Holy as the Holy One.
Oh the heights and depths of Grace!
Shining with meridian blaze—
Here the sacred records show
Sinners black, but comely too."

But we must not forgot that *Christ was glorified in His death, officially, as our great High Priest.* He stood alone in that dark hour as the true High Priest presenting the one perfect Sacrifice unto God. All other high priests had been but types of Christ, the great Anti-type. They had, once a year, though "not without blood," passed under the embroidered veil which hid the Holy of Holies from other eyes. But in that dread hour of darkness on Calvary, Christ, the true High Priest, offered up Himself as the Propitiatory Sacrifice which alone could put away His people's sins. And then, through the torn veil, that is to say, His body—His soul passed up into the Presence of God and there His blood still pleads for His people, speaking better things than that of Abel! Begone all you gorgeous ceremonies of Aaron and his sons, like stars that hide their light when the sun itself appears! Christ, the Great High Priest, is the only one that His Church needs! You may banish your many-colored robes. You may put away your precious miters. You may lay aside your bespangled breastplate, for Christ alone wears the robe, the miter and the breastplate of the true High Priest before God! And He stands gloriously accepted through His unique Sacrifice. From now on let it be known, throughout the whole earth, that there is no other sacrificing priest but the living Christ, and there is no other sacrifice but the Sacrifice which He has once and for all offered—and which still avails for all who trust in it! His precious blood—

"Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Is saved to sin no more."

Thus have I shown you that even on the Cross, Christ was glorified. Yet this declaration of His may also refer to that which followed His death. It is indeed so closely linked and intertwisted with His passion and Crucifixion that it would be wrong to separate it from them—yet we must never forgot that He who died and was put into the grave—also rose again! It was His Glory that by His own almighty power, He arose, "the first-born from the dead." After forty days He ascended unto the Father and angels welcomed Him as He returned triumphantly to Heaven. Our faith can almost hear the lingering notes of that wonderful song of His angelic escort, "Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be lift up, you everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in." Glorious was His welcome by the spirits bought with blood who were already before the Throne of God! And truly glorious was He as He sat down at the right hand of the Father. See the Son of Mary exalted to sit at the right hand of the Father! Man like ourselves, yet glorified in Being made to reign there with His Father! He had always been there as God, but now He is there, also, as Man, crowned with glory and honor, and made to have dominion over all the works of God's hands! The very Man who was once the Baby in Bethlehem and then the Carpenter of Nazareth and afterwards the Murdered One of Calvary, is now so highly exalted that at His name, which is above every name, every knee shall bow, "of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father!"

It strikes me that our Lord also meant, by making this statement in connection with the visit of these Greeks to Him, *to teach us that after His death He would be glorified among all the nations of mankind.* That although in His earthly ministry, He was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet, after His death the Gospel should be preached in His name to all nations—and out of all nations a people should be gathered who would praise His name forever and ever! Even at the present time it is no small Glory to Christ, who was nailed to the Cross of Calvary, that His name is reverenced over a great part of the earth—even by nations whose ancestors were strangers to it—and that His name is the foundation of every true morning prayer and every holy evening song! "His name shall endure forever" and His Gospel shall extend its saving and sanctifying power from realm to realm till He comes again, "in His Glory, and all the holy angels with Him," to glorify His saints with Himself forever and ever!

I have spoken at this length upon what our Lord said concerning His death as the means of glorifying Him, for I am anxious that we should not think lightly of that of which He thought so highly!

II. The few minutes that remain must be devoted to the second part of the text which concerns THE NECESSITY AND RESULTS OF CHRIST'S DEATH.

Our Lord seems to say that it *was absolutely necessary that He should die*—that even His perfect life would have been of no use to us if He had not died. He says, "Except a corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone." So you see, Brothers and Sisters, that if Christ, after

having come to this earth as He did, had not died, He would, as far as mankind is concerned, have had to abide in Heaven alone. As God, the word, *"alone,"* would have had no reference, for the holy angels, as well as His Father and the ever-blessed Spirit would always have been near Him. But if our Lord could have come here and then have gone back to Heaven without dying, it would not have been possible for any other man to ever have gone to Heaven—and Christ would have been the only Man in the whole of that land of joy! It is dreadful even to think of such a thing as that! If that could have happened, where must all the saints of God and all mankind have gone? There is but one other region—the land of darkness and of death, the land of pain, of horror and of unutterable woe. And we must *all* have gone *there* if Christ had not died upon the Cross—not only the thief on the left hand of Christ, but the thief on His right hand, too—not only Judas, but Peter, John and all the Apostles—not only Demas, but Paul, Silas and all the early Christians—not only Ahithophel, but David, also—not only the unrighteous, but the righteous, too—all! *All!* ALL, having sinned, would have been condemned to eternal wrath if Jesus had not died! Ah, but it was not possible for the Son of Man, who was also the Son of God, to be alone in Heaven! He could not be content to be there alone. He left His Father's side in Glory, in order that He might become the Son of Man! And then, after He had once taken our human Nature into union with His Divine Nature, He could not go back to Heaven to live there in solitude, without another man to bear Him company! We cannot conceive of the First-Born without a brotherhood, the Head without a body, the Savior with no saved ones to sing His praises, the Shepherd without sheep, the King without subjects! No, this could not be and, therefore, it was absolutely necessary that Christ should die!

It was a most suggestive and suitable figure which Christ used—that a corn of wheat must be put into the ground and die, or it cannot produce its like. Our language and all languages, when they speak of such lofty themes as life and death, become very much like a skein of silk that is all in a tangle—and we must never talk lightly concerning these supreme Truths of God. I believe that half the disputes about that very important matter of eternal punishment—concerning which some think that the Scriptures favor the view of a limited period to the punishment—arise because those who hold that view do not observe that there is a vast difference between mere existence and life and, an even greater difference between death and annihilation. If a grain of wheat were really to die, it would not bring forth any fruit. When the maltster has passed the corn through the various processes which end with kiln-drying, it is really dead. And if you were to plant it, it would never bring forth fruit. That is a very different kind of death from that which takes place when the seed is cast into the ground—there it dies in quite another sense, that is to say, it rots—the matter of the corn dissolves and furnishes the first soil for the little minute of life to feed upon, for the grain of wheat is not all life, there is a life-germ inside it. The grain of "corn or wheat" must be broken up and be resolved into its primary elements or else it cannot

bring forth fruit. [In *C. H. Spurgeon's Autobiography,* Vol. III, pages 194-6, there are further explanations of this subject, including the definition of death given by Mr. Spurgeon to Mr. Ruskin, who said, "That is the most extraordinary definition of death that I ever heard, but it is true."]

So, our Lord Jesus Christ had to die and to be buried in the grave, as the seed-corn is put into the ground, and there He had to be resolved, as it were, into His primary elements—the soul to be for a while separated from the body, and the Deity from the Humanity. Without this death there could have been no fruit-bearing to spring out of Him. But when He had passed through this experience of death, then there sprang up out of the dead Christ—dead after that fashion—abundant fruit! Nobody can tell you why it is that if a single grain of wheat is put into the ground, it may bring forth a hundredfold. Why should it so multiply itself? That is a great mystery, but it is a solid fact—and it is a blessed mystery of faith that, as Jesus Christ died, all who put their trust in Him are the "much fruit" springing up from His death! It is because He died on the tree that Believers are to live with Him forever. I have not time to go fully into that subject now, but you all know that if Christ had not died, we would all still be under the curse. If Jesus had not died, we would have been condemned at the bar of God. If Jesus had not died, there would have been no way of approach for us to God. We could not, as Believers, have had any existence at all except through His death! And now, through the preaching of His death, and the hearing of the message by the ear of faith through the effectual working of the Holy Spirit, we are made alive unto God and so become "fruit" to the praise of the Savior who died on the Cross of Calvary!

Brothers, if we want to have fruit in our ministry—if we want to see sinners converted—we must preach up Christ's death! As the blacksmith strikes the hot iron upon the anvil, we must keep the hammer of the Gospel at work upon this great foundation Truth of God, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." It is no talking to men upon other topics in the hope that it will lead to their conversion. The great soul-quickening agency is, "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Whoever will come and trust in the God-appointed Substitute for sinners shall be eternally saved, for life comes only through His death! The salvation of sinners is not even by preaching the great and glorious Truth of Christ's Second Advent, nor by preaching about Christ's millennial and eternal Glory, but by incessantly pointing to Christ lifted up upon the Cross! There is the grain of wheat that put into the ground brings forth much fruit—and we must keep to that theme beyond all others! You who try to talk to the unconverted must do this if you wish to see them find real, lasting peace, and enter into true Christian liberty. You must say, with Charles Wesley—

"His only righteousness I show,
His saving Truth proclaim!
'Tis all my business here below
To cry, 'Behold the Lamb!'"

I must close, Brothers and Sisters, with this reflection. You and I want to bring forth fruit unto God. We want to save souls. Then we must do

what Christ did, though in another sense. That is to say, *we must fall into the ground and die*. Did you ever see a minister who was such a gentleman that he did not know his people, and never shook hands with them in his life—one who was only anxious to show them what a dignified individual an ordained minister is? Well, such a man as that is like a grain of wheat put into a golden shrine to be admired. But, possibly, you know another man—he may be a city missionary—and he goes right down into the midst of the sin and misery of those whom he seeks to win for Christ, looking at everything from their point of view. And often it is a difficult task for him, yet he will do it. He lays aside everything in which he is their superior, speaks so that they can understand him, and brings the Gospel right down to their level. That man will win souls for the Savior because he is not a grain of wheat laid on a marble shelf, but he is dropped into the ground! And the more that man will spend himself for his Master—work himself to death, break up his constitution—kill himself, as it were, in his Master's service—the more likely is he to bring forth "much fruit" unto God. I do not believe you can do much good without having a great deal taken out of yourselves. And when men are so very particular and careful about themselves and will only serve God if it does not cost them anything, I believe that no earthly good can come of that. The man whom God will greatly bless must be willing, in this sense, to fall into the ground and die!

In persecuting times, the Christian has often had to literally give himself up to die, but, instead of the cause of Christ being injured by his death, he has, in that way, brought forth the "much fruit." There have been no other such fruitful preachers of the Gospel as those who suffered at the stakes of Smithfield or died upon the rack. If you would be the means of saving others, you must make no reserve for yourself, but imitate your Master, of whom His enemies tauntingly but truly said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." I ask you, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, to resolve, by God's strength, that there is nothing you will not do and nothing you will not give for Him who loved you so well that He gave all He had to save you! Seek, by every means that you can use, to win souls for Christ! The man who must have conversions, or he will die, will have them! The woman who feels that she must bring her class to Christ and will never rest till she does, will bring them to Christ! The Lord help us so to preach Christ and so to live for Christ and, if necessary, so to die for Christ, that we may bring forth fruit unto God—"some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold." Amen.

PUBLISHERS' NOTE:

A very considerable portion of this Sermon was revised by Mr. Spurgeon in readiness for publication. The topic— "Christ's Death and Ours"—is peculiarly appropriate to *the 15th anniversary of the beloved preacher's last days upon earth.* [He died January 31, 1892.] But the subject of the next Sermon, which is to be published on *January 31st—the exact anniversary of the date of his Home-going*—is still more suitable.

The text is, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." And the title of the Sermon is to be, "Fifteen Years After!" to remind all readers that although the preacher's voice has not been heard in this world for the past 15 years, yet, like the martyred Abel, "He being dead yet speaks," and, as Dr. Newman Hall truly said, "as he yet speaks, he is not *dead."*

It is also a somewhat remarkable fact that the Sermon to be issued next week was preached on *Thursday evening, February 11th,* 1869, *exactly 23 years to the very day, before the funeral service at the Tabernacle,* the long procession from Newington to Norwood, and the interment in the cemetery there in the presence of an enormous concourse of sympathizing spectators.

Regular readers of the Sermons will remember that similar coincidences were pointed out at the time of Mr. Spurgeon's Home-going, when, without any human pre-arrangement, the Sermons intended for reading on the four Sabbaths in February, 1892, were as follows—No. 2242, Volume 38—GOD'S WILL ABOUT THE FUTURE; No. 2243, Volume 38— HIS OWN FUNERAL SERMON; No. 2244, Volume 38—MEMBERS OF CHRIST and No. 2245, Volume 38—"LIVING, LOVING, LASTING UNION'—the four discourses concerning the Home-going of Deacon William Olney.

—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 12:12-36.

Verses 12-15. *On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet Him, and cried, Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel that comes in the name of the Lord. And Jesus, when He had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Zion, behold, your King comes, sitting on an ass's colt.* Even in the little glory of a temporal kind, which was given to the Lord Jesus Christ when He was "here among men" as Mrs. Luke's hymn puts it, His humility and meekness were very manifest, thus fulfilling the prophecy recorded in Zechariah 9:9—"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, your King comes unto you; He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass." Oh, that all His people would always be of such a lowly spirit, not seeking great things for themselves, but condescending to men of low estate, remembering that it was their Master who said to His disciples, "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."

16. *These things understood not His disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things unto Him.* I wonder whether, when Christ comes back to earth, in the Glory of His Father with the holy

angels, we also shall not understand a great many things which are complete mysteries to us now. Perhaps it will be said of us, then, "These things understood not His disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things unto Him." That first Glory of His Ascension to Heaven shed a flood of light upon the life of Christ, as doubtless the greater Glory of His Second Advent will shed a yet brighter light upon our understanding of the things of Christ which quite surpass our comprehension now.

17-19. *The people therefore that were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. For this cause the people also met Him, for that they heard that He had done this miracle. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive you how we prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after Him.* No doubt many of His disciples thought so, too, yet how mistaken were both the friends and the foes of Christ, for you recollect, Brothers and Sisters, that Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem was followed, within less than a week, by a far different scene—when the same crowd that cried, "Hosanna!" shouted, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" The world that was supposed to have gone after Him, nailed Him to the Cross, so short-lived is human popularity. So short-lived, also, is the admiration of Christ by carnal minds, for they do admire Him after a fashion, they cannot help doing so! There have been written lives of Christ which have been full of admiration of Him, yet equally full of opposition to His Deity. We must not always regard it as an encouraging sign when men praise Christ for very soon, if the root of the matter is not in them and they do not accept Him as their Lord and Master, they will change their note and instead of, "Hosanna!" it will be, "Away with Him, crucify Him!"

20, 21. *And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired Him, saying, Sir we would see Jesus.* I do not know why these Greeks went to Philip, who was of Bethsaida of Galilee, unless it was because he had a Greek name. Yet Andrew and Peter also had Greek names. If I went to Paris and wanted to see the President, and knew that there was somebody in the cabinet who had an English name, I would probably say, "Well, either he is an Englishman, or he comes of English parentage, so he may take an interest in me and get me the introduction I want." Perhaps that was the reason why these Greeks came to Philip. I cannot think of any other, but I know that if you want to get to Christ, you will always find some way of doing it—and that the reason why so many people do not get to Him is because they do not want to! You may all come to Jesus Christ if you will. But, alas, until His Grace controls it and changes it, your will inclines you to go still further away from Christ rather than to come to Him.

22. *Philip came and told Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip told Jesus.* Andrew and Philip appear to have been staunch friends and fellow laborers—and it is always well when Christian men can work for Christ

with congenial companions. My poor perplexed Brother, if you cannot get to Jesus Christ by yourself, it will be a good thing for you to say to some Philip, "Sir, I would see Jesus." Perhaps Philip will tell his friend, Andrew, and then Philip and Andrew will go together and tell Jesus, and so you will get to Him! It is a great help in prayer, when you are yourself unable to pray, to get someone whom you know to be a Christian, and who has sympathy with you, to come and pray with you.

23, 24. *And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily*—"Amen, amen."

24, 25. *I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone: but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit. He that loves His life shall lose it.* Or, as it should be rendered, "He that loves his life loses it." That is not the true way to live—and in his selfish attempt to live to himself, he is losing his life.

25, 26. *And he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serves Me, let him follow Me.* The best service you can render to Christ is to imitate Him. If you want to do what will please Him—do as He did!

26. *And where I am, there shall also My servant be.* You cannot expect better lodgings than that! So, as Christ had to live here amid sorrow, sin and shame, you must be willing to do the same. But, as Christ was afterwards exalted to indescribable honor, so shall it be with you if you are His true servant!

26. *If any man serves Me, My Father will honor him.* For such is the Father's love to His Son, that He delights to honor all those who become His Son's faithful servants!

27. *Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.* There was a conflict in the Savior's heart—the weakness of His true Manhood—striving with the strength of His Infinite affection to His people, and also to His Father. We must never forget that "He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." If it had been no pain to Him to die as the Substitute for sinners, there would have been no atoning Sacrifice in His death. And if no dread had overtaken Him at the thought of death, it would have proved that He did not die as we do and, therefore, He would not have been able to take our place as He did. Notice how the Savior speaks of the struggle that was going on in His soul. "What shall I say?" Do you ever have to ask that question when you are trying to pray? If so, do not be astonished, for even your Lord and Master said the same. "What shall I say?"—as if He paused to consider what form His prayer should take—"shall I say, Father save Me from this hour? No, but I will say, For this cause came I unto this hour."

28. *Father, glorify Your name.* That is a grand answer to the Savior's question, "What shall I say?" And when you do not know how to pray, you may always present that petition, "Father, glorify Your name." You have some dear one at home very ill—you would be glad if the precious life might be spared, yet you are not sure whether you may ask for it. Well then, say, "Father, glorify Your name." Possibly you are passing

through a great trial and you would be glad to escape from it—yet you do not know whether it is the Divine will that you should do so. Well then, you may, at any rate, put up this prayer, "Father, glorify Your name. Whatever is most for Your Glory, let that be my will as it is Your will."

28 *Then came there a voice from Heaven.* An *audible* voice, for those who stood by could hear it—"There came a voice from Heaven."

28-30. *Saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered. Others said, An angel spoke to Him. Jesus answered and said, This Voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes.* "You needed to be strengthened as to the Divine Character and authority of My mission. You required to be comforted with the full assurance that I shall, indeed, be glorifying My Father even when I die upon the Cross of Calvary."

31. *Now is the judgment of this world.* This is a wonderful sentence—as if, in Christ's death, the world was judged and condemned! And so it was. Nothing ever so convicted the world of high treason against God as when men said of the Lord Jesus Christ, God's well-beloved Son, "This is the Heir. Come, let us kill Him, and the inheritance shall be ours." The shedding of the blood of Christ upon the Cross is the crimson evidence of the deep transgression of human nature! "Now is the judgment of this world." There is another rendering of this text, retaining the Greek word, "Now is the *crisis* of this world." [*See Sermon No. 2338, Volume 39—THE CRISIS OF THIS WORLD —Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.*]

31. *Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.* Thank God for that! His throne was shaken to its fall when Christ died on Calvary. All the powers of darkness suffered eternal defeat in the hour that men and devils fancied they had gained the victory.

32, 33. *And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die.* Yet they did not understand it, even then, clear as it now appears to us that He spoke concerning His lifting up upon the Cross.

34-36. *The people answered Him, We have heard out of the Law that Christ abides forever: and how say You, The Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walks in darkness knows not where he goes. While you have light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light. These things spoke Jesus, and departed, and did hide Himself from them.*

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

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

FIFTEEN YEARS AFTER!
NO. 3025

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY FIRST, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 11, 1869.

[This title has been selected in order to call special attention to the fact that the Sermon is published exactly 15 years after the beloved preacher was "called Home" on January 31st, 1892. The subject is as singularly appropriate to the anniversary of that never-to-be-forgotten period as the Sermons which were issued at the time of Mr. Spurgeon's death and funeral—Sermons No. 2242, (All Volume 38)—GOD'S WILL ABOUT THE FUTURE; No. 2243, HIS OWN FUNERAL SERMON; No. 2244, MEMBERS OF CHRIST and No. 2245, "LIVING, LOVING, LASTING UNION"—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

"The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away;
blessed be the name of the LORD."
Job 1:21.

OR, as some read it, "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away; blessed be the name of the Lord." So that the text is not only concerning the past, but it may rightly be considered as relating also to the present. Some of the rarest pearls have been found in the deepest waters and some of the choicest utterances of Believers have come from them when God's waves and billows have been made to roll over them. The fire consumes nothing but the dross and leaves the gold all the purer. In Job's case, I may truly say with regard to his position before God, he had lost nothing by all his losses, for what could be purer and brighter gold than this which gleams before us from our text, revealing his triumphant patience, his complete resignation and his cheerful acquiescence in the Divine will? "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

There are two points to which I ask your earnest attention while we meditate upon this subject. The first is the exhortation drawn from the text—*learn to see the Lord's hand in everything*—in giving and in taking. And, secondly—and this is a harder lesson—*learn to bless the Lord's name in everything*—in giving and in taking.

I. First, LET US LEARN TO SEE THE LORD'S HAND IN EVERYTHING.

Our whole history seems to be divided, as our text divides itself, into a beholding of God's hand in giving and then a beholding of it in taking.

We are then, first of all, to behold God's hand as a giving hand. If we are Believers, all the comforts and mercies that we have are to be viewed by us as coming from the hands of our gracious Heavenly Father. Job confessed that the Lord had given him the camels, the sheep, the oxen and that the Lord had given him his seven sons and three daughters. Everything which he had ever possessed he looked upon as having been the gift of God. Job did not say, "I worked hard to obtain all that stock that I have now lost." He did not complain, "I spent many weary days and many anxious nights in accumulating all those flocks and herds that have been stolen from me." He did not ascribe any of his wealth either to his own wit, or to his own industry, but he said of it all—"The Lord gave it to me." In his mind's eye, he took an inventory of all that he once had and of all that he had lost—and he said of the whole, "It was all the Lord's gift to me."

Now, Beloved, whatever may be the possessions which you have at the present time. Whatever may be the number of those who are the comfort of your life—husband or wife, parents or children, kinsfolk of any sort—say of all of them, "The Lord gave them to me." And, as a Christian, *learn the wisdom of never ascribing any earthly comfort to any earthly source.* The worldling may not always be able to say what Job said concerning his possessions. Some of what he has may not have been obtained honestly—the Lord did not give any of that to him. Some of what he has may turn out to be a curse rather than a blessing, but the Believer in Christ may say with the utmost truthfulness, with regard to all that he has, "It is all the gift of my loving and tender Heavenly Father."

And, Brothers and Sisters, there is associated with this fact that all our possessions are God's gifts, the remembrance that *they are all undeserved gifts.* They are gifts in the fullest sense of the word—the gifts of God's Grace. They are not given to us because we have merited them, for we have never deserved even the least of all the mercies which the Lord has so bountifully bestowed upon us. We may say of the whole river of His favor which continually flows side by side with us as we journey along the pathway of our pilgrimage, that there is not a drop of it which comes to us of debt or by law, but all comes through the free gift of God's Grace! All that we have, over and above what would have been our portion in the pit of Hell, is the gift of God's mercy towards us. It is of the Lord's mercy and because His compassions fail not, that we are not consumed. Every Believer can truly say with Job, "'The Lord gave,' yes, the Lord gave even to me, an unworthy one who sat as a beggar at His gate and received from His own hand countless tokens of His Infinite loving kindness."

And I may add, with regard to those gifts, that *they have been given to us with wondrous kindness and thoughtfulness on God's part.* Some here, I think, will have to say that they have found themselves provided for by

God's forestalling their needs. He has gone before them in the way of His Providence and mysteriously cleared a path for them. Before they have felt the pinch of poverty, the pinch has been averted. There are others of God's servants here who have sometimes been brought very low, yet they can bear witness that up to now their bread has always been given to them and their waters have been sure. And while God's mercy comes to us very sweetly when forestalling our needs, there is equal sweetness if it comes when the need has been felt. No food is so palatable as that which has hunger for its sauce! To know what it is to be poor will make us more grateful if God ever gives us abundance. But time would fail me to tell you the love and care of God towards each one of us, every day of our lives, and to recount how He not only continues but even multiplies His favors. It is impossible for us to count them, for they are more in number than the hairs of our head, or the sand on the seashore, or the stars in the midnight sky! [See Sermon No. 3022, Volume 53—GOD'S INNUMERABLE MERCIES—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

Now, as everything we have is freely and graciously given to us by God, this should make us feel, in the first place, that *this Truth sweetens all that we have.* I daresay there is many a little thing in your house that is of no great value in itself, but it was given to you by someone who was very dear to you. How much a child values that Bible that was given to her by her mother who wrote her name in it! Many a man has, in his house, things which an auctioneer would appraise at a very small amount, but which the owner prizes very highly because they were given to him by someone whom he intimately esteemed and who gave them to him as a token of his love. In like manner, look at the bread on the table of a Believer as a love token from God. The Lord gave it to him—and if there were upon his table nothing but that bread, it would be a token of God's gracious condescension in providing for his needs! Let us learn to look thus at everything that we receive in this life, for such a view of it will sweeten it all. We shall not then begin to calculate whether we have as much as others have, or as much as our own whims or wishes might crave, but we shall recognize that all we have comes from the hand and heart of our Heavenly Father—and that it all comes to us as a token of our Father's love and with our Father's blessing resting upon it!

This fact should also *prevent any Believer from acting dishonestly in his daily avocations,* or even from wishing to obtain anything that is not his own by right. All of you who belong to God have what God has given you—so mind that you do not mix with it anything that the devil has given you! Do not go into any worldly enterprise and seek to gain something concerning which you could not say, "The Lord my God gave it to me." Men of the world will engage in such transactions and they will say that you are not as sharp as you might be because you will not do the same. But you have a good reason for refusing to gain even a shilling

upon which you cannot ask God's blessing. A sovereign, dishonestly procured, though it might gladden your eyes for a little while and help to fill your purse, would certainly bring a curse with it—and you do not want that. You would not like to have to confess to yourself, concerning anything you possessed, "I dare not tell my Heavenly Father how I got it, though He knows. And I dare not ask His blessing upon it, nor do I think He would ever give it to me. He will probably turn it into a rod and sharply scourge me for having dared to use such unholy means to get what I ought not to have even wished to possess." Some of God's people might have been very happy if they had not been greedy and grasping. He that hurries to be rich will soon find that he will fall into many snares and abundant temptations. It is an evil thing when people cannot be content although they have enough for all their necessities, for even the world's proverb says that, "enough is as good as a feast." Yet many stretch out their arms, like wide-encircling seas, and try to grasp in them all the shore! Such people, sooner or later, begin to rob others right and left, and very many of them come down to poverty and the Bankruptcy Court, disgraced and dishonored. Let it not be so with you, Beloved, but be content with such things as you have, whether God gives you little or much and, above all things, pray that you may have nothing but what He gives you, nothing in your house or shop but what comes in at the front door in the light of day, nothing but what may be seen coming in if any eyes should be watching. That man is truly happy who can say of all his substances, be it little or be it much, "The Lord gave it to me."

Further, as it is the Lord who gives us all the wealth that we possess, *how very foolish are those people who are proud of possessing a little more of this world's wealth than others have!* There are some who seem to be thoroughly intoxicated by the possession of a larger income than their neighbors enjoy. They even seem to fancy that they were made of better material than was used in the creation of ordinary mortals. Did not a broad grin appear on the faces of many aristocrats when someone said, in Parliament, that we were all made of the same flesh and blood? Of course all those who were in their right senses knew that it was true—but insanity in high places seemed to be moved to utter contempt at the bare mention of such a thing! When a man is poor, unless he has brought his poverty upon himself by extravagance, or idleness, or his own wrongdoing, the man is a man for all that, and none the worse man for being poor! Indeed, some of the best of men have been as poor as their Lord was. I have known many who have been very poor, yes, who have been the excellent of the earth, in whom a true saint of God might well take delight! There always will be various ranks and conditions among man and there is a certain respect which is due from one to another which should never be withheld where it is rightly due, but, at the same time, whenever a man begins to say that because God has

given him more than He has given to another, therefore he will despise his poorer brother and look down upon him, it must be dishonoring and displeasing to God and it is extremely likely that He will turn round and make the proud man bite the dust! How often those who have held their heads so very high have been rolled in the mud—and how easily that might be made to come to pass with others!

A further inference arising out of this Truth that God gives us all that we have, is that it *ought never to be difficult for us to give back to God as much as we can.* As He has given us all that we have, it is but right that we should use it to His Glory and if, under the rule of His Grace, and under the Gospel, He does not so much claim a return from us as a matter of right, but leaves our liberality to be awakened by the love which constrains us, rather than by the Law which compels us, yet let us not give God less because He gives us more! Under the Mosaic dispensation, the Jew gave his tenth by compulsion, but let us willingly give to God more than that and not need to be forced to do it except by the sweet constraint of love. Do I owe every penny that I have in this world to the bounty of God's hand? Then, when God's cause and God's poor are in need, let no one have to beg of me to give to them! I always feel ashamed when I hear people say that we are "begging for God's cause." God's cause has no need to be a beggar from those who would be beggars if it were not for God's Grace! Oh, no, no! It must never be so! We ought to be like the children of Israel in the wilderness who gave so generously towards the building and furnishing of the Tabernacle that Moses had to restrain their liberality, for they had already given "much more than enough for the service of the work which the Lord commanded to make." Let us try to imitate the liberality which God has manifested toward us in the gift of His well-beloved Son and in all the Covenant blessings which come to us through Him. All those who have received so much from God should count it their privilege and delight to give back to Him all that they can!

These reflections might suffice for this part of the subject, but I shall add one more. *"The Lord gave"—then we must worship the Giver and not His gifts.* How can we so degrade ourselves as to worship that which God has given to us? Yet you know that many make idols of their gold, their lands, their husbands, their wives, their children, or their friends! It is no unusual thing for a little child to be the god of the family—and wherever that is the case, there is a rod laid up in store in that house. You cannot make idols of your children without finding out, sooner or later, that God makes them into rods with which He will punish you for your idolatry! "Little children, keep yourselves from idols," was the injunction of the loving Apostle John. And he wrote thus in love because he knew that if God sees us making idols of anything, He will either break our idols or break us. If we really are His people, He will, in some way or other, wean

us from our idols, for He wants our love to be given wholly to Himself. So it is best for us to keep the creature in its right place and never to let the joys or comforts of this life usurp God's rightful position in our hearts! God has been pleased so to fashion the world that it should always be under our feet and, as Christians, we should always keep it there. The dearest thing we have on earth should always be estimated by us at its proper value as a gift from God but as nothing more than that—and never be allowed to occupy our heart's throne which should always be reserved for the Lord alone.

But now we are to think, for a while, of the Lord's hand taking away from us as well as giving to us. Job said, "The Lord gave, *and the Lord has taken away."* Some of you have come to this service very sad and heavy of heart because that dear child of yours is dead. Well, I do not blame you for sorrowing over your loss, but I pray you also to remember that it is the Lord who has taken your child away from you. You say that it was the fever that took away your dear one—and perhaps that was the immediate cause of your child's death—but if you can realize that the fever was only the instrument in God's hands to remove the dear little one from your care to His own, surely you will dry your tears. And as for that substance of yours, which has almost melted away under the fiery trial to which it has been subjected, so that poverty seems, now, to stare you in the face, you will be able to bear even *that* when you remember that it is the Lord's hand that has taken away what His hand had first given!

As long as we look at the secondary causes of our trouble, we see reasons for sorrow. But *when our faith can pierce the veil and see the Great First Cause, then our comfort begins!* If you strike a dog with a stick, he will try to bite the stick because he is a dog. But if he knew better, he would try to bite *you*—not the stick! Yet that is the way that we often act with the troubles that come to us—we fly at the second causes and so are angry and petulant with them! But if we would always remember that it is God who takes away, as well as God who gives—that He is at the back of all our trials and troubles—that His hand weighs out our shame of grief and measures our portion of pain—then we would not dare to rebel and bewail, but, like David, we would say, "I was dumb. I opened not my mouth because You did it." Even if we could not get up higher, and say with Job, "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Further, *when once we know that God has done anything, that fact forbids any question concerning it.* It must be right because He did it. I may not be able to tell why, but God knows why He did it. He may not tell me the reason, but He has a reason, for the Lord never acted unreasonably. There never was any action of His, however sovereign or autocratic it might appear to be, but was done "after the counsel of His

own will." Infinite Wisdom dictates what absolute Sovereignty decrees. God is never arbitrary, or tyrannical. He does as He wills, but He always wills to do that which is not only most for His own glory, but also most for our real good. How dare we question anything that God does!

My dear Sister, rest assured that it is better that you should be a widow and seek to glorify God in your widowhood. My dear young Friend, believe that it is better that you should be an orphan—otherwise God would not have taken away your parents. It is better that you, dear Friends, should lose your eyes. It is better that you should be poor, or diseased, or else the Lord would not let you be so, for, "no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." If health and wealth were good things for you, God would let you have them. If it were a good thing for saints to never die, they would never die. If it were a good thing for them to go to Heaven at once, they would go there at once. If you are walking uprightly, you may know that you have all things, which, all things considered, would be good for you. Some things which might be good in themselves, or good for others, might not be good for you and, therefore, the Lord, in love, withholds them from you. But, whatever He gives, or takes away, or withholds, raise no questions concerning it, but let it be sufficient for you that the Lord has done it!

Besides, *when we know that the Lord takes away our possessions, the knowledge that they are His effectually prevents us from complaining.* Suppose you are a steward to a certain nobleman and that his lordship has been pleased to entrust you with ten thousand pounds of his money? By-and-by he withdraws it from your charge and invests it somewhere else. Well, it never was your money—you might have complained if it had been. But you are only a steward and if your lord pleases to withdraw his own money, are you going to be out of temper with your master because he does what he wills with his own? Suppose you have a banker—and we are, as it were, the Lord's bankers—and suppose that a week or two ago you paid into the bank a thousand pounds, or more, and the clerks or those in authority were pleased to take charge of your money. But suppose that you went to the bank, today, and drew it all out? They did not get angry with you, did they? You would not like to trust a banker who was only civil to you when you were paying in money! And if we are God's bankers, He sometimes puts His treasure into our keeping and sometimes takes it out—but it is not our treasure any more than our money is the banker's when we entrust it to his care! It is on deposit with us and we ought to be paying God good interest upon it! Whatever God has given to us, He never gave it as our own freehold. It was always on a lease—a lease, too, that had to be renewed every moment, for if God chose to cancel it, He could do so whenever He pleased. How dare we, then, complain?

To use another figure, our *position* is like that of a nurse into whose care a mother placed her baby and the nurse dandled the child, and was glad to have charge of it. But when she had to return it to its mother, she cried over the loss of the little darling! Yet it was not the nurse's child, given to her to keep—it was only hers to nurse. So it was with your children whom God has taken Home to Himself—they were not yours to keep. The Lord put each one of them, for a while, into your charge and said to you, "Christian mother, take this child and nurse it for Me, and I will pay you your wages." So, when He called the child back to Himself, why should you complain as though He had wronged you? Or, to use another illustration, which has been frequently employed in this connection—a gardener had been especially careful in tending one particular rose which was very fair to look upon. But, when he went, one morning, to his favorite rosebush, he found that the flower of which he had taken such care, was gone! He was very vexed, for he thought that some bad boy had stolen into the garden and taken away his best flower. He was complaining very bitterly of his loss when someone said, "The master has been down in the garden this morning, and he has been admiring this rosebush, and he has taken away that fine bud of which you were so proud." Then the gardener was delighted that he had been able to grow a flower that had attracted his master's notice and, instead of mourning any longer, he began to rejoice! So should it be with anything upon which we have set our hearts! Let each one of us say to our Master, "My Lord, if it pleases You to take it, it pleases me to lose it! Why should I complain because You have taken from me what is really Your own?—

'If You should call me to resign
What most I prize—it never was mine!
I only yield You what was Yours—
Your will be done!'"

II. The second part of my discourse must be briefer than the first part, yet it is equally important. It is this, LEARN TO BLESS THE LORD'S NAME IN EVERYTHING. Learn to ring the bells of His praise all day long and, for that matter, all night long, too!

First, *bless the name of the Lord when He reveals His hand in giving.* "Ah," you say, "that is an easy thing to do." So it ought to be, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and it is a neglect of our duty when we do not do it. We come down to our breakfast in the morning rejoicing in health and strength, and we go out to our day's engagements but, I hope not without thankfulness that we are in health and that we have food to eat, and raiment to put on! We are out all day and things prosper with us, but I trust that we do not accept all this as a matter of course—but that we praise the Lord for it all day long—and then when we go home again at night, and God is still with us, I hope we do not fall asleep before we again praise Him. John Bunyan used to say that the very

chickens shame us if we are ungrateful, for they do not take a drink of water without lifting up their heads, as if in thankfulness, for the refreshing draught. If we, who are the Lord's children, do not bless Him for the mercies which so constantly come to us from Him, we are, of all people, the most ungrateful! Oh, for a grateful frame of mind, for I am sure that is a happy frame of mind. Those who are determined to murmur and to complain of God's dealings with them, are sure to find plenty of things to complain of—while those who are of a thankful spirit will see reasons and occasions for gratitude in everything that happens!

Do you remember a touching story, told some years ago, of a poor mother with her two little fatherless children? On a cold winter's night they discovered an empty house into which they went for shelter. There was an old door standing by itself, and the mother took it, placed it across a corner of the room, and told the children to creep behind it so as to get a little protection from the cold wind. One of the children said, "Oh Mother, what will those poor children do that haven't got any door to set up to keep out the wind?" That child was grateful even for such a poor shelter as that! Yet there are some who have thousands of greater blessings than that, and yet do not see God's hand in them—and do not praise Him for them. If that has been the case with any of us, let us turn over a new leaf and ask God to rule it with music lines and then let us put on them notes of thanksgiving, and say to the Lord, with David, "Every day will I bless You; and I will praise Your name forever and ever." Or say with one of our old poets—

"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."

Praising God is one of the best ways of keeping away murmuring! Praising God is like paying a peppercorn rent for our occupation of our earthly tenement. [See Sermon No. 3021, Volume 53—LANDLORD AND TENANT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] When the rent is not paid, the owners generally turn the tenants out—and God might well do so with us if He were like earthly landlords. If we are not grateful to Him for all the bounties which we constantly receive from Him, He may make the stream stop—and then what would we do? Ungrateful mind, beware of this great danger! Thankfulness is one of the easiest virtues for anyone to practice and certainly it is one of the cheapest! So let all Christians especially comply with the Apostolic injunction, "Be you thankful." It is a soul-enriching thing to be thankful. I am sure that a Christian, with gratitude for a small income, is really richer than the man who lives a graceless life and is plentifully endowed with worldly wealth. David spoke truly when he said, "A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked." So, let others do as they will, we say, "Give us, Lord, whatever You will, whether

it is little or much, so long as You give with it the light of Your Countenance, our souls shall be abundantly content!"

Thus are we to bless the name of the Lord for all that He gives us.

But, *it is a much more difficult thing to bless the name of the Lord for what He takes away from us.* Yet, difficult as it is, I venture to say that many Believers who have forgotten to praise God while He was giving to them, have not forgotten to praise Him when He was taking away from them! I do not know how thankful Job had been before this trying period in his history, but I do know that his trials brought out this expression of his thankfulness. It is his first recorded praise to God. Some of us need to lie a little while upon a sickbed in order to make us thankful for having had good health for so long. And we need to be brought low and to have our spirits depressed in order to make us grateful that we have had such cheerful spirits and been blessed with so many comforts. It is not natural or easy for flesh and blood to praise God for what He takes away, yet this painful experience often wakes up the gratitude of the Christian and he who forgot to praise the Lord, before, makes up for it now!

Brothers and Sisters, praise is God's due when He takes as well as when He gives, for there is as much love in His taking as in His giving! The kindness of God is quite as great when He smites us with His rod as when He kisses us with the kisses of His mouth. If we could see everything as He sees it, we would often perceive that the kindest possible thing He can do to us is that which appears to us to be unkind. A child came home from the common with her lap full of brightly shining berries. She seemed very pleased with what she had found, but her father looked frightened when he saw what she had and anxiously asked her, "Have you eaten any of those berries?" "No, Father," replied the child, to his great relief. And then he said to her, "Come with me into the garden." And there he dug a hole, put the berries in, stamped on them and crushed them, and then covered them with earth. All this while, the little one thought, "How unkind Father is to take away these things which pleased me so much!" But she understood the reason for it when he told her that the berries were so poisonous that if she had eaten even one of them, she would in all probability have died in consequence! In like manner, sometimes, our comforts turn to poison—especially when we begin to make idols of them—and it is kind on the part of God to stamp on them and put them right away from us so that no mischief may come to our souls. Surely that child said, "Thank you, Father, for what you have done. It was love that made you do it." And you, also, Believer, can say, "Thank God for my sickness, for my poverty, for that dead child of mine, for my widowhood, for my orphanhood—thank God for it all! It would have been ruinous to me to have left me unchastened. Before I

was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept His Word. Blessed be His name for all that He has done, both in giving and in taking away."

It is a grand thing when we do not judge God's dealings with us simply by the rules of reason. From the first moment when the love of God is revealed to us, right on to the hour when we shall be in the Presence of the Father in Glory, we may depend upon it that there is Infinite Love in every act of God in taking from us, just as much as in giving to us! Jesus said to His disciples, "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you." The Father always loved Jesus with Infinite Love—He loved Him as much when He was on the Cross as He did when He was on His Throne. And, in like manner, Jesus always loves us with an unchanging love—a love which can never fail us. He loves us as much in the furnace of affliction as He will love us when we shall be with Him in Glory, so let us bless His name whether He gives or takes away! I invite every mourning soul here to bless God's name at this moment.

"Ah," says one, "I wish I could get a little more happiness to sustain me under my many trials." Well, let me just remind you of the poor widow woman who went out to gather a few sticks to make a fire, that she might bake some cakes for herself and her son. When the Prophet Elijah met her, what did he say to her? He told her to make *him* a little cake, first, and afterwards he added, "make for you and for your son. For thus says the Lord God of Israel, the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth. And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord which He spoke by Elijah." Notice that he said to the woman, "Make me a little cake first." And God seems to say to you, "Praise Me first, and then I will bless you." Say, as Job did a little later in his history, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him." I believe it marks the turn of the tide, with a saint, when he or she can say to the Lord, with good old John Ryland—

"You, at all times, will I bless!
Having You, I all possess!"

The sky soon begins to clear when the Christian begins to say, "The Lord's will be done." "Not as I will, but as You will." This is a sign that the chastisement has had its due effect—the rod will now probably be put away. You mourning souls, take down your harps from the willows and sound forth at least a note or two to the praise of the Lord your God! Praise Him with such notes as these—"Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart…I will not fret myself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass…O my God, I believe that all things are working together for my good and that You are my gracious Heavenly Father, full of compassion

and overflowing with love." If you talk like this, Christian, and mean what you say, it will be a blessing to you, a comfort to others and an honor to your God!

As I speak thus, I am reminded that these comforting Truths of God belong only to true Believers. And as I send you away, I dare not put the words of my text into all your mouths, for, alas, some of you cannot see our Father's hand in anything that happens to you! You are without a parent, except that wicked one of whom Christ said to the Jews, "You are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do." Yet, remember, you who cannot claim God as your Father, that the door of His Grace is not yet shut. He is still willing to receive you! If you will come to Him, confessing your sins and seeking mercy through the precious blood of Jesus, He is both able and willing to give you a new heart and a right spirit—to save you here and now—and to adopt you at once into His family! Then will you also be able to see His hand both in giving and in taking away—and you will also learn to bless His name at all times!

If God the Lord shall deal thus graciously with you, His 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.

VANITY DEPRECATED
NO. 3026

A SERMON
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"Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way."
Psalm 119:37.

THERE are divers kinds of vanity. In the play of the frivolous and the sport of the idle, we see but one sort of vanity—light, open and undisguised. The cap and bells of the fool, the motley of the jester, the mirth of the world, the dance, the lyre and the cup of the dissolute— men know these to be vanities—they wear upon their forefront their proper name and title. Yet another species of vanity, and more deceitful, can be discovered in the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. A man may follow vanity as truly in the counting-house as in the theater. If he is spending his life in amassing wealth, he is heaping vanity to himself quite as much as though he openly passed his days in vain show or empty pageant. All the fools do not dance or drink. All the fools do not make jests—full many there are of somber mood who spend money for that which is not bread, and their labor for that which satisfies not!

Moreover, there is such a thing as solemn vanity—the vanity that may be seen among those who observe the empty ceremonials of religion, invest themselves with strange garments and affect the odor of sanctity. Or, turning from the gorgeous meetings to the lowly conventicle, vanity may even be discovered beneath the broad brim of the Friend who, seeking after the world rather than after Christ, thinks that he rebukes the world's vanity when the world may well rebuke his! Vanity, I say, is quite as certainly to be found among the sober as among the frivolous. Unless we follow Christ, and make God the great Object of our life, we only differ from the most frivolous in degree—and possibly the degree may not be as great as we suppose!

You will all understand my text, as you hear it, to mean, first, "Turn away my eyes from looking upon the levities of men, the tomfoolery of the world." But it means more than this. "Turn away my eyes from looking at the world's pride, at the world's wealth, at the world's substantial temptations." These, as the royal preacher has said, are vanity. "Vanity of vanities," said Solomon, "all is vanity," as he looked at everything beneath the sun! And we may say of everything short of Christ, "Turn away my eyes from beholding it, less my heart should love it."

The Psalmist goes on to couple with this another petition—"Quicken me in Your way." Beholding vanity is sure to bring deadness into the soul. You all know that this is true, not only of that which is frothy, but of all that, however specious, is not sterling. If you let the cares of this world enter into your mind too much, do they not destroy your spirituality? If honor is your *game,* or even if you are hunting after an honest livelihood without casting the care of it upon God, you know that your Grace declines, your faith grows weak and your love becomes ready to expire. No high degree of Divine Grace can be attained when the eyes are fixed upon debasing things. We must have our eyes where we profess that our hearts already are—beyond the skies. We must be looking for Christ to reveal the exceeding riches of His Grace and Glory—not after vanities to display the pleasure of this present evil world—or else our souls will soon lose the force and strength of piety and we shall have good reason to cry, "Quicken me in Your way."

Beloved, I hope you all know what the Psalmist means by being quickened in God's way. Often your spirits get lethargic and dull when, suddenly, the Spirit of God comes upon you and once, more your former vigor returns. And, instead of creeping, you begin to run in the way of God's Commandments. Pray, then, this prayer as well as the former one, "Quicken me in Your way," for, as the looking at vanity will make us dull, so our souls being quickened will be sure to turn our eyes away from vanity! As the first part of the text acts upon the second, so the second will act also upon the first. Put the two together and may they be graciously fulfilled in the experience of every one of us!

To amplify the teaching of the text, I shall now call your attention to four things—*a tacit confession; a silent profession; a vehement desire and a confident hope.*

I. First, then, I observe here A TACIT CONFESSION. It is not stated in so many words, but it is really meant.

The Psalmist seems to impeach himself and unburden his breast before God, deploring, indeed, *a natural tendency towards vanity.* What? Is it so, after all, that David has known of fellowship with the world? Does the vain still attract him? What? When God's Covenant has been peculiarly delightful to the shepherd-king, do the mirth and revelry of this world and the gewgaws of earth still attract him? He seems to confess it. He would not need to have his eyes turned off from vanity if there were not a something in his heart that went after it! He would not ask God to turn them off unless he felt that he needed a stronger arm than his own to keep him in fitting restraints! It is very easy for you and me to stand up and play the wise man—yes, and in the closet to pray like wise men. We may feel, in our own souls, that we have experience, now, and shall never again be intoxicated by the world's draughts, never more be deceived by its lies. But no sooner does Madam Bubble show her face than her strange fascinations draw our eyes! Let the world ring the bell and straightway we start up and our heart wanders, too often before we

are aware of it! We know they are vain things—know it thoroughly—but yet, knowing it, we do not in our own nature therefore avoid them! Reckless of the snares, the birds are foolish enough to fly into them! Though we know that the draught is poisoned, yet is it so sweet that unless prevented by God's Grace, you and I would soon be drunk with it! Every child of God knows that he is a fool or he is a great fool, indeed, if he does not know it! Every heir of Heaven understands that there is within himself a very sink of vanities—his vicious tastes respond to the vile compounds of earth as "deep calls unto deep." It is clear enough, I think, if you turn over the prayer, that the Psalmist confesses that his heart goes after vanity.

He confesses, yet again, that *his eyes are on it now.* He says, *"Turn them off."* What does he mean but that they are on it? And some of us, in coming up to the House of God, tonight, and, perhaps, while sitting here, have had to confess that our eyes are on vanity. Why, some of you Believers may have been thinking of some silly snatch of a song that you heard before you were converted, or some idle tale that was told you the other day. You would gladly forget it, but it has followed you in here—yes, and may even follow you to the Communion Table. Or, possibly, your worldly cares have come up with you and my poor talk has scarcely had power to lift you up from your families, from your shops, or from all the anxious thoughts that burden you! Your heart is on these things now. When you stood up to sing about Christ and asked Him to set you as a seal upon His heart, where were your flighty imaginations roaming? We tried to pray just now, but while the preacher's words went up to Heaven, did not your hearts wander, I know not where?

The confession assumes another character as it seems to hint that, *no sooner are our eyes on vanity, than our heart goes after it.* What? Can we not manage our own eyes? What? Are we such vain creatures that the mere sight of vanity is a temptation to us? Surely to see vanity ought to be sufficient to make us avoid it! Some men say that they will look at evil and, knowing that it is evil, they will be safe from the danger of being betrayed by it. Ah, how many have proved the hollowness of that pretense? Brothers and Sisters, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil has brought little benefit to mankind—it has certainly brought a curse! Beware of the hope to be as gods through eating again of that tree! We are more likely to be as devils than to be as gods through feeding upon it! Oh, no! I know enough of sin without looking at it! There is enough knowledge of my sinfulness forced upon me by my daily temptations and failures, without my going to this place or to the other, that I may look upon sin! Do not tell me that you went into bad company just to ascertain its character! Do not tell me, young man, that having heard a certain thing condemned, you thought you ought to see it for yourself! That will not do! That is not a Believer's desire, nor a godly man's wish! He cries, "Turn away my eyes. Lord, let me speak to You humbly. Am I so

sinful and so weak that I have only to see a ditch to fall into it—only to see a fire to put my finger into it? I am not like that in other things—how is it that I am so besotted in the carnality of my mind? Yet so it is, Lord. You know and Your servant feels that it is so." Therefore, let the confession stand, "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity."

The Psalmist's confession seems to go a little deeper, for *he seems to say that he cannot keep his own eyes off vanity.* "Turn away my eyes." What, Lord? Have I not an optic nerve? Is there not a power in my head to turn which way it wills? Am I *compelled* to look at vanity? No, not compelled by physical necessity, but still, so compelled by the disposition of this vile nature of mine that unless You keep Your hands on my head and turn my eyes from beholding vanity, I shall surely be looking at it! We will go anywhere to see vanity! It is strange what mountains men will climb—into what depths they will dive—what leagues they will travel—what wealth they will spend to see vanity! And when they have seen all they can see, what does it come to but the sight of so much smoke, after all? And yet, Brothers and Sisters, we cannot keep our eyes off it! If anybody tells you that there is a lewd or unseemly thing, a juggle, or some witchcraft, do you not feel an inward craving, an unholy desire to see it? Is not that a well-known principle of human nature? There is a little tract, I think, entitled, "Don't Read It"—and why, do you think, was it so entitled? Because, whatever tract might remain unread, that one is certain to be read! "Don't Read It"—the prohibition provokes appetite, and the moment you and I hear, "don't," said, inclination begins to be astir! Thank God that this morbid propensity is restrained and subdued by Sovereign Grace through the love of Jesus! But still, the natural bias is toward evil and only toward evil. Therefore, Lord, "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity." The confession goes very deep, you see.

But there is even more in the next clause. "Quicken me in Your way." *He seems to confess that he is dull, heavy, lumpy, all but dead.* Do not you feel the same? I hope you do not, but I often do, and I am afraid you often do, even the best of you. And when we think of how fast our spirits ought to move along the heavenly road, constrained and moved by love like that of Jesus, I think we all must cry—

"Dear Lord! And shall we always lie
At this poor dying rate?
Our love so faint, so cold to You,
And Yours to us so great?"

Yes, we are dull if God leaves us for a moment—so dull and so doting that the best motives cannot quicken us! Otherwise the Psalmist would not have needed to appeal to the Almighty to effect that of which he was himself capable. What? Will not the thought of Hell quicken me? Can I think of sinners perishing and yet not be awakened? Will not the thought of Heaven quicken me? Can I think of the reward that awaits the righteous and yet be dull and stupid? Will not the thought of death quicken me? Can I think of dying and standing before my God—and yet

be slothful in my Master's service? Will not Christ's love quicken me? Can I think of His dear wounds, can I sit at the foot of His Cross and think of Him, and yet not be stirred to something like fervency and zeal? Yet it seems that no such consideration can quicken to zeal, but that God Himself must do it or else there had been no need to cry, "Quicken me." It struck me, as I turned this text over, that it was amazing how poverty-stricken the Psalmist felt himself. What does a beggar ask for? The poorest beggar that I ever met never asked me, so far as I remember, for anything less than a drink of water and a bite of bread—but here is a man who does not ask God for anything so little as that—he asks for life itself! "Quicken me." The beggar has life—he only asks me for means to sustain it. But here is a poor beggar, knocking at Mercy's door, who has to ask for life itself! And that beggar represents me—represents you—represents, I am sure, every Christian who knows himself. You may well ask, every day, for spiritual existence! It is not, "Enlarge me, Lord. Enrich me in heavenly things," but, "Oh, do keep me alive! Quicken me, O Lord!" You see that the confession thus takes us into the most secret places of man's need. I pray God to teach us all so to feel what our true state is that, with humble, sincere and devout hearts, we may pray the prayer, "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way."

II. The text likewise involves A SILENT PROFESSION. Do you observe it? It is not all confession of sin—there is a profession of *something*.

There is a profession at least of this, "Lord, I know it is vanity." That is something. "O my God, how I bless You that I know the hollowness of the world and the plague of my own heart! It was always so, but I did not always think so." There are some of you who do not think that even worldly amusements are vanity. You love them—there is a sweetness and a substance in them to you. Perhaps you are like the lady who said to the minister that she loved to go to the play, because, first of all, there was the pleasure of thinking of it before she went—and then there was the pleasure of being there, then there was the pleasure of thinking of it afterwards—and the pleasure of telling it to one's friends. "Ah," said the man of God, "and there is another pleasure you have forgotten." "What is that, Sir?" asked the lady. "It is the pleasure of thinking of it on a dying bed, Madam." Small pleasure that! Some of you have never thought of that last pleasure and, therefore, the world's vanity is very satisfactory to you. I know what a pig would say if he were to talk. As he munched his husks, he would say, "I cannot tell what to think of those stupid men—they call these husks empty—and throw them away. I think them very luscious and substantial." You would, then, attribute the quality of the taste to the nature of the beast. It is after the manner of a pig and so, sinners say, "We cannot make out why these strict people, these Puritans, find fault with worldly amusements—we find them very sweet." Yes, but you see that it is only a sinner who says so—it is only a sinner

who feels so. The true child of God knows that both the pleasures of this world and its cares are, alike, vanity!

I know how some of you have often felt when you were busy. Encumbered with many things, more than you could manage, a friend has complimented you and said, "I am glad you are getting on so well. Appearances bespeak a thriving trade." "Well," you reply, "I think I am. I am grateful for business." But, as your friend turned his head, you thought to yourself, "Ah, but I should be more grateful if I had more Divine Grace, for I feel that much business needs much Grace to balance it, or else the more I get, the poorer I shall be." You felt that it was vanity unless you could have God's blessing and the Presence of Christ with it.

It is a feature of this profession that, seeing this vanity, you do not want to love it and would avoid being ensnared by it. If I say, "Turn away my eyes from it," I do, in effect, confess before God that I do *not* love it. I hope there are many of us here who can say, "Lord, our evil heart sometimes goes after it, but we do not really love it—in the bottom of our souls there is a hatred of sin so deeply rooted that if the loss of our eyes would take away temptation and prevent us from sinning, we would thank You to never allow us to see a ray of light, again, for sin is so terrible an evil to us that even blindness would be a blessing if it enabled us to escape from sin."

The second clause of the text has in it, likewise, the nature of profession—"Quicken me in Your way." The man who can pray thus is already in God's ways! He professes that he loves them—that he desires to be obedient to God's will and to continue to make greater progress in God's ways. What do you say, dear Brothers and Sisters? Some of you find the ways of righteousness very rough, yet, would you leave them? Some of you are reproached and persecuted for Christ's sake, yet, would you like to go back to the ways of sin? The devil has put a horse at your door and there is a golden bridle on it—and it ambles so softly! "Now mount," he says, "and come back and serve your old master! Nobody will laugh at you then! Everyone will call you a good fellow—charitable, kind and liberal. Come back," he says, "and I will treat you better than before!" Will you mount and ride? "No," the very least of us would say if we had the highest offer for the renunciation of Christ—we would not leave Him—

"Go you that boast in all your stores,
And tell how bright they shine—
Your heaps of glittering dust are yours,
But my Redeemer's mine!
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."

No, Lord, I may be weary *in* Your way, but, by Your Grace I will never weary *of* Your way.

III. And now, in the third place, there is before us here A VEHEMENT DESIRE—how vehement, those only experience who know the bitterness of vanity and the disappointment which it brings! How vehement those only can describe who know the excellence and sweetness of Divine Quickening! The Psalmist breathes his whole soul out in this prayer. He seems to plead most vehemently, his body and his soul seem to pray together. "Turn away my eyes," says the body. "Quicken me," says the soul!

This is a most reasonable and a most practical desire.

How reasonable it is! When a Christian is not quickened in God's way, he is very uncomfortable. The happiest state of a Christian is the holiest state. As there is the most heat nearest the sun, so is there the most happiness nearest to Christ. I am persuaded that no Christian ever finds any comfort when his eyes are fixed on vanity—no, that he never finds any satisfaction unless his soul is quickened in the ways of God. The world may find happiness elsewhere, but he cannot. I do not blame ungodly men for going to their pleasures. Why should I blame them? Let them have their fill—that is all they have to enjoy. I heard of a converted wife who despaired of her husband's salvation, but she used to be always very kind to him. She said, "I am afraid he will never be converted." But whatever he wished for, she always got for him, and she would do anything for him, "for," she said, "I fear that this is the only world in which he will be happy and, therefore, I have made up my mind to make him as happy as I can in it." But you Christians must seek your delights in a higher sphere because you cannot be happy in the insipid frivolities of the world, or in the sinful enjoyments of it!

Besides being uncomfortable, it is very dangerous. A Christian is always in danger when he is looking after vanity. We heard of a philosopher who looked up to the stars and fell into a pit. But if they fall deeply who look up, how deeply do they fall who look down! No Christian is ever safe when his soul is so slothful or drowsy that it needs quickening. Of course you do not understand me to mean that his soul is in danger of being lost. Every Christian is always safe as to the great matter of his standing in Christ, but he is not safe as regards to his standing and happiness in this life. Satan does not often attack a Christian who is living near to God—at least, I think not. It is when the Christian gets away from God and gets half-starved and begins to feed on vanities, that the devil says, "Now I will have him!" He may sometimes stand foot to foot with the child of God who is active in his Master's service, but the battle is generally short. He that slips as he goes down into the Valley of Humiliation invites Apollyon to come and fight with him!

Again, for a Christian to have his eyes fixed on vanity is injurious to his usefulness. No, more—it does positive damage to others. When a Christian is found setting his affection upon worldly things, what do

worldlings say? "Why, he is one of our own kith and kin! He is just like us! See, he loves what we love, where is the difference between us and him?" Thus the cause of Christ gets serious injury. How can you, my dear Brother, from the pulpit, for instance, preach concerning a certain sin when you are, yourself, guilty of it? I should like, for instance, to hear a man who swears that Baptism regenerates when he knows it does not, rebuke a countess for saying that she is "not at home" when she is! I should like to hear him rebuke a draper for "a white lie" across the counter. I should like to hear him rebuke the devil, for, I think he could scarcely venture to do it! Unfaithfulness to the Spirit of God is as great a sin as ever Satan committed! No, my Brothers and Sisters, we must keep ourselves clear of these sins, or else, for practical purposes, the tendon of Achilles has been cut and we cannot serve God with might and main! We can only do some trifling service for Him when our garments are spotted and our souls are set on vanity.

For all these reasons, then, let the Christian pray this reasonable prayer that he may be kept from vanity.

Did I say that this is *a very practical prayer?* So, in truth, it is. You will observe that the former pain is practical, though the latter may seem spiritual. The Psalmist says, "Turn away my eyes." Now, the man who prays after this fashion will not fail in the directness of his aim. He who is diligent in praying this prayer will not be negligent in his life. He will not pray, "Turn away my eyes from vanity," and then go and drink death-draughts of carnal pleasures. He will not pray, "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity," and then go and turn his eyes on the very evil that he deprecated! No, Brothers and Sisters, there is something so practical in the text that I commend it to your earnest observation. Make it your prayer tonight, each one of you!

IV. Lastly, there is in the text an expression of CONFIDENT HOPE.

The Psalmist does not pray like a waverer who will receive nothing of the Lord. It seems to me that he has an unmoved confidence that God will turn his eyes away from vanity and that God can quicken him. Have any of you backslidden? Let this sentence comfort you tonight! Do not lose the belief that Divine Love can restore you. Have you sunk very low? Do not, I pray you, doubt the efficacy of the right hand of the Most High to bring you back again! Satan will get a great advantage over you if you begin to think that God cannot quicken you. No, be assured that He can. And let me tell you that He can do so readily. It may cost you many pains, but it will cost Him none. He the made the world out of nothing can certainly restore to you the joy which you have lost!

And may I tell you what I think is the means which God often uses with his people to restore and quicken them, and take their eyes from vanity? I think it is a sight of Christ! At any rate, my personal witness is that I never know the vanity of this world so well as when I see the beauties and the perfections of the Lord, my Master. That true man of God, Dr. Hawker—I am told by a friend of mine who visited him one

morning—was asked to go and see a military review that was then taking place at Plymouth. The doctor said, "No." My friend pressed him and said, "I know you are a loyal subject and you like to see your country's fleets—it is a noble spectacle." The doctor said, no, he could not go and, being pressed until he was ashamed, he made this remarkable answer, "There are times when I could go and enjoy it, but my eyes have seen the King in His beauty this morning, and I have had so sweet a sense of fellowship with the Lord Jesus that I dare not go to look upon any spectacle lest I should lose the present enjoyment which now engrosses my soul." I think you and I will have felt the same thing, in our measure, when Christ has manifested Himself to us. What? Look on vanity, my Lord, when Your pierced hand has touched my heart? What are the grandest buildings of this world, with all their pomp of architecture, compared with You, You Great Foundation Stone, you Chief Cornerstone, elect and precious? What is the music of this world, with all its swell and roll, compared with Your name, Immanuel, *God With Us*?—

"Sweeter sounds than music knows
Charm me in Immanuel's name—
All her hopes my spirit owes
To His birth, and Cross, and shame."

What are the world's feasts compared with You, O Christ? Its dainties are not sweet, for I have tasted of Your flesh. Its wines are no longer luscious, for I have sipped from the cup of Your blood. What are the world's choicest offers that she can make me of honor or of wealth? Have You not raised me up and made me to sit together in heavenly places with Yourself, and have You not made me a king and a priest unto God and shall I not reign with You forever and ever? Christian, you may carry on such musing as this by the hour together! You may boast yourself in God and your leviathan faith may swim in this boundless deep of Jesus' love! You surely, after this, can never wish to go back to the pool wherein the minnow of this world disports itself. Here you can bask yourself in the rays of a meridian sun—and will you afterwards cry for a farthing candle because you have lost its beams?

Shame on you, Christian, if your soul is taken up with vanities! Let those love them find their all in them, but you cannot! The sight of Him who is white as the lily for perfection and red as the rose for sacrificial suffering must have taken away the beauty of this world for us! Says Rutherford, "Ever since I ate the Bread of Heaven, the brown bread of this world has not been to my palate. And since I have feasted on the food of angels, I cannot eat the ashes that satisfy the men whose portion is in this life." And truly it is so! Arise, Sun of Righteousness, and our love of darkness shall be dispelled while we are charmed with Your light! We hear of some who worship the sun at its rising—that is sad idolatry—but rise, Sun of Righteousness, and we will worship You and there shall be no idolatry in that! You are not like the sun that burns out human eyes when they look upon it. We will look into Your face until Your

transporting light shall only burn out our sight for this world—to help us to gaze upon Yourself without a veil between.

Oh, that I were talking thus for you all, but I am conscious that I am not. I do pray, however, that you who love vanity may find out how vain it is before you come to die. The other night I lay awake and tossed to and fro many hours before I fell asleep. I realized then, more than at any other time in my life, what it was to die. My every bone seemed to tremble. I lay, as I thought, upon a bed of sickness—the room seemed hushed around me. The ticking of my clock sounded like the ticking of the death-watch. I thought I heard them whisper, "He must die." And then my soul seemed to fling itself back upon the realities of God in Christ and I asked myself, "Have I preached or have I prayed for this? But now is Christ able to save me. He is my only hope and my only plea. Is it true that Christ came into the world to save sinners?" And I recalled those cogent and blessed arguments which prove that Christ is the Sent One of God and my soul rejoiced that it could die in peace! And then I could but think of that sweet rest which Jesus brings when you can throw yourself on Him.

And now, tonight, in the recollection of that strange vision of the shadow of death through which I passed, I can but ask others, "What will you do when you really come to die, if you have no Savior?" Men and women, if you have no Christ to trust to, what will you do? You must soon have the death-sweat wiped from your clammy brows. You must soon have the needed drop of water administered to your parched lips. What will you do when Death shakes the bones within the strong man and makes each nerve thrill with the dread music of pain? What will you do when death, and Hell, and judgment, and eternity, and the Great White Throne have become real things to you and your business, and even your children and your wife seem banished from your eyes? Let a brother's love beseech you to flee from the wrath to come and to fly to Christ for salvation! God knows how I love your soul! It is for the sake of men's souls that I suffer contempt and scorn and will gladly bear it—yes, and will provoke it more than I have ever done—provoke it because this dull, dead age needs provocation—needs to be stirred up! Even its ministers need to be stirred up to something like honesty and zeal for the souls of men! I say that I will gladly bear reproach for your souls' sake—will not you?

Oh, will not you be persuaded to think on those things that make for your eternal peace? The gates of Heaven are up there! The gates of Hell are down yonder! The Cross of Christ points you to Heaven—follow its guidance! Look to the wounds of Jesus! These are the gates of pearl through which you must enter Heaven. But if you will turn to your vanities and to your sins and follow them—and delight yourself in worldly pleasures—then Hell is your portion as surely as you sin! May the Lord give faith to those who have none and help us who have believed

through Grace, to walk in His ways—and unto His name shall be the Glory, world without, end! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:81-88.

Verse 81. *My soul faints for Your salvation: but I hope in Your word.* The Psalmist was so full of longing, hungering, thirsting, for God's salvation that he had come even to faintness through the strength of his desire. Yet, in his faintness, he was not too far gone to hope—and we, also, have good ground for hoping and believing that God, who gave us His Word, will stand to it, for He is both able and willing to fulfill all that He has promised!

82. *My eyes fail from searching Your word, saying, When will You comfort me?* He looked out for a message from God as the watchers of the night looked for the breaking of the morning. His eyes ached to behold the comforts of his God. Oh, blessed state of strong desire! I pray God that we may all experience it!

83. *For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget Your statutes.* When an empty skin bottle was hung up in one of the smoky dwellings of the East, it became withered, cracked, useless. And the Psalmist says, "'I am become like a bottle in the smoke,'—I seem to be good for nothing, withered, dried up—'yet do I not forget Your statutes.'" A good memory is one of the best of things for us to possess, but a good memory for that which is good is better still.

84. *How many are the days of Your servant? When will You execute judgment on them that persecute me?* "I am not going to live here forever, Lord. Let me not have to wait to be vindicated until I am in my grave. O my God, hasten the day of my deliverance!"

85, 86. *The proud have dug pits for me, which are not after Your Law. All Your commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully; help You me.* God's Word is all true—the longer we test and try it, the more shall we find it to be worthy of our fullest confidence. Those who doubt its Truth have never really proved its power. Those who mistrust it in any degree are as yet like inexperienced mariners who are constantly doubting and fearing what is going to happen. But those who have long done business on the great waters of the ocean of Divine Inspiration and who have seen the wonders of the Lord there, will tell you that though Heaven and earth shall pass away, God's Word shall endure forever! We have seen a thousand things in the course of our earthly pilgrimage, but there is one thing that we have never seen, and that we never shall see, namely, God proving unfaithful to His promise and deserting His people in their time of need!

What a short yet comprehensive prayer the Psalmist prayed when he uttered those three words, "Help You me!" "'Help You me'—that I may

never be frightened by those who wrongfully persecute me—that I may never do anything to deserve their persecution—that I may be able to behave myself wisely while they are plotting against me." If you are in business, write this prayer on your shops, your offices, and your ledgers! If you are sick, have this petition hanging before your eyes, that you may be constantly reminded to cry to the Lord, "Help You me."

87. *They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not Your precepts.* Therefore his enemies could not consume him. As long as the Believer holds fast to God's precepts, he is indigestible even to the old dragon, himself! And no adversary shall ever be able to devour him as long as the Word of God is in his heart!

88. *Quicken me after Your loving kindness; so shall I keep the testimony of Your mouth.* "Give me more true spiritual life, inspirit me, revive me, 'quicken me.' At this very moment, good Lord, if I am cold, and half frozen, and almost dead, yet since I am like the trees whose life is in them even when they have lost their leaves, give me a new springtime—'Quicken me after Your loving kindness .'" We all need this quickening if we are to hold on and hold out to the end and, blessed be the name of the Lord—

"New supplies each hour we meet
While pressing on to 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
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GOD'S TIME FOR COMFORTING
NO. 3027

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 21, 1867.

"My eyes fail from searching Your Word, saying, When will You comfort me?" Psalm 119:82.

DAVID, in his troubles, knew where to turn for consolation—and that is no small piece of wisdom. When a man is ill, he may not know to which physician he had better send, but if he knows of one who has had much experience with the disease from which he is suffering, he sends for him at once if he is a wise patient. David knew that the best place for a true Believer to find consolation was in God's Word, so he did not look in a thousand places, but his eyes were turned to God's Word—and though he did not immediately find the comfort that he sought, yet he continued to look even till his eyes seemed to fail him, till they ached with looking, till they wearied with watching, till his disappointed expectation made his heart sick! Yet the idea never entered into his mind that he had better knock at another door, or seek another friend, or try another fountain! He still continued in the attitude of expectancy and desire, his eyes still searching the Word of God to find the comfort that he so greatly needed.

Christian, learn this piece of heavenly wisdom from the Psalmist's experience—there is no other comfort for you beneath the skies like that with which the Word of the Lord will furnish you. If God's promises cannot comfort you, rest assured that no speech from the lips of man can do it. If your God shall not yield you the consolation that you need, you will go in vain to the giddy world and its pleasures and follies in the hope of finding it. If that overflowing well could ever dry up, you would indeed be the subject of despair. Resolve in your mind never to expect any good thing apart from God. Say with Toplady—

"I will not be comforted
Till Jesus comforts me."

Refuse all consolation but that which comes from the Most High, for it will be fictitious, delusive, dangerous, perhaps fatal—but cling to your God whatever happens! Though He smite you, still cling to Him. Though He slay you, still trust Him. If His Word should seem to be like thunder and lightning to you, though every page of it should seem to bristle as with bayonets and not a single thought of consolation should be found in

a thousand verses, yet still cling to your father's Bible, hold fast to the good old Book which made glad your mother's heart, for, before long, comfort shall shine forth from it upon you like the sun in the fullness of its strength—and the day shall break and the shadows flee away. Go not elsewhere to look for consolation! Seek out no strange doctrines! Weary not yourself in searching for other comfort, but let your eyes, even if they fail, still look to the Word of God for the consolation that your soul needs!

David, however, besides looking to the Book of the Lord, looked to the Lord of the Book, saying, "When will *You* comfort me?" He did not expect the Word in itself to be a sufficient consolation to him, so he looked to the Word as applied by God, the Holy Spirit, the Word as spoken over again by the mouth of God into the silent soul of the waiting Believer. Paul tells us that "the letter kills, but the spirit gives life." And the Psalmist so far anticipates that Truth of God as to cry to the Lord, "When will *You* comfort me?"

Christian, I again exhort you to imitate the Psalmist's example by going to your God for comfort. You are still far too apt to lean upon an arm of flesh, but have you not yet learned what disappointments are always to be met with there? Will you still go to the broken cisterns that can hold no water when they have already only mocked your thirst? When will you give up running to your neighbors and going to your brother's house in the day of your adversity? You will do far better if you will go to your Father's house and to your Elder Brother! Even our common proverb says, "Straightforward makes the best runner," so, run straight to your God! Do not beat around the bush in the hope of getting at God through second causes, but go to the great Fountainhead of all consolation at once. Depend upon it, that the more absolutely you hang upon the bare arm of *God*, the better will it be for you and the more will you learn to live independently of those poor creatures of earth whose breath is in their nostrils! The more you depend upon the great, invisible, Omnipotent, eternal Jehovah, the stronger and happier will you become! Then shall your head be lifted high above your enemies and you shall sing praises unto God for very gladness of heart.

Troubled ones, I urge you to resolve that if you cannot have comfort from God, at any rate you will not have it from the devil—determine that if you cannot do business with Heaven, you will not trade with Hell! And say that you would rather live in a dungeon with God than dwell in tents of ease with Satan. If your life must always be one of sorrow, be content that it shall be so if the Lord so wills it, but be resolved that you never will dally with sin or Satan for the sake of any present consolation. You cannot afford to buy your gold so dearly as that, nor to part with Heaven for the sake of the richest comforts of earth!

It is worthy of note that the Psalmist, even in his worst condition, always expected to be comforted. Our text was probably uttered by the same man who more than once asked himself, "Why are you cast down,

O my Soul? And why are you disquieted within me?" Some men readily fall into a state of despair, but the Psalmist was not a man of that sort. When all God's waves and billows had gone over him, he still said, "Yet the Lord will command His loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me." And where deep called unto deep at the noise of Jehovah's waterspouts, he could still hear the still small voice of hope, so that he said to his soul, "Hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

Beloved, let none of us give way to despair! No doubt Satan will tell us that it is humble to despair, but it is not so. The pride of despair is truly terrible. I believe that when a man altogether doubts the power of God to save him and gives himself up to sin because he thinks he cannot be saved, so far from there being any humility in it, it is the proudest action that depraved flesh and blood can perform! Man, how dare you say that there is no hope for you? If the iron gates of Hell were shut upon you and God had hurled the key of the Pit into the infinite abyss, *then* you might say that there was no hope for you. But as long as there trembles in the air that blessed invitation of Christ, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," it is only a lying voice that tells you that there is no hope for you! No hope, Man? Why, if you were in the very jaws of death and the grim monster's teeth were about to close upon you, there would still be hope for you! The dying thief on the Cross did but trust to the expiring Savior by his side—and that very day he was with his Lord in Paradise! Never despair, Sinner, but trust in Jesus when at your worst!

And as for you, Christian, what have you to do with despairing? Be of good cheer, for your sins are forgiven you. [See Sermon No. 3016, Volume 52—GOOD CHEER FROM FORGIVEN SIN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Even though your eyes fail, God's eyes do not fail, nor His arm, either. And though you grow weary with your long waiting, yet when He comes to you, He will make amends for that and your weary waiting shall be well repaid. Wait at the posts of His doors, for—

"He never is before His time,
He never is too late."

If you will but play the man and let patience have her perfect work, you shall be well rewarded before long. Therefore wipe away your tears and "wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the Lord."

Now, although the Psalmist expected to receive comfort from the Lord, whatever his trouble might be, yet he was careful to do what he could in order to obtain it. He looked into God's Word for comfort and he asked the Lord, "When will You comfort me?"—as if he meant to say, "If there is anything on my part which prevents my receiving the comfort, let me know and, Lord, I will put it away from me. Should You be withholding Your consolation from me because of any sin which I am harboring, only

say the word, Lord, and my sin shall be taken out to execution! Quick shall be my hand and sudden shall be the stroke, for I must have Your comfort to sustain my soul—I cannot longer live in this state of sadness."

I trust that this will be the language of anyone here who is seeking the forgiveness of his sins. Perhaps I may be addressing someone who has been seeking mercy for months and he has not yet found it. I hope he is not satisfied to go without it—I trust that he will hunger and thirst until he gets it and that he will, at this moment, put up these requests to God, "Show me, Lord, why You contend with me. When will You comfort me? What is there which parts me from You and hides the light of Your face from my poor, guilty, dying spirit?"

Perhaps the words which I am about to utter, in answer to the question in my text, may be the means of bringing comfort to some who are groping for it in the dark like blind man trying to feel the way marks which they cannot see. I shall first address myself to Christians and then to seekers after salvation.

I. First of all, I SPEAK TO YOU, BELOVED BELIEVERS—to you who are saying with the Psalmist that your eyes are failing from searching the Word of God—to you whose hearts are saying to Him, "When will You comfort us?"

God will answer your question in His own good time and way, but it is certain that *God will comfort you one day.* He cannot leave His people without comfort. You know that He said, in olden times, by the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you." The mother ought not to be able to forget her child when it is in that specially dependent stage of its existence—when it is a sucking child not only her love, but the very force of Nature ought to compel her to remember it! Yet, though she may forget her child, God cannot and will not forget you who are His children! That is impossible—the whole force of His Divine Nature constrains Him in loving kindness to remember you and to say to you, "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you." His message to His servants is still, "Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak comfortably to Jerusalem and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned." Now, how can comfort be withheld from those whose sins are pardoned? Christian, you must have comfort from your God sooner or later!

To help you to answer your question as to why you do not have that comfort now, consider, in the first place, that God may, *of His own Sovereign will and pleasure,* withhold from you the comforting light of His Countenance. He has His reason for doing so, but He may not give you that reason. And surely, if He does not tell you the reason, you will submit to His will. Remember the good advice of the Prophet Isaiah, "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 do but at last get to Heaven—if the Lord should take away His candle from you on earth for a little time, you may cheerfully submit to that privation! You may cry out to Him, for "His own elect" do that—they "cry day and night unto Him," yet you must not be impatient if He does not at once grant your request. With ardent desire you may long for Him to comfort you in the night seasons, but, amid the darkest shades, you may still say to Him, "I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are right and that You in faithfulness have afflicted me." It may be because of Divine Sovereignty that comfort is, for a while, being withheld from you. If so, then the same Sovereignty which shuts you up in the dark room will, in due season, open the door and set you at liberty!

But more likely, dear Friends, you will get comfort *when you have cast away your present unbelief*. Most of us owe a great part of our sadness to our lack of faith in God. Is it any wonder that you are sad when you will not believe your Heavenly Father's promises? Child of God, is it a surprising thing that your mind should be ill at ease when you mistrust the veracity of your Father? Would you expect your own children to be happy if they were always doubting the truth of their father's promises to them? What a wretched household such dark suspicions would soon make! Away, then, with all suspicion of the truth of your Heavenly Father's promises! It is utterly groundless! It is unworthy of yourself and it is dishonorable to God! Testify against Him now if you can. When did He ever fail you? Has He been a wilderness to you? Has He ever forsaken you? He has chastened you, it is true, but has He ever deserted you? "Come now, testify, O My people; bear witness against Me if you can!" says the Lord. "Have I wearied you with labor? Have I borne you down with burdens and not given you help?" Oh, no! We all bear witness that He is a good and gracious God—and we pray for the Holy Spirit's power to rest upon us that we may have done with our cruel, wicked, disgraceful unbelief! Come, child of God, take down your Bible, look up some precious promise, grasp it, believe it and expect to see it fulfilled to yourself! You will not then have long to ask, "When will You comfort me?" You will be comforted as soon as you have cast away your sinful unbelief from your soul. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to do so at once!

Possibly the answer to your question may take another form—*The Lord will comfort you as soon as you have done with complaining.* There are certain people in the world whom God will never comfort until He has taken their present murmuring spirit out of them. I know some such people, to my sorrow. If they prosper very much, if they get on a great deal in their business, they say, "Oh, yes, we have had a tolerably good year!" They never admit that they have had anything beyond "a tolerably good year." That is all that they will say even when their money is rolling

in, in floods! Many a farmer, when his ground is bearing as much corn as it possibly can, says, "Yes, I shall do pretty middling this year." He calls the very best that he can possibly have, "pretty middling!" And if he should happen to have a little loss, or a little trouble, or some little vexation, then straightway his mouth is filled with murmuring against God. And though he would not like to have it called by that name, yet it is a sort of minor blasphemy against the Most High—envying others, speaking of them as though they had all the sweets of life and talking of himself as though he had to drink all the bitters and all the dregs of the cup. Some of you know people of that kind, who seem to be "cut on the cross"—a strange sort of people who can always see clouds on the finest day and who will say that the grass is all dried up even when all can see that it is beautifully green!

Ah, my dear Friends, you must get rid of all this if you want God to comfort you! There is something expressive in that word, murmur—I have often wondered at the wisdom of the man who gave it the meaning that it has, though I do not know who he was. *"Mur-mur"*—two ugly little syllables such as any cross child could easily sound! But it is a childish, foolish, wicked habit for any of us to fall into—to be murmuring against God—for, after all, our mercies far outnumber our sorrows! As long as we are out of Hell, we have no right to complain, for, if we had received our just desserts, we would have been there. Dear Friends, may God help you to shake off this murmuring spirit as Paul shook the viper off his hand into the fire! And when you have done that, then you will probably find that the Lord will speedily appear to comfort your heart!

Again, in some persons there is an absence of Divine Consolation *because there is some sin which is tolerated within them.* There might be very startling discoveries made here, this very hour, if every professing Christian were compelled, by his accusing conscience, to stand up and tell the congregation what his secret, besetting sin is. I fear that at least some of you would never dare to show your faces in the Tabernacle again—you would be ashamed to be seen among those who knew such things about you! Yet the smoke of these burning sins rises in clouds and shuts the face of God away from such inconsistent Christians. God loves His people, but He does not love their sins. Sin is hateful anywhere, but it is most hateful in the Lord's own people. You are, none of you, fond of loathsome diseases such as fevers, but I am sure that you loathe the fever most of all when it attacks your own dear child. So, sin is a disease which God hates everywhere, but He hates it most of all when He sees it upon one of His own children and, for this reason, He takes His rod into His hand and causes His sinning child to smart and to cry out with Job, "Show me why You contend with me." When the Lord's people are really in earnest about this matter, He points to their idol-gods, or to some other evil thing which they have harbored in their hearts and so awakened His anger. Then, if they arise and cast out these abominations,

the rod is put away and God once more gives them the comforts of His Grace. Therefore, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if you lack comfort, search and see where the fault lies, for it is my firm conviction that in nine cases out of ten, it is owing to some sin that has been indulged! I quoted Job's question just now, and Eliphaz asked him, "Are the consolations of God small with you? Is there any secret thing with you? Why does your heart carry you away? And what do your eyes wink at, that you turn your spirit against God and let such words go out of your mouth?" I pass those searching questions on to anyone here to whom they may apply. And I trust that as the result of doing so, such a soul will be able to present the poet's petition with the poet's confidence—

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Your Throne,
And worship only Thee!
So shall my walk be close with God,
Calm and serene my frame,
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads me to the Lamb."

Possibly the lack of comfort is owing to some other cause. Dear Christian Brother or Sister, you may be at this moment without comfort *because you have neglected some duty.* I believe that many of God's people who know their Lord's will, yet do it not, do get beaten with many stripes. They say that they do not understand why they are thus chastised and they do not know what it is that causes them to be so frequently and so sorely afflicted. It is because there is some precept, which they know to be their Lord's precept, yet they wink their eye at it and leave it neglected. Learn a lesson from Jonah's experience. If the Lord should bid any of us go to Nineveh and cry against it and, instead of doing so, we go down to Joppa and find a ship going to Tarshish, and get in it, we must not reckon upon having a smooth passage! Before long there will be "a mighty tempest in the sea." If we had not been God's servant, there might have been fair weather—but when a child of God runs away from his plain duty, God will send a tempest after him—and he may be very thankful if God also sends a whale—for although the whale may swallow him, yet it may bring him safely to land—but he will be sure to rue the day on which he turned away from his clear duty and sought out a more comfortable path.

Master John Bunyan, whom I cannot help quoting, tells us the result of Christian and Hopeful going over the stile into By-Path Meadow. They thought it would be much smother walking just on the other side of the fence and Christian tried to assure his companion that the path ran along by the way-side. No doubt they thought that they could keep so close to the King's Highway that they would see, in a minute, when the path began to turn away from the right road—and then they would just

jump over the fence and get into the right way again. They felt sure it would be all right. At least Christian did, for Hopeful was doubtful all the while, though he gave way to his older companion. But when Giant Despair found them sleeping in his grounds, he drove them off into his dungeon and came, the next morning, with a great crab-tree cudgel and gave them not a mouthful of bread, nor a drink of water, but plenty of crab tree! And when, the day after, he counseled them to destroy themselves, and left them lying, day after day, pining in their filthy prison—then they understood that smooth walking is not always safe walking, and that it is best to walk in the right road even though it may be a rough one! Let us be careful where we walk, for we may lose our comfort very speedily unless we keep strictly to the path of obedience. Let us, at all times, with a cheerful and willing spirit, wear our Master's yoke, for His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

I will speak very plainly to some of you who get downhearted and desponding, for I am rather glad that you do get into such a state of mind. There are some who think that the blame rests with the preacher if they become despondent. They say that he ought to comfort them more than he does. Ah, but lazy professors must remember what Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "This we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." As for you busy preachers, Sunday school teachers, tract-distributors and other earnest workers for Christ, when you do get to a sermon, how sweet it is to you! You have been hard at work for the Lord and it has sharpened your spiritual appetites! But lazy Christians who never fail to win souls for the Savior and who only want to be spiritually fed without doing a stroke of work in the Master's service get to be very dainty. No matter how good the fare may be, nor however much others enjoy it, they are sure to say, "That is not the food that we like." They want it spiced up to a wonderful degree and it must be carved so daintily or they will not touch it! Whereas if they had been hard at work, they would have gained a healthy appetite which would have turned even the bitters into sweets!

I pray God that those professors who do nothing for Him may be miserable! "That is a very unkind prayer," say some of you. No, it is not, for it is meant for your good. See, if you get to be happy in your idleness, you will stay in that sinful state. But if you are unhappy while you are doing nothing for the Master, I think you will be the more likely to say to Him, "Lord, what will You have me to do?" Then I hope you will soon get to work and I believe that comfort will be sure to come to you when, in an evangelical spirit, depending upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, you go out to do what you can for the Lord! Some of you, perhaps, have a great heap of money stored up and you cannot make out why there is such a bad smell of canker all over the house—I could tell you! Some of you who have not been doing anything for your Master for a long while, think that surely your blood must be

congealed in your veins, for it does not seem to move! I think I could tell you why that is. If you would again exercise yourself in God's work, as you used to do, you would soon find that the blood would again course through your veins and that the dew of your spiritual youth would come back to you. Our sorrows are often manufactured by our sins—our sins of omission, or of commission. May we all have Grace, then, to search within ourselves to see if we can discover the answer to the question, "When will You comfort me?"

II. Now I am going, for a few minutes, to deal with THE CASE OF ANXIOUS, SEEKING SINNERS.

Where are you, anxious one? Never mind where you my happen to be at this moment—let the Word of the Lord come straight to you as though nobody else were here! You are sorrowfully saying, "I have been praying for pardon for months. I am in the House of God whenever it is open. I search the Bible as diligently as I can, yet I cannot find comfort. Oh, that I could get my sins forgiven! I must get that blessing, or I shall die. Tell me, Sir, when will God comfort me?"

My dear Hearer, it may be that comfort is withheld from you *because you have not fully confessed your sin.* We have God's Word for it that "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Then if we do not make a complete confession to our God, we must not expect to receive pardon. "Oh," you say, "I have said, 'Lord, I am a sinner.'" That is right, but you must do more than that. Tonight, before you go to bed, think over your past life. Recapitulate your faults and confess the whole of them to God—and do not keep anything back. I have heard of a professor who was guilty of backsliding for a time and, therefore, was suspended from church membership. He prayed about the matter, but he used to pray thus, "Lord, you know that I have indulged a little—have mercy upon me!" Of course no comfort came to him. Then a Christian Brother said to him, "Tell the Lord the whole truth—He knows just what it is." The man was wise enough to follow this good advice, so he prayed, "Lord, you know that I was drunk, will you not forgive me, for Jesus Christ's sake?" Then the comfort came to him and you, also, must call your sin just what it is when you go before God, for you are not truly humbled and penitent as long as you try to put a gloss upon your sin. David could get no peace till he prayed, "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God." And, my dear Hearer, you must confess the worst aspect of your case before God. "Make a clean breast of it," as we commonly say—tell the Lord all about your sin. Perhaps it is the lack of this that keeps you from being comforted—the lack of an explicit, plain, full confession of your sins.

Again, if you ask me why you do not have comfort, although you do try to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, I answer, *Perhaps there is some sin that you have not given up* and, depend upon it, if that is the case,

although salvation is all by the Grace of God and we are not saved by our own works, yet, Sinner, you can never have peace with God till you have made a clean sweep of every known sin! There may be a man here who has attended the Tabernacle for a long time, and who says that he cannot get peace. Now, where was he last night? His conscience knows and I will ask him whether he expects to get peace with God while he can be found in such society? There is another man here who says that he cannot get comfort—but where is he to be found the greater part of the week? Does he not regularly go to the gin-palace? And can he expect that the Lord Jesus Christ will go there with him? No, that cannot be! There was no room for Christ in the inn when He was born and there is certainly no room for Him in the gin-palace of the present day. There are some men who can cheat in their business—they know very well that they do not deal fairly with their customers. Their goods are adulterated and they give short weight—yet they expect to have peace with God while this is the case? How can it be? Do you suppose that God will patch up a truce with your sins and give you His forgiveness while you are harboring such evil things in your house? No, that cannot be! Though you cannot be perfect, yet you must *want* to be perfect and there must not be any sin which you knowingly spare. Cut them in pieces, every one of them! As soon as you know that anything is wrong, I pray you to have such a tender conscience that you will seek to escape from it, for, as long as you harbor even one of them, comfort will never come to you.

"But this is such a little sin," says one. Yes, and those little errors are like the little boys that the big thieves take with them to crawl through the little windows—and then they open the door and let the big thieves in! Those little sins will be your ruin unless you forsake them and get them forgiven! One of our proverbs says, "Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves." Turn that proverb round and it will teach you that if you look sharply after your little sins, you will not fall into great ones. It is these so-called little sins—mixing with worldly society, going into bad company and so on—that keep so many of you from getting peace with God! Some of you young women get to walking with ungodly young men. And some of you young men form acquaintances that are no good to you. And then you come here and your consciences are somewhat touched, and you ask that you may be found "accepted in the Beloved." How can that be when you will walk straight away from this service and talk in such a way as would be impossible if the Holy Spirit were really in you? The Holy Dove would fly away from such talk as that! A defiled heart is no nest wherein He can take His rest.

Once again, is it not very likely that the reason why you do not get peace with God is this—that *you have not trusted to the Lord Jesus Christ wholly and entirely?* There is the root of the mischief! You still hope to save yourself in some measure and, as long as you cling to a rag of self-

righteousness, you cannot get peace or comfort! If ever a Sinner is to be saved, it must be entirely by the mercy of God shown to him solely because of the merit of Jesus Christ and, as long as a man puts so much as a shadow of a trust in himself beside his trust in Christ, his comfort will be marred! You must be to yourself as though you were dead, so far as any confidence in yourself is concerned—and you must rest alone in Jesus. The finished work of the exalted Redeemer must be your only confidence!

"How was it, Sam," asked a Christian master of his servant, "that when you and I were both under conviction of sin, you got comfort so much sooner than I did? As far as I know, Sam, my life seemed to be as good as yours before conviction came to me, yet I could not get comfort, though you did." "Ah," said Sam, "you see, Master, I was a great deal worse than you were. And when God the Holy Spirit showed me what I was, I looked at my rags and I said, 'Ah, they are nothing but a lot of filthy rags, they will never patch up.' So I took them off at once and I put on the robe of Jesus Christ's righteousness, for I knew my rags would never match that spotless garment of His. But, Master, when you got a little light, you looked at yourself and you had been so good—you had lived such a decent life that you said—'Ah, my coat needs mending. There is a hole in the elbow and a tear here and there, but it can be patched up and it shall do a little longer.' And so, Master, you did not got the robe of Christ's righteousness as quickly as I did." And some of you moral people will have hard work in fighting against your self-righteousness. When good Mr. Hervey questioned a godly farmer as to what was the greatest hindrance to a sinner's coming to Christ, he thought the farmer would say, "Sinful self," but he said, "Righteous self," and so it is. Righteous self-confidence in our prayers. Self-confidence in our repentance, self-confidence in something we mean to do, or something we feel that we already have—all this keeps us back from true peace and comfort!

All the candles in the world will not enable us to do without the sun. Some of you light your poor little candles and try to get comfort that way. Put the extinguisher on every one of them and go and stand in the sunshine, for then you will have light indeed! Give up all your carnal hopes, your earthly confidences, your good works, your own righteousnesses—away with them all—and come as poor, guilty, condemned sinners and trust in Jesus Christ, and you shall get comfort this very instant, for, the moment a sinner trusts in Jesus Christ, he is saved! Peace and pardon immediately follow trust in Jesus! Only come to Him with your sins and miseries, your burdens and your unworthiness, your hardness of heart and your coldness of spirit—come to Him just as you are, for, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." The Lord Jesus is a Physician who heals the sick when

their disease is at its worst—He does not want you to try to make yourselves better, but to come to Him just as you are—and then He will heal you as you are.

That was a beautiful act on the part of the Good Samaritan who found the poor wounded man half dead by the roadside. He did not stand and gaze at his injuries, and say to him, "My dear fellow, when your wounds are less painful to you, I will come back and bind them up." He did not say to him, "My dear man, when you are more conscious of your need of my services, and can sit up and ask me to help you, I will do what I can for you." He did not say, "My dear man, when you are very sorry that you ever came down this dangerous road where you have been waylaid and injured, I will come and heal you." Oh, no! There the poor man lay, half dead, and the Good Samaritan went just where he was, stooped over him and looked at his wounds. Probably the man did not feel anything just then, for most likely he had been stunned, but the Good Samaritan felt for him. The man could not plead for himself, but the heart of the Good Samaritan pleaded for him—and he tenderly bound up his gaping wounds, pouring in oil and wine—and lifted him up, set him on his own beast, carried him to the inn and there did all he could to ensure the completion of his cure. As the Good Samaritan went to the wounded man where he was, so Jesus Christ, "the Good Samaritan" in the highest sense of the term, comes to the sinner where he or she is!

But, Sinners, though you are trying to make your hearts ready for Christ, you will never succeed in doing it! You are wasting your strength upon a task that must end in failure. Remember that if you cannot come to Christ *with* a broken heart, you can come to Him *for* a broken heart! If you cannot come as you ought, come just as you are! And if you have no good thing to plead as a reason for your acceptance, so much the better will it be for you.

I have tried to put this matter of finding comfort plainly and in as simple language as I could. O Sacred Spirit, come now, and bring sinners to Jesus, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

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

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

GOD'S GLORY OUR REREWARD
NO. 3028

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1907.

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

"The glory of the LORD shall be your rereward."
Isaiah 58:8.

THE Church of God is an army marching through an enemy's territory. She can never reckon upon a moment's peace. If she were of the world, the world would love its own, but because true saints are not of the world, but Christ has chosen them out of the world, therefore the world hates them. As the Amalekites suddenly fell upon the children of Israel, unprovoked and without giving any warning of their hostile intention, so, not only in times of persecution, but in these apparently softer days when the world does not use the stake and the sword, at all seasons the world is ready to pounce upon the Church of God and to call in its grand ally, the devil, to overthrow and destroy, as far as possible, the militant hosts of Israel!

Every Christian, then, must be a soldier and take his share in the battles of the Cross. We must not look upon our life as being a pleasure-journey through a friendly land, but as a march—a march through the very midst of foes who will dispute every foot of our way!

Now, if we thus view the Church of God as an army, it is consolatory to know that we have a vanguard—My righteousness shall go before you." We take our Lord Jesus Christ to be "the Lord our righteousness." He is the Forerunner and He has gone before us, even through the River of Death and up to the skies, that He may prepare a place for all those who have enlisted under His standard.

Our text, however, speaks not of the vanguard, but of the "rereward." There is always danger there, and it is comforting to the saints to behold so glorious a shield borne in their rear by so mighty an arm—"The Glory of the Lord shall be your rereward."

It is but little I have to say to you this evening, but may God make that little profitable to you! We will, first of all, *dwell upon the rereward and enquire what it is which is here intended.* And, secondly, *we will try to show how the Glory of the Lord brings up the rear and protects the saints on every side.*

I. In the first place, WHAT MAY WE UNDERSTAND BY THE REREWARD?

Taking the text to refer to *the Church of God as a body,* we remark that there are always some who bring up the rear. God has never left His Church without men to stand in the front. A few choice men have always been raised up by God and they have led the way, both in testimony and

in suffering. The race of the Prophets will never be extinct. "The scepter," in this sense, will not depart from the members of the Church until Christ shall come a second time. The teacher shall not be taken out of his place, nor the candlestick be removed, nor the Bread of Life be taken away. But the mass of the Church are rather like the body of the army marching on and fighting well—but not attaining unto the first three mighties.

We have, moreover, in the Church of Christ, a considerable proportion of those who are always behind. Some of those are here tonight. You feel yourselves to belong to the rear *because you are so weak in faith.* It is a blessed thing to enjoy full assurance of faith and yet, no doubt, there are thousands in the fold of Jesus who never reach this attainment. It is a great pity that they should not reach it, for they miss much happiness and much usefulness. But still—

"Thousands in the fold of Jesus,
This attainment never could boast.
To His name eternal praises,
None of these shall ever be lost.
Deeply engraved
On His hands, their names remain."

There are some who, from their natural constitution and other circumstances, are very apt to despond. Like Mr. Fearing, they not only go through the Slough of Despond, but, as Bunyan says, they carry a slough of despond about with them! They are little in faith, but they are great at foreseeing evil. They are always expecting some dreadful ill and they cower down before a shadow. I thank God that those of you who have faith but as a grain of mustard seed, shall not be left to fall away—the Glory of the Lord shall gather you up with the rest of the saints! The stragglers, the wounded, the halt, the lame—though these cannot march with the rest as we desire, though, like Mr. Ready-to-Halt, they have to go on crutches—yet the Glory of the Lord shall be their shelter and protection.

Then there are some of you who are not exactly weak in the faith but, in your *humble estimate of yourselves,* you put yourselves in the rear. "I am very poor," says one, "it is but little that I can ever give. Even if I gave two mites, as the widow did, I might almost give all my substance in so doing. I am obscure, too, for I have no talent. I cannot preach. I can scarcely pray in the Prayer Meeting to edification. I hope I love the Lord and that I am one of the stones in the walls of His Church, but I am quite a hidden one." Ah, well! Poor though you are, despised and forgotten, the Glory of the Lord shall secure your safety! It was said of the tribe of Dan, "They shall go hindmost with their standards," and there must be some to be in the rear! So, while the rich may rejoice in what God has given to them, yet you, in your contentment with your lot, may be thankful for your poverty and bless the name of the Lord that though you may be in the rear, you are yet in the army—and you shall soon—as much as those in the van, have your full share of the spoil!

Possibly there are some who get into the rear from a much more painful cause, namely, from *backsliding.* I would not say a word to

excuse backsliding, for it is a dreadful thing that we should depart from our first love, or lose the vigor of our piety. It is dangerous to get even half a yard from the Savior's side! To live in the sun, like Milton's angel—that is blessed living! No lack of light or warmth there! But to turn our backs on the sun, as the descendants of Cain did of old, and to go journeying away from Christ—this is dangerous in the extreme. "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways." Many men talk of David's sin—it were well if they would remember David's repentance and David's broken bones after he had received pardon. He never was the same man afterwards that he was before. His voice was hoarse and cracked. You can tell the Psalms that he wrote after his fall, for his pen quivered as he wrote them, and yet, blessed be God, he could say, "Although my house is not so with God; yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." Even to these falling ones, Christ is kind! Though they have wandered from Him, His voice is not that of condemnation, but of consolation. Return, you backsliding ones! He still acknowledges the marriage bonds. "I am married unto you, says the Lord." Backslider, let this be some comfort to you, if you are bewailing your backslidings. But oh, if you are not conscious of them, or are conscious of them, but are not mourning them, tremble, tremble, lest backsliding should become apostasy and you should prove beyond question that you never had a sound work of Grace in your heart!

Now, whoever it may be, in the militant host of the Lord, who is in the rear, here is our comfort—that the Glory of the Lord shall be the rereward! Only one or two of you can guess, in any adequate measure, what the care of such a large Church as this is. I have sometimes felt as Moses did when he said to the Lord, "Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them, that You should say unto me, Carry them in your bosom, as a nursing father bears the sucking child?" But here is my consolation, "the Lord knows them that are His." And those of you who do not always show due faith and courage—who do not advance to the front, as we would wish in Christian service, we nevertheless commend you to the care of our God, praying that the rear may be Divinely preserved. We wish that you would quicken your pace, that you would grow in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, but we know that even as it is, you shall be found of Him in peace in the day of His appearing, since your righteousness is found in Him and you are not trusting in yourselves.

But, now, *supposing the text to refer to the individual Christian*—how shall we translate it?

We will translate it in three ways. First, *as relating to our past*—that which is behind us. We need a protection from the past. Now, what is that which is behind us? There is something to rejoice in, for God has been gracious to us, but there is very much to mourn over, for we remember our former lusts in our ignorance, things of which we are now ashamed. Christian, look back awhile upon those sins of yours, the sins

of your youth and your former transgressions—sins against Law and against Gospel, sins against light and against love, sins of omission and sins of commission. What about them? Suppose that, like a pack of hungry wolves, they should pursue you? Suppose they should come after you, as Pharaoh and his chariots and his horsemen went after the children of Israel when they escaped out of Egypt? Ah, then the Glory of the Lord shall be your rereward! Christ and His Atonement shall come between us and our sins and He shall drown our enemies in the Red Sea of His blood, even as he drowned Pharaoh and all his raging hosts who pursued the chosen people! Fear not your past sin, Christian! Tremble at the thought of it, by way of repentance, but thank God that you shall not be called to account for it, for all your sins were numbered on the Scapegoat's head of old and He took them and made an end of them and carried them away forever! "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" As to past sin, the glorious Atonement shall bring up the rear!

Then there are *our past habits.* How much of injury we still suffer from these! A man who has been accustomed to witness scenes of vice will frequently have most fearful pictures painted upon his eyeballs, even when they are closed for prayer! Yes, and when the sacred hymn is going up to Heaven, a word in it may suggest a snatch of a profane song, or bring to the recollection even blasphemy itself! It is a sad thing to have learned the arts of sin, to have acquired habits of passionate temper, of pride, or covetousness, or of falsehood. We may well tremble lest these old enemies should at last prove too much for us. We have left them behind us—they do not lead and guide us as once they did—but they dog our steps. The dominion of sin has been broken, but the law of sin is still there to vex us. The tree is cut down, but the sprouts still spring from the root and are all too vigorous, especially at times when they have been watered by circumstances, for at the scent of water they will bud and grow. Ah, then, we must take our bad habits to the Lord Jesus! We must ask Him to manifest His Glory by helping us to conquer them and we shall yet break these bonds which had become like fetters of iron! We shall snap them as Samson of old did his green straps and we shall be free! But, the Glory of the Lord must do it, and we shall have to give Him all the praise!

So, the whole of the past, if you take it in any of its aspects, need not cause the Christian tormenting sorrow, for he can believe that all his sinful past is left with God, so that, as neither things present, nor things to come shall be able to separate him from the love of God, so not even things past shall be able to do it!

But again, understanding the text as referring to the individual Believer, we may speak of the rear as signifying *that part of our nature which is most backward in yielding to the power of Divine Grace.* Brothers and Sisters, often, to will is present with us, but how to perform that which we would, we find not! The understanding is convinced and that leads the van. Firm affections are awakened and they follow after. But there is a weaker passion which would, if it dared, consent to sin—and that is this flesh of ours in which there dwells no good thing! It is this

dangerous rear, this weakest part of our nature, which we have most cause to dread. O Friends, you know but little of yourselves if you do not know this, that there are such weak points about you that you might be overthrown in a moment if almighty Grace did not preserve you! Peter is laughed at by a silly maid and he falls. "How are the mighty fallen!" How little a thing brings an Apostle to the level of a blasphemer! As for this rear part of our army, what shall we do with it? It is here that God's Glory will be seen in conquering and overcoming! "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," and gives us victory in the very place where we were accustomed to say, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Those straggling passions which we cannot marshal as we would, into regular order. Those wandering thoughts. Those downward desires. That cold heart which will not grow warm, as we would have it, but will lose its holy glow—all these powers of ours shall be brought into subjection and sanctified by Grace! God shall gather up the stragglers and bring the whole man safe to perfection by the sanctifying power of the Spirit!

Once again, still understanding the individual Christian, may we not speak of our rear as signifying *the end of our days?* The Glory of the Lord shall be the rereward of our mortal history. The van was blessed, when we looked to Christ and were lightened, and our faces were not ashamed—

"Many days have passed since then,
Many changes have we seen
Yet have been upheld till now—
Who could hold us up but Thou?"

But the rear of the march of life is coming. We shall soon be up to our necks in the cold river—the waves and billows must soon roll over us! We may desire to be with Christ, but death, itself, never can be desirable—

"We shrink back again to life,
Fond of our prison and our clay."

We long to be with Christ, for it shall be "far better" there, but that last pinch, when soul and body shall be separated, cannot be looked forward to without solemn awe. Oh, how sweet to think that Christ shall bring up the rear of our life! If ever we have had His Presence, we shall have it then! We shall—

"Sing when the death-dew lies cold on our brow,
If ever we loved You, our Jesus, 'tis now."

Perhaps our last day will be our best and brightest day and we shall be surprised to find what floods of Glory there are around and above the floods of death! I see before me many, very many veterans. Your gray hairs tell of your nearness to Heaven. I trust your locks are whitened with the sunlight of Glory! Oh, be not afraid! You shall find it a blessed thing to sleep in Jesus—and even as you go to that last bed, you shall not tremble, for He shall be so manifestly with you that you shall not be afraid! The Glory of the Lord shall be your rereward and what that Glory shall be, what heart can imagine, what tongue can tell? The Glory that excels the glory of perfection! The Glory of being made like unto the First-Born among many brethren! The Glory of the Well-Beloved which He had

with His Father before the world was! "The glory which you gave Me, I have given them." Behold, then, your latter end! Oh, that our last days might be with the righteous and our last end be like theirs! The Glory of the Lord shall be the Christian's rereward.

II. But now, only for a minute or two, let me show you HOW THE GLORY OF THE LORD thus, both in the case of the whole Church of Christ and of each separate Christian, BECOMES THE MEANS OF GRACIOUS PRESERVATION.

What is this "Glory of the Lord" which shelters the weak and preserves the saints? May we not understand it to mean, first of all, *the glorious attributes of God? God's mercy* is one of His glories. It is His great glory, you know, that He is a God passing by iniquity, transgression, sin and remembering not the guilt of His people. Now, Brothers and Sisters, as to our past sins, our weaknesses and all those other senses in which we understand the rear of our spiritual host—as to all these, the mercy of God will glorify itself in them all! Notwithstanding our weakness, Mercy shall find a platform for the display of itself and where sin abounded, there shall Grace much more abound. When you think of the greatness of your sin, think also of the greatness of God's mercy at the same time. As Master Wilcox says, "If you cannot keep your eye on the Cross when you are repenting, away with your repenting!" A sense of sin which is not also attended with a belief in God's mercy, is not an evangelical sense of sin. Oh, to know the super abounding mercy of the loving God who delights in mercy, His last-born, but His best-beloved attribute! He will glorify Himself by His mercy in delivering you when you most need it.

So will He also use the glorious attribute of *His Wisdom.* It takes a wise captain to conduct the rear of the army. To lead the van needs courage and prudence, but to protect the rear often needs more wisdom and even more courage! And God will show the wisdom of His Providence and the fidelity of His Grace in taking care of the weakest of the host and in preserving you, Believer, in that place where you are most in need of preservation.

So will He also show *His Power.* Oh, what power it will be that will be needed to bring any of us to Heaven! We need a God to get us there. Nothing short of Divine strength will ever be able to preserve any of us. So crushed and hardened, and sometimes so stung with the venom of the old serpent, how shall we who are in the rear be kept unless the bare arm of God is revealed? The Glory of the Lord in Mercy, Wisdom and Power shall shine transcendently in our case!

And here, too, shall be conspicuous *the Immutability of God.* Beloved, of all the attributes of God next to His Love, this is, perhaps, the sweetest to the tried Christian, namely, His Immutability—

"Immutable His will
Though dark may be my frame."

You are not trusting in a Savior who was yours yesterday, but is not faithful today, or who will fail you tomorrow! Every word of His promise stands sure and He, Himself, stands fast to it. How the Immutability of God will be illustrated in those who have had a long life and borne trials

all through it, but who find, at the last, that Christ, who loved His own which were in the world, did love them even unto the end! Yes, the weakness, which you now discover and mourn over shall only afford an opportunity for the faithfulness of God to reveal itself in your case! The Glory of the Lord, in all its attributes, shall bring up the rear!

May we not also understand, besides His attributes, *His Providence?* The Providence of God is part of His Glory. Thus He shows the skirts of His royal robes among the sons of men, as He has dominion over all the events of time. Ah, yes, you may rest assured that in all those points in the Christian Church which are the most weak, and the most behind, the Providence of God will be seen in bringing the entire army of God home, safely home, victoriously home! Looking at the history of the whole Church, it is cheering to us to see that God has never sustained a defeat. And when His army seems to have been repulsed for a time, it has only been drawn back to take a more wondrous leap to a yet greater victory! One wave may recede, but the main ocean advances, the great tide of our holy faith is coming up and as we watch wave after wave dying upon the shore, we must not weep, or think that God is sustaining a disappointment, for the main flood must advance and it shall, till all the mud of idolatry and human sin, and all the sand of human rebellion shall be covered with the silver tide of Truth and Love, and against the rocks of eternity, the great waves of Gospel Truth shall forever beat! Courage, my Brothers and Sisters, the Lord will bring up the rear by His Providence, ruling and overruling, making evil produce good and good something better—and better still in infinite progression! Not only to the whole Church, but to you, also, individually, shall it be so! And in due time, if you will but wait, you shall not be disappointed, but your light shall rise in obscurity and the days of your mourning shall be ended! The Glory of the Lord shall thus be our rereward.

But may we not believe that the Glory of the Lord, which brings up the rear, is *the Lord Himself?* After all, we cannot dissociate the Glory from the Glorious One! God Himself we must have if we would see His Glory! Ah, Brothers and Sisters, the wine of communion with our Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, is the surest preservative against fear! And especially ought we to cultivate this communion when we feel that we are most in danger. Near to the Savior's bosom it does not matter what we suffer! Close to God, He who is full of infirmities will overcome them all. Whatever your besetting sin may have been, put your head upon the Savior's bosom and that besetting sin shall not overthrow you! Close to the Master and since His garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, you shall never want for perfume. Have Christ with you and you cannot walk in darkness, however dark your way may be! Get to your chambers. Wait upon Him in prayer. In coming down from those chambers with your souls refreshed, say to Him, "Abide with us from morn to eve," for you may rest assured that in this holy communion you shall find the true protection, while they who neglect this are most apt to slip!

And so, let me close these few words of address by *entreating you always to fly to the Glory of the Lord whenever you feel your danger* and even when you do not feel it, for it is well to be there. "Trust in the Lord and do good—so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed." Trust not in man, nor put any confidence in the glory of man. Rest not in your circumstances, nor your wealth, nor your health, for the glory of all these shall pass away as the beauty of the flower in the field which is soon cut down beneath the mower's scythe. Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength! You sons of men, trust in your God and you shall be secure beneath the shadow of His wings. You sinners, fly to the Savior! "Seek you the Lord while He may be found." Look to the Cross of Jesus and put all your dependence in His suffering and His merits—and you who have done so already, trust more than ever to your God and to your God, alone, in every hour of ill, and every night of grief!

The Lord bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 12:1-44.

In this chapter our Savior dispels the fears of His disciples concerning temporal things, and especially their fear of persecution and their fear of need.

Verses 1, 2. *In the meantime, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trampled upon one another, He began to say unto His disciples, first of all, Beware you of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.* What, therefore, can be the use of hypocrisy? Hypocrisy leads a man to pretend to be what he is not. His only hope lies in not being discovered. But, as Christ declares that "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known," hypocrisy becomes insanity as well as iniquity! Therefore, keep clear of it in every shape and form.

3-5. *Therefore whatever you have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which you have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops. And I say unto you, My friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: fear Him, which after He has killed, has power to cast into Hell; yes, I say unto you, Fear Him.* There is nothing, comparatively, to fear in death considered by itself. If that were the end of man, he need have little or no fear even of God, Himself. But inasmuch as after death there is another state which is everlasting and unchangeable, there is grave cause for the ungodly to fear Him who, "after He has killed, has power to cast into Hell."

6, 7. *Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.* So particular is the care of Divine Providence.

7. *Fear not, therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows.* And if He counts the sparrows, and cares for them, He certainly will not forget you!

8, 9. *Also I say unto you, Whoever shall confess Me before men, Him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denies Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.* Mind what you are doing, then, you who never confess Christ before men, because, according to the context of this passage, you are set down as having denied Him. Christ first speaks of those who confess Him and then of those who do not confess Him—and He describes them as virtually denying Him. On another occasion, Christ said, "He that is not with Me is against Me. And he that gathers not with Me scatters abroad." Examine that attitude of yours, which you suppose to be neutral, and see how Christ regards it—and then ask yourself whether you can be satisfied to remain in it any longer.

10. *And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemes against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven.* What is the sin against the Holy Spirit? We do not know and I think it is a great mercy that we do not know. I will tell you one reason why I think it is a great mercy, and that is because the devil is continually tempting poor distracted souls to commit that sin. I have, within the past week, seen several persons who have been frequently tempted to commit it. Only, happily, they did not know what the sin against the Holy Spirit was! And, therefore, they could not persuade themselves into the belief that they had committed it. I have seen many people who have told me that they have committed the unpardonable sin, and I have asked them to sit down and tell me what that sin was, for if they could do so, I would find out something that I did not know! In every instance I have very soon been able to say to them, "Though I do not know what the unpardonable sin is, I am quite certain that what you mention is not that sin, for such sin as yours has frequently been forgiven." It is a blessing that we are left in the dark concerning that matter! Only as I have often said to you, do not presume upon your ignorance. This warning is something like the notice you see put up on certain great men's estates, "Man-traps and spring guns set here." If you go round the mansion, and say to the owner, "If you please, Sir, will you tell me where the man-traps and spring guns are?" He will say, "No. Why should you want to know where they are? You keep from trespassing and then it will not matter to you where they are." That very indistinctness about the warning is a part of the preventive power which surrounds it! You have no right to go trespassing there at all, so keep away from the place! And you are not told what the unpardonable sin is, though there is a sin which is unto death and there is a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit which shall not be forgiven.

11, 12. *And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take you no thought how or what thing you shall answer, or what you shall say: for the Holy Spirit shall teach you in the*

same hour what you ought to say. He has often done this. If you will read in *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, the answers given even by unlearned, illiterate men and women who were taken quite at unawares, and assailed by subtle questions, you will see that they often answered in a remarkably wise way. They could not have answered better if the questions had been before them for months! They frequently baffled their cunning adversaries by their wisdom and sometimes by their wit, for the Holy Spirit taught them in the same hour what they ought to speak.

13. *And one of the company said unto Him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.* He rudely broke in upon Christ's discourse when He was preaching upon these important matters because he wanted the Savior to act the part of a judge in his dispute with his brother!

14. *And He said unto him, Man, who made Me a judge or a divider over you?* Some present-day minister, if this request had been made to him, would probably have said, "Well, I may save some litigation, perhaps, if I attend to this matter." As a general rule, Brother, you had better mind your own business! Your Master, who was far wiser than you are, would not entangle Himself with the affairs of this life and, usually, true wisdom suggests that we, also, should keep ourselves apart from them.

15-17. *And He said unto them, Take heed and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses. And He spoke a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?* This was his dialogue within himself. He might have answered at once, "As I have more than I can use, I will give some to the poor! Why should I need to lay up my fruits, to let them get moldy and corrupt? There are many poor people starving at my very gates—I will let them share in what God has so bountifully given to me." This might have been his answer to the question, "What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?" His reply, however, was a very different one.

18, 19. *And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul.* It is, "my," all through—*my* fruits, *my* barns, *my* goods. The man was eaten up with selfishness and did not recognize the fact of his stewardship. He did not know that even his own soul did not belong to him—he thought it did—"I will say to *my* soul."

19, 20. *Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you: then whose shall those things be which you have provided?* "You fool." That is God's opinion of the man who means to build bigger barns in order that he may, himself, enjoy what is about to be taken away from him! He was a fool to be laying up in store for others to scatter. Many a miser's heirs have lived to ridicule him. He was the rake that gathered up a heap of gold—and they are the shovel and fork that scatter it! They drink the old man's health and are much obliged to him for stinting himself that they may drink so deeply.

21, 22. *So is he that lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. And He said unto His disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought.* It really means, "Make it not a matter of anxious care. Take no inordinate thought."

22, 23. *For your life, what you shall eat; neither for the body, what you shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.* Everybody admits the truth of this saying of the Savior, though all do not see everything that is involved in it. Therefore, as the soul is more important than all else, look well to your soul, look more to your life than to your food!

24. *Consider the ravens.* It is quite possible that some of them were flying overhead just at that time, and that Christ pointed to them and said, "Consider the ravens."

24, 25. *For they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them: how much more are you better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?* "You cannot lengthen your body." Or perhaps the Savior meant, "You cannot lengthen out your life."

26. *If you then are not able to do that thing which is least.* It really is a matter of very slight consequence whether you are a little shorter or taller.

26-29. *Why take you thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothes the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith? And seek not you what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, neither be you of doubtful mind.* Full of carking care and anxiety about little things or, indeed, about anything!

30. *For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knows that you have need of these things.* Therefore He would have you so live—industriously, prudently, thriftily—that you shall get these things and shall not waste them when you have them. But He would not have you live in an anxious, worrying, depressed spirit, as if you had no God, no Heavenly Father, no all-sufficient Friend—and as if there were no all-wise Providence, and you were left to drift about uncared for and alone. It is not so. O God of the lilies and God of the ravens, You will be the God of Your people, too!

31, 32. *But rather seek you the Kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.* He may not give you much here, but, in due time He will give you the Kingdom! He may give to worldlings more of these secondary things—these husks, these mere illusions, these mirages of the desert—than He gives to you—but for you there is prepared a city that has foundations and a Kingdom that shall never pass away! Therefore patiently wait until the appointed time and fear not, "for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."

33, 34. *Sell that you have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that fails not, where no thief approaches, neither moth corrupts. For where your treasure is, there will your heart also be.* It is not only important to lay up that which can truly be called treasure, but also to lay it up in the right place—"a treasure in the heavens that fails not, where no thief approaches, neither moth corrupts." Such treasure as that will not harm us if we set our heart upon it and, by-and-by, in God's good time, we and our treasure shall both be in Heaven!

35-37. *Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning. And you yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he comes and knocks, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the lord when he comes shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.* This always seems to me to be one of the most remarkable of our Lord's utterances while He was here upon the earth. His whole life was one of condescension, which was never more clearly manifested than it was when He, the Lord and Master of All, took the position of Servant of all, and washed His disciples' feet! Yet He here tells us that, if He finds us watching when He comes again, He will once more take His place as our servitor!

38-44. *And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have allowed his house to be broken into. Be you therefore ready also: for the Son of Man comes at an hour when you think not. Then Peter said unto Him, Lord, do You speak this parable unto us, or even to all? And the Lord said, Who, then, is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he comes shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he has.*

—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 TENDER MERCY
NO. 3029

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1907.

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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 23, 1869.

"The tender mercy of our God."
Luke 1:78.

IT was a proof of great tenderness, on God's part, to think of His sinful creature, man, at all. When the created one had willfully set himself in opposition to his Creator, that Creator might at once have destroyed him, or have left him to himself—to work out his own destruction. It was Divine tenderness that looked on such an insignificant creature impudently engaging in so gross a revolt! It was also infinite tenderness which had, long before that, considered man so carefully as, practically, to frame a plan by which the fallen might be restored. It was a wonder of mercy that Infallible Wisdom should unite with almighty power to prepare a method by which rebellious man might be reconciled to his Maker. It was the highest possible degree of tenderness that God should give up His own Son, His only-begotten Son, that He might bleed and die in order to accomplish the great work of our redemption. It is also indescribable tenderness that God should, in addition to the gift of His Son, take such pity upon our weakness and our wickedness as to send the Holy Spirit to lead us to accept that "unspeakable Gift." It is Divine tenderness which bears with our obstinacy in rejecting Christ—Divine tenderness which plies us with incessant expostulation and invitation—all to induce us to be merciful to ourselves by accepting the immeasurable Gift which God's tender mercy so freely presents to us.

It was wonderful tenderness on God's part that when He thought of saving man, He was not content with lifting him up to the place which he had occupied before he fell, but he must lift him far higher them he was before, for, before the Fall, there was no man who could truly call himself the equal of the Eternal—but now, in the Person of Christ Jesus, manhood is united with Deity! And of all the creatures that God has made, man is the only one whom He has taken into union with Himself and set over all the works of His hands. There was infinite tenderness in God's first thoughts of love toward us and it has been Divine tenderness right through up till now! And that same tenderness will bring our souls into Heaven where we shall say with David, "Your gentleness has made me great."

I am going to speak of the tenderness of God's mercy towards sinners, in the fond hope that, perhaps, some of you who have never yet loved our God, may see how great has been His love to you and so may be

enamored of Him—and trust in His dear Son, Jesus Christ—and so be saved!

I. And, first, I will try to show you that in the mercy of God THERE IS GREAT TENDERNESS IN ITS GREAT PROVISIONS.

There is a wounded soldier bleeding out his life upon the battlefield and here comes a friend, merciful and tender, who has brought him a refreshing draught which will help to bring him back to consciousness and open his half-glazed eyes again. He is covered with a clammy sweat, but there is cold water with which to wipe his fevered brow. His wounds are gaping wide and his very life is oozing forth from him, but his friend has brought the salve and bandages with which to strap up every wound. Is this all that he has provided for the wounded warrior? No, for there is a stretcher, carried by men who choose their steps with care, so that they do not jolt the poor invalid. Where will they carry him? The hospital is prepared. The bed—so soft, just fit to bear such a mass of weakness and pain—is waiting for him and the nurse stands there in readiness to render such service as may be required. The man soon sleeps the sleep that brings with it restoration—and when he opens his eyes, what does he see? Just such food as is suited to his circumstances and needs! A bunch of flowers is also placed near him, to gladden and cheer him with their beauty and fragrance. And a friend comes stepping softly up, and asks whether he has a wife, or a mother, or any friend to whom a letter may be written for him. Before he thinks of anything that he needs, it is there beside him and, almost before he can express a wish, it is supplied! This is one instance of the tenderness of human sympathy, but infinitely greater is the tenderness of God towards guilty sinners! He has thought of all that a sinner can possibly need and he has provided in abundance all that the guilty soul can require to bring him safe into Heaven itself!

For every individual case, God, in the Covenant of His Grace, seems to have prepared some separate good thing. For great sinners, whose iniquities are many and gross, there are gracious words like these, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." If the man has not fallen into such depths of open sin, the Lord says to him, as the tender-hearted Savior said to one who was in that condition, "One thing you lack"—and that one thing the Grace of God is prepared to supply! There is as much in the Word of God to encourage the moral to come to Christ as there is to woo the immoral to forsake their sins and accept "the tender mercy of our God." If there are children or young people who desire to find the Lord, there is this special promise for them, "Those that seek Me early shall find Me." Yes, even for the little ones there are such tender words as these, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God." Then, if the sinner is an aged man, he is reminded that some were brought to labor in the vineyard even at the 11th hour! And if he is actually dying, there is encouragement for him in the narrative of the dying thief who trusted in the dying Savior and who, when he closed his eyes on earth, opened them with Christ in Paradise! So again I say that in the Covenant of His Grace, God has seemed to meet the peculiar case of every sinner who

really desires to be saved. If you are very sad and depressed, desponding and almost dismayed, there are Divine declarations and promises that are exactly suited to your case! Here are a few of them—"He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds." "The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy." "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench." Everything seems to be done on purpose that into whatever condition a man may have fallen through the grievous malady of sin, God may come to him, not roughly, but most tenderly, and give to him just what he most needs! I rejoice to be able to say that all that a sinner can need between here and Heaven is provided in the Gospel of Christ—all for pardon, all for the new nature, all for preservation, all for perfecting and all for glorifying is treasured up in Christ Jesus, in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell!

Let us, then, before we go any further, bless that tender thoughtfulness of God which, foreseeing the greatness of our sins and our sorrows, our needs and our weaknesses, has provided for our vast necessities a boundless store of Grace and mercy!

II. But, secondly, the tenderness of God is seen IN THE METHODS BY WHICH HE BRINGS SINNERS TO HIMSELF.

The old system of surgery may have been useful in its time, but it certainly was not very tender. On board a man-of-war after action, what rough methods were adopted by those who were trying to save the lives of the wounded! Some of the remedies that we read of in the old doctors' books must have been a great deal more horrible than the diseases they were intended to cure, and I do not doubt that many of the patients died through the use of these rough remedies. But God's method of showing mercy to man is always Divinely tender. It is always powerful but, while masculine in its force, it is feminine in its tenderness.

See now, my dear Hearer, God has sent the Gospel to you, but how has He sent it? He might have sent it to you by an angel—a bright seraph might have stood here to tell you, in flaming sentences, of the mercy of God. But you would have been alarmed if you could have seen him and you would have fled from his presence! You would have been altogether out of order for the reception of the angelic message. Instead of sending an angel to you, *the Lord has sent the Gospel to you by a man of like passions with yourself*—one who can sympathize with you in your waywardness and who will affectionately try to deliver his message to you in such a form as will best meet your weakness. Some of you first heard the Gospel from your dear mother's lips—who else could tell the sweet story as well as she could? Or you have listened to it from a friend whose tearful eyes and heaving bosom proved how intensely she loved your soul. Be thankful that God has not thundered out the Gospel from Sinai with sound of trumpet, waxing loud and long, reminding you of the terrific blast of the last tremendous day, but that the blessed message of salvation, "Believe and live," comes to you from a fellow creature's tongue in melting tones that plead for its reception!

See also the tenderness of God's mercy in another respect, in that *the Gospel is not sent to you in an unknown tongue.* You have not to go to school to learn the Greek, or Hebrew, or Latin language in order that you may read about the way of salvation. It is sent to you in your homely Saxon mother tongue. I can honestly say that I have never sought after the beauties of eloquence and the refinements of rhetoric, but if there has been a word, more rough and ready than another, which I thought would favor my purpose of making plain the message of the Gospel, I have always chosen that word. Though I might have spoken in another fashion had I chosen to do so, I have thought it right and best, as the Apostle Paul did, to "use great plainness of speech," that no one of my hearers might be able to truthfully say, "I could not understand the plan of salvation as it was set forth by my minister." Well, then, since you have heard the Gospel so plainly preached that you have no need of a dictionary in order to understand it, see in this fact the tender mercy of God and His desire to win your soul unto Himself!

Remember, too, that the Gospel comes to men not only by the most suitable form of ministry, and in the simplest style of language, but *it also comes to men just as they are.* Whatever your condition may be, the Gospel is suitable to you. If you have lived a life of vice, the Gospel comes to you and says, "Repent you therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." You may, on the other hand, have lived a life of self-righteousness. If so, the Gospel bids you lay aside this worthless righteousness of your own, which is as filthy rags, and bids you put on the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness! You may be very tender-hearted, or you may be quite the reverse. Your tears may readily flow, or you may be hard as the neither millstone, but, in either case, God's Gospel is exactly suited to you! Yes, blessed be the name of the Lord, if a sinner is at the very gates of Hell, the Gospel is adapted to his desperate condition and can lift him up even out of the depths of despair!

One other thing I want you to particularly notice, and that is *that the mercy of God is so tender because it comes to you now.* If you are able to relieve a poor sufferer at once, and yet you keep him waiting, your treatment is as cruel as it is tardy. But God's Gospel says, "Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation!" If any sinner stands outside Mercy's gate for even half an hour, he must put the blame for his exclusion down to his own account, for, if he would but obey the Gospel message and trust to the finished work of Christ, the door would be opened at once! Such delays as this are not God's delays, but ours! And if we postpone our acceptance of His mercy, we have ourselves to blame!

III. Now I must pass on to notice, thirdly, THE TENDERNESS OF GOD'S MERCY IN THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE GOSPEL.

What does the Gospel ask of us? It certainly asks nothing of us but what it gives to us. It never asks of any man a sum of money in order that he may redeem his soul with gold. The poorest are as heartily welcomed by Christ as the richest! And the beggar who could count all his money on his fingers is as gladly received as the millionaire who has

his stocks and his shares, his lands and his ships! Poor men are bid to come to Jesus "without money and without price."

Neither does the Lord ask of us any severe penances and punishments in order to make us acceptable to Him. He does not require you to put your bodies to torture, or to pass through a long series of outward and visible mortification of the flesh. You may trust Christ while you are sitting in your pew—and if you do so, you shall be at once forgiven and accepted!

No great depth of learning is asked as a condition of salvation. In order to be a Christian, one need not be a philosopher. Do you know yourself to be a sinner—guilty, lost, condemned—and Christ to be a Savior? Do you trust Christ to be *your* Savior? Then you are saved, however ignorant you may be about other matters!

Nor is any great measure of spiritual depression asked as a qualification for coming to Christ. I know that some preachers seem to teach that you must not come to Christ till you have first been to the devil—I mean that you must not believe that Christ is able and willing to save you until you have been, as it were, right up to Hell's gates in terror of conscience and awful depression of spirits! Jesus Christ asks not anything like this of you—but if you truly repent and forsake your sins, give up the evils which are destroying you and put your trust in the griefs and pains which He endured upon the Cross, you are saved!

Nor does the Gospel even ask a great amount of faith of you. To be saved does not require Abraham's faith, nor the faith of Paul or Peter. It requires a like precious faith—faith similar in substance and in essence, but not in degree. If you can but touch the hem of Christ's garment, you shall be made whole! If your view of Christ is such a poor trembling glance that you seem to yourself scarcely to have seen Him, yet that look will be the means of salvation to you! If you can but believe, all things are possible to him that believes! And though your belief is but as a grain of mustard seed, yet shall it ensure your entrance into Heaven! What a precious Savior Christ is! If you have sincere trust in Him, even though it is but very faint and feeble, you shall be accepted. If you can, from your heart, say to Christ, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom," you shall soon have His gracious assurance, "You shall be with Me in Paradise." Do not delude yourself with the idea that there is a great deal for you to *do* and to *feel* in order to fit yourself for coming to Christ. All such fitness is nothing but unfitness! All that you can do to make yourself ready for Christ to save you is to make yourself more unready! The fitness for washing is to be filthy—the fitness for being relieved is to be poor and needy. The fitness for being healed is to be sick—and the fitness for being pardoned is to be a sinner! If you are a sinner—and I guarantee you that you are—here is the Inspired Apostolic declaration, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." And to that declaration we may add our Lord's own words, "He that believes on Him is not condemned." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Oh that God would give all of you the Grace to receive this gracious Gospel,

whose requirements are so tenderly and so mercifully brought down to your low estate!

IV. The fourth point which illustrates God's tender mercy is this—THERE IS GREAT TENDERNESS ABOUT ALL THE ARGUMENTS OF THE GOSPEL.

How does the Gospel speak to men? It tells them, first, of *the Father's love.* You never can forget, if you have once heard or read it, the story of the prodigal son who wasted his substance with riotous living. You remember how he said, when he was feeding the swine, "I will arise and go to my father." That was a Divine touch and showed the Savior's master hand when He put it in and again when He added this affecting description, "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." Sinner, that is God's way of coming to meet you! If you want to meet Him, He sees that yearning desire and that trembling wish of yours and He will come more than half way to meet you! Yes, it is because He comes *all the way* that you are able to go any part of the way!

How else does the Gospel talk to men? Why, it tells them of *the great Shepherd's love.* He lost one sheep from His flock and He left the 99 in the wilderness while He went to seek the one which had gone astray. And when He had found it, He laid it on His shoulders, rejoicing, and when He came home, He said to His friends and neighbors, "Rejoice with Me; for I have found My sheep which was lost." That lost sheep was the type of an unconverted sinner, and that Shepherd is the bleeding Savior who came to seek and to save that which was lost!

Ought not such arguments as these prevail with you? When the Gospel seeks to win a sinner's heart—its master plea comes from the heart, the blood, the wounds, the death of the Incarnate God, Jesus Christ, the compassionate Savior! The thunders of Sinai might drive you away from God, but the groans of Calvary ought to draw you to Him! God's tender mercy appeals even to man's self-interest and says to him, "Why will you die? Your sins will kill you. Why do you cling to them?" It says to him, "The pains of Hell are terrible." And it only mentions them in love, so that the sinner may never have to feel them, but may escape from them. Mercy also adds, "The Grace of God is boundless, so your sin may be pardoned. The Heaven of God is wide and large, so there is room for you there." Mercy thus pleads with the Sinner, "God will be glorified in your salvation, for He delight in mercy, and He says that as He lives, He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live."

I cannot enlarge upon this point, but must be content with saying that *all Scripture proves God's love to sinners.* Almost every page of Scripture speaks to you, Sinner, with a message of love! And even when God speaks in terrible language, warning men to flee from the wrath to come, there is always this gracious purpose in it—that men may be persuaded not to ruin themselves and may, through the abounding mercy of God, accept the free gift of eternal life instead of willfully choosing the wages of sin which must assuredly be death!

O my dear Hearers, as I think of some of you who are unconverted, I can hardly tell you how sad I feel when I recollect against what tenderness you have sinned! God has been very good to many of you. You have been kept from the depths of poverty, you have even been dandled on the knee of prosperity. Yet you have forgotten God! Others of you have had many Providential helps in fighting the battle of life. You have been often Divinely assisted when you were sick, or when your poor wife and children were all but in need. God very graciously stepped in to supply your needs, yet now you talk to your friends about how "lucky" you have been, whereas the truth is that God has been tenderly merciful towards you! Yet you have not even seen His hand in your prosperity and, instead of giving God the glory for it, you have ascribed it to that heathen goddess, "Luck." God has been patient and gentle with you as a nurse might be toward a wayward child, yet you altogether ignore Him or turn away from Him! You were sick, a little while ago, and God raised you up again to health and strength—is there still no burning of your heart towards God? I pray that God's Grace may work in you the change that no pleading of mine can ever produce, and that you may say, "I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned." If you heartily make that confession to your Heavenly Father, He will forgive you and welcome you as freely as the father in the parable welcomed the returning prodigal!

V. The last point of the tenderness of God's mercy that I can now speak of is this, THE TENDERNESS OF ITS APPLICATIONS AND OF ITS ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

What does God do for sinners? Well, when they trust in Jesus, *He forgives all their sins, without any upbraiding or drawbacks.* I have sometimes thought that if I had been the father of a prodigal son, I could have forgiven him when he came home and I hope I should have very freely done so. But I do not think I could ever have treated him in quite the same way that I treated his elder brother. I mean this—I would have had them sit at the same table, and feast on the same food—but I think that when market-day came round, I would have said to my younger son, "I shall not trust you with the money. I must send your elder brother to the market with that, for you might run away with it." Perhaps I would not go so far as to say this, but I think I would feel it, for such a son as that one would be rather suspicious for a long time. Yet see how differently God deals with us! After some of us have been great sinners and He has forgiven us, He puts us in trust with the Gospel and bids us go and preach it to our follow sinners! Look at John Bunyan—a swearing, drinking profligate playing at "tip-cat" on Sundays—yet, when the Lord had forgiven him, He did not say to him, "Now, Master John, you will have to sit in the back seats all your life. You shall go to Heaven, I will provide you a place there, but I cannot make as much use of you as I can of some who have been kept from such sins as you have committed." Oh, no! He is put in the front rank of the Lord's servants, an angel's pen is given to him that he may write *The Pilgrim's Progress,* and he has the high honor of lying for nearly 13 years in prison for the

Truth's sake! And among all the saints there is scarcely one who is greater than John Bunyan! Look at the Apostle Paul, too. He called himself the chief of sinners, yet his Lord and Father made him, after his conversion, such an eminent servant of Christ that he could truly write, "In nothing am I behind the very chief of Apostles, though I am nothing."

It is a proof of great tenderness on God's part that He gives liberally and upbraids not. He not only forgives, but He also forgets! He says, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." And although we may have been the vilest of the vile, He makes no drawbacks on that account. I have known a father who has said to his bankrupt son, "Now, you young scapegrace, I will set you up in business again, but I have already lost so much money through you that I shall have to make a difference in my will, for I cannot give all this to you and then treat you as I treat your brother." But, blessed be God, He makes no difference in His will! He has not said that He will give the front seats in Heaven to those who have sinned less than others have done, and put the greater sinners somewhere in the background. Oh no! They shall all be with Jesus where He is and shall behold and participate in His Glory! There is not one Heaven for the great sinners and another for the little ones—but there is the same Heaven for those who have been the greatest sinners, but who have repented and trusted in Jesus, as there is for those who have been kept from running into the same excess of riot. Let us admire the wondrous tenderness of Divine Grace in its dealings with the very chief of sinners! When God deigns to cleanse a sinner, He does not partly wash him, but He takes away all his sin! He does not partly comfort him, but He loads him with loving kindness and gives him all that his heart could wish! Oh, that sinners could be persuaded to come unto Him for His full and free forgiveness!

Possibly somebody here says, "If God is so tender in mercy towards those who come to Him through Christ, I should be glad if you could explain why His mercy has not been extended to me. I have been seeking the Lord for months! I am at His House as often as I can be. I delight to hear the Gospel preached and I long for it to be blessed to me. I have been reading the Scriptures and searching for precious promises to suit my case, but I cannot find them. I have been praying for a long while, but my prayers still remain unanswered. I cannot get any peace! I wish I could. I have been trying to believe, but I cannot." Well, my Friend, let me tell you a story that I heard the other day. I cannot vouch for its truth, but it will serve for an illustration for me. There were two drunken sailors who wanted to go across a narrow inlet. They got into a boat and began to row, in their wild drunken way, but they did not appear to make any headway. It was not far across, so they ought to have been on the other side in a quarter of an hour, but they were not across in an hour, nor yet in several hours! One of them said, "I believe the boat is bewitched." The other one said he thought *they* were and I suppose they were, through the liquor they had been drinking! At last, the morning light came and one of them, who had become sober by that time, looked over the side of the boat and then called out to his mate, "Why, Sandy, you never pulled up the anchor!" They had been tugging at the oars all night long, but had

not pulled up the anchor! You smile at their folly and I do not regret that you do because you can now catch the meaning of what I am saying. There is many a man who is, as it were, tugging away at the oars with his prayers, and his Bible reading, and his going to Chapel, and his trying to believe. But, like those drunken sailors, he has not pulled up the anchor! That is to say, he is either holding fast to his own supposed righteousness, or else he is clinging to some old sin of his which he cannot give up. Ah, my dear Friend! You must pull up the anchor whether it holds you to your sins or to your self-righteousness! That anchor, still down out of sight, fully accounts for all your lost labor and fruitless anxiety. Pull up that anchor and there will soon be a happy end of all your troubles—and you will find God to be full of tender mercy and abundant Grace even to you! May it be so, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 54.

The precious promises contained in this chapter belong in the first place to the Church of God, but, as that which belongs to the Church really belongs to every member of it, we shall not be acting dishonestly with the Scripture if we who are Believers, personally take home to ourselves every drop of comfort that we can find here!

Verse 1. *Sing, O barren, you that did not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you that did not travail with child.* Sing, even though you are barren! Do not postpone your song until God's promise is fulfilled unto you, but sing even while you are desolate and forlorn—and let faith pitch the key-note. Let me, therefore, entreat any of you who are disconsolate and sad, to give heed to the words of the Prophet and even *now* begin to sing! Give to God songs in the night—imitate the nightingale and sing though not a star is to be seen!

1. *For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, says the LORD.* After all, we who have the deepest sorrow have the highest joy, and if we are sometimes desolate, we need not wish to change with those who always keep the even tenor of their way. If we have great downs, we also have great ups! If the valleys are deep, blessed be God, the hills are high and the view from their summits is glorious! Let us be thankful even if our lot is a hard one, if we are the Lord's, "for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, says the Lord."

2, 3. *Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of your habitations: spare not, lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes; for you shall break forth on the right hand and on the left; and your seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.* This is another act of faith—not only singing before the mercy comes, but getting ready to receive it before it is in sight, stretching the curtains and the cords in order to have room to house the blessing which has not yet arrived! Carnal reason says, "When we have

the children, we will enlarge the tent. When we have gathered the congregation, we will build a House of Prayer." But faith says, "I will enlarge my heart that it may be able to take in the blessing which is sure to come. I will be big with expectation. I will open my mouth wide—not when I see the blessing, but before I see it, that God may place the blessing in my open, empty mouth." May the Lord graciously give us enlarged expectations, for, according to our faith, so shall it be unto us!

4. *Fear not; for you shall not be ashamed: neither be you confounded; for you shall not be put to shame: for you shall forget the shame of your youth, and shall not remember the reproach of your widowhood any more.* Here is a third line for faith to run upon, namely, that of courage. Before you are strong, before you have been lifted up out of your weakness, be of good courage and fear not, for if you walk by faith and trust in the Lord with all your heart, you shall never have any cause to be ashamed of having done so. The Lord will always honor your faith because your faith honors Him. Be of good cheer, for you shall yet have good reason to rejoice and all those days that you are now ashamed to think of, in which you lived without God, and without Christ—your days of sad and terrible widowhood—shall be so completely surpassed by the abundance of mercy which you shall receive from the Lord that you shall not remember them anymore!

5. *For your Maker is your husband; the LORD of Hosts is His name; and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. The God of the whole earth shall He be called.* Oh, how blessed it is that Jehovah, Israel's God, the Lord of Hosts, is the God of the whole earth—so that we poor Gentiles may come and hide under the shadow of His wings! And what a joy it is to all Believers that this great God has united us in the sacred bonds of marriage with Himself! "Your Maker is your husband." Oh, what bountiful provision will such a Husband make for us! How well will He comfort us! How abundantly will He bless us! So let our hearts be glad in Him.

6. *For the LORD has called you as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when you were refused, says your God.* Some of you know what it is to have had your affections betrayed and your hearts broken by unfaithful friends. Now the Lord calls you to come close to Himself that you may prove His faithfulness and so forget your past sorrows in your present and future joy.

7, 8. *For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the LORD, your Redeemer.* These choice words do not need any explanation! This blessed plaster only needs to be applied to the wounded heart and it will heal it at once. If the Lord will but speak these sentences into our souls, so that we may know that they are really meant for us, our rapture will be complete! Let me read these verses again—"For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says Jehovah, your Redeemer"—your God—your next

of kin—your Advocate and Champion! What a blessed name is this and what a wonderful combination is this—Jehovah, your next of kin!

9, 10. *For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed.* There is nothing really stable about them—all things that are visible must melt and flow away.

10. *But My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the LORD that has mercy on you.* What gracious words are these! What majesty there is in such consoling sentences as these! They remind us of Mr. Paxton Hood's lines—

"All His words are music, though they make me weep,
Infinitely tender, infinitely deep."

11. *O you afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted.* Where are you? Have you come in here to seek the consolation you cannot find anywhere else? Then see how God lays Himself out to comfort you! He has put into human language the true sympathy for you that He feels in His heart. And again He says to you, "O you afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted."

11. *Behold, I will lay your stones with fair colors, and lay your foundations with sapphires.* You shall have done with the rough tossing of the troubled sea and you shall come to land—to a royal city which has foundations of sapphire—to a king's palace where even the stones shall be stained with rich vermilion such as only princes use in their costly buildings—"I will lay your stones with fair colors, and lay your foundations with sapphires."

12. *And I will make your windows of agates, and your gates of carbuncles, and all your borders of pleasant stones.* See what riches belong to the Church of the living God! And, as I have already reminded you, everything that belongs to the Church belongs to every member of it. So we expect to see our Lord's face through a window of agate and to go through a gate of carbuncle to meet Him in the place of communion which shall itself be enriched with all manner of precious stones. Yes, and everything that has to do with us—even the very "borders" of our life shall be laid with "pleasant stones." Happy are all you who are the favorites of Heaven, the Beloved of the Lord! Blessed are you even in your shop and your store—blessed in the common things of your life, as well as in the choicest parts of your Christian experience!

13. *And all your children shall be taught of the LORD.* Our children are often our greatest care. We ask, "How shall they be educated? Where shall we place our boys and our girls?" Put them under the care of God, for, as Elihu said to Job, "Who teaches like Him?"

13, 14. *And great shall be the peace of your children. In righteousness shall you be established: you shall be far from oppression; for you shall not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near you.* The man who has the fear of God within his heart need have no fear of anybody else—

"Fear Him you saints, and you will then
Have nothing else to fear!
Make His service your delight—

He'll make your needs His care."

15. *Behold, they shall surely gather together.* You will have enemies, even if you lead the most blameless life that can be lived, for the absolutely Blameless One had many cruel enemies who hounded Him to death.

15. *But not by Me.* God is not with them, for He is on your side.

15. *Whoever shall gather together against you shall fall for your sake.* Oh, how often, and how mysteriously, and how terribly God has smitten the enemies of His people! The hand of the Lord has gone out against them as it went out against Sennacherib and his host in the days of good King Hezekiah.

16. *Behold, I have created the smith that blows the coals in the fire, and that brings forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the spoiler to destroy.* Even over the most wicked and the most powerful of men there is the supremacy of God! And deep and mysterious though the Doctrine is, yet Divine Predestination applies even to such sinners as Judas Iscariot and the vilest of the vile in all times. And herein is our confidence—that God is greater than death, and the devil, and Hell! He is supreme above all the malice and craft and cruelty of the worst and the greatest of men.

17. *No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper—*

"Neither two-edged sword nor falchion bright,
Nor barbed arrow that flies by night"—

"No weapon" of any kind—however cunningly made, or however deftly handled—"no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper."

17. *And every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment, you shall condemn.* The tongue—that worst of weapons, whose wicked words are sharper than swords—is like a condemned criminal.

17. *This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord.* Did I not rightly say that these precious promises belong not only to the whole Church of God as a body, but also to each individual member of that Church?

17. *And their righteousness is of Me, says the LORD.* If, then, your righteousness is found in God, in God you shall find everything else that you need for time and for eternity! God grant this unto each one of us for His dear name's sake! Amen.

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

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

A CONSISTENT WALK FOR TIME TO COME
NO. 3030

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 7, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
DURING THE YEAR 1864.

"As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him."
Colossians 2:6.

THOUGH the shepherd cares for the lambs and carries them in his arms, he does not cease his care when they become sheep. But, as long as they shall need to be tended, so long will he watch over them. Hence it is that our Apostle, though always quick of eye after newborn souls and abundantly anxious to bring sinners to a knowledge of the Truth of God as it is in Jesus, is equally in a conflict of soul for the spiritual healthfulness of those who have been born-again. Our text contains one of those loving admonitions. It is addressed, not to the ungodly, not to those who are strangers to our Lord and Master, but to those who have "received Christ Jesus the Lord." Longing for their spiritual good and anxious that they should be established in the faith, he admonishes them thus, "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him."

In endeavoring, by God's help, to speak upon this subject, we shall have three points. There is here, *first, a fact stated concerning Believers*—they have "received Christ Jesus the Lord." Then there *is an exhortation, or a counsel, offered to such*—"walk in Him." Besides which we have *a model held up for our imitation.* How are we to walk in Him? Why, just in the same way as we at first received Him! Let our first coming to Christ be to us the mirror of how we shall walk in Him all our days.

I. All true Christians are here described in the text as HAVING RECEIVED CHRIST JESUS THE LORD.

The first point to which I would particularly direct your attention *is the personality of this reception.* Believers have, it is true, received Christ's words. They prize every precept, they value every Doctrine, but this is not all. They have received Christ *Himself*. While they have received Christ's ordinances and are not slow to walk in obedience to the things which He has commanded, they do not stay here. They have received Christ Himself—His Person, His Godhead and His Humanity. They have "received Christ Jesus the Lord." And, mark you, there is a very great distinction here—and also a great mystery. A great distinction, I say, for there are some who do, I think, wholly believe the doctrines which Christ has taught, and are profoundly orthodox, full of an earnest controversial spirit for the faith once delivered to the saints and yet, for all that, they do not seem to have received Him, the very Christ of God! And, truly, there are many who have received both Baptism and the Lord's Supper,

yet, despite what any may say, we believe that they have not received Christ, but are still as great strangers to Him as though they had only passed through the rites common to mankind, or the rites in which heathens indulge! There is a vast difference between the outward reception of the Doctrine, or the ordinance, and the inward reception of *Christ.*

We also said that herein is a mystery—such a mystery that only he who has received Christ can understand. The preacher cannot tell you what it is to receive Christ. Human language is not adapted to convey to the mind this deep enigma, this matchless secret. We know what it is, for "truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ." We can describe it in such a measure that our friends who have also received Christ will know that we understand the mystery—but to the carnal mind it will always remain a puzzle how Christ can be "in us the hope of glory"—how we can eat His flesh and drink His blood. They run away to some carnal interpretation and suppose that the bread is turned into flesh at the Eucharist or that the wine is transformed into blood. That is *carnal* talk and this they talk because they know not what is the mystery of this receiving Christ and this walking in Christ.

This much, however, we may affirm. *The Believer has received Christ into his knowledge.* He knows Him to be God and to be Man. He knows Him to be set forth of the Father as the Redeemer, but, he also knows Him by a personal acquaintance. His eyes have not seen Him and yet he has looked to Him and has, by faith, seen the King in His beauty! His hands have not handled Him and yet there has been a secret touch by which the virtue has come out of Christ and has flowed into him! He has never sat down at a Communion Table when Christ has been physically present and yet full often he could say, "He brought me to the banqueting house and His banner over me was love." He has talked with me as a man talks with his friend and the strongest sense that can be attached to that sweet word, "communion," is tame in reference to the Believer's connection with the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ! And in that sense of knowing Him, intimately knowing Him, the Believer has received Christ!

Not only has he received Christ into his cognizance, but *into his understanding.* He understands, with all saints, the love of Jesus in its height, depth, length and breadth. He has so seen Christ as to understand of Him that He was before all time as the Ancient of Days and then had His delights with the sons of men in the great Covenant decree of electing love. He understands how He became made flesh with us—married to us—when He came on earth, the Son of Mary, "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh." He knows by experience what is the meaning of the Atonement. He can understand how Justice is satisfied and Grace magnified. Without confounding or making mistakes, he knows how God was always gracious and full of love and yet how Christ Jesus came that the love of God might be shed abroad in our hearts and we were reconciled unto God by His death. Hence the Christian does not read of Christ as though He were a mere historical personage, nor of His

work as a great mystery which he cannot comprehend, but he has received Christ into his understanding!

Ah, Beloved! This is a very poor and shallow sense compared with the next. I have received but one ounce of Christ into my understanding, but, bless His name, I have received the whole of Him *into my affections.* Good Rutherford used to pray for a larger heart, that he might hold more of Christ and, perhaps, you remember that strange extravaganza of prayer in which he says, "Oh, that I had a heart as deep, and wide, and high as Heaven, that I might hold Christ in it!" And then he said, "Since the Heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, oh, that I had a heart as vast as seven heavens, that I might get the whole of Christ into me and hold Him in my arms!" And truly, Christian, in one sense you have taken all of Christ into your soul, have you not? Do you not love Him—not a part of Him, but the whole of Him? I hope you can truly say to Christ—

"Have You a lamb in all Your flock
I would disdain to feed?
Have You a foe, before whose face
I fear Your cause to plead?
You know I love You, dearest Lord
But oh, I long to soar
Far from the sphere of mortal joys—
And learn to love You more!"

We must not leave this part of the subject without adding that the Believer has received Christ *into his trust,* and this he did at his spiritual birth. He received Christ into the arms of his faith. He took Jesus Christ to be, henceforth, the unbuttressed pillar of his confidence, the one Rock of his salvation, his strong castle and high tower. And, in this sense, every soul that is saved has "received Christ Jesus the Lord."

Our text seems to point to a threefold character in which we have received Christ. *We have received Him as the Christ.* My Soul, have you ever seen Him as the Father's Anointed One—as the Chosen and Sent One, ordained of old—as One that is mighty, upon whom help should be laid? Have you seen Him as God's great High Priest, ordained as was Aaron, chosen of God from among men? Have you looked upon Him as David did, as One chosen out of the people? We must accept Christ as the Anointed One and the right way to thus receive Him is to receive Him as the garments of Aaron received the oil that flowed from his head. Christ is the Anointed One and then you and I become anointed ones through the Holy Spirit which distils from Him to us—and so we receive Him as Christ.

And then He is called, "Jesus," and *we must receive Him as the Savior.* "You shall call His name, Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." Justification is receiving Christ as Jesus. So is sanctification! Only I think I must say justification and pardon receive Christ as Jesus—and sanctification receives Him as Christ Jesus, both as the Anointed One and the Savior. May you and I be daily delivered from sin—the guilt and power of it—and so receive Him as Jesus!

There is a peculiar emphasis about the next expression. The article is emphatic here, "Christ Jesus *the* Lord." To me, *if I receive Christ, He must*

be Lord—not one of the lords that may have dominion over me, but *the Lord,* peculiarly and specially. And though hitherto other lords have had dominion over me, now I am to obey Him and only Him. What do you say, professor? Have you received Christ Jesus *the Lord?* Is your will subject to His will? Do you desire only to act according to His bidding? Are His commands your desire? Is His will your will? Is He your Lord? For, mark you, you can never truly receive Him as Christ, or as Jesus, unless you receive Him as *the* Lord! Thus, another sense in which we receive Him is by subjecting ourselves entirely to Him, sitting at His feet, wearing His yoke, taking up His Cross and bearing His reproach.

You will note that there is also, in this description of a Christian, the thought of his *entire dependence.* The Apostle does not say, "As you have therefore fought for and won or earned Christ Jesus," but, "as you have therefore *received* Him." It is a humbling word which divests the creature of everything like boasting! What is there to glory in if I am a receiver? The Apostle in another place says, "If you did receive it, why do you glory, as if you had not received it?" The vessel that is filled under the flowing stream cannot boast, though it is ever so full, for it was naturally empty and owes its fullness to the stream. The beggar in the street, let him receive gold, yet cannot boast of the gold because he is a receiver. He who gave must have the honor of the benefaction—not the person who received! So let your faith be ever so strong, let your confidence in Christ be ever so glorious, you have nothing to boast of in it, for you have "received Christ Jesus." Beloved, here is a test for us—is our religion a receiving religion, or is it a working and an earning religion? An earning religion sends souls to Hell! It is only a *receiving* religion that will take you to Heaven! You may tug and toil, and do your best and make yourselves, as you think, as holy as the best of the Apostles—but when you have done your utmost, you have done nothing whatever! You have built a house of cards which shall soon fall down. But when you come as an empty-handed sinner, having nothing of your own—and *receive* Christ Jesus—then you have bowed your will to God's will. Or rather, Divine Grace has bowed it and you are saved according to the Lord's own word, "He that believes on Me is not condemned." Thus you have dependence connected with the personality of the Christian's faith!

We also have here *certainty*—"As you *have* received Christ Jesus the Lord." Oh, how many Christians—I hope they are Christians—talk as if they really thought it was impossible to attain to any assurance of faith whatever! It is the fashion with some Christians to say, "Well, I hope," and, "I trust"—and they have a notion that this is being very humble-minded. But to say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him," is thought to be pride! The declaration of Job, "I know that my Redeemer lives," or of the spouse in the Canticles, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His; He feeds among the lilies," is thought to be vain presumption and boasting. But indeed, Beloved, it is no such thing! Doubting is pride, but believing is humility! Let me prove it.

I think I used this illustration among you some little time ago. There are two children of one parent and the father says to the two children, "On such a day I intend to give you both a toy which has been the object of your ambition for many a day." Well, the older boy of the two sits down and calculates that the present will be expensive—and he begins to doubt whether his father can afford to purchase it. He remembers many times in which he has offended his parent, or broken his parent's commands and, therefore, he doubts whether he shall ever have it. He feels that he is unworthy— therefore he goes about the house without any joy, without any confidence. If anybody asks him whether his father will give him this present or not, he says, "Well, I—I hope so. I trust so."

Now, there is his little brother and the moment he heard that he was to have this present, he clapped his hands and ran out to his companions and said, "I am to have such-and-such a thing given me!" His brother checked him, "You are too presumptuous to say that." "No," said the little one, "for Father said he would give these toys to us." "Oh, but," said the other, "remember that you and I have often broken his commands!" "But he said he would." "Oh, but the thing is expensive!" "Ah, but Father said he would and unless you can *prove* that my father tells lies, I shall go and rejoice in the bright hope that he will keep his promise!" Now, I think that the younger of the two is less presumptuous than his brother, for certainly it is a high presumption for a child to doubt the veracity of his parent! No matter how excellent your reasoning may seem to be, and how clear it may be to the eyes of the flesh, it is always pride to doubt God! And to believe God—though, to the carnal mind which can never understand the bravery of faith, it may look like presumption—is always a badge of the truest and most reverent humility!

Beloved, you *may* know whether you are Christ's or not! I exhort you not to give sleep to your eyes till you know it! What? Can you rest when you do not know whether you are saved or not? O Sirs, can you sit down at your tables and feast—can you go about your daily business with this thought in your mind, "If I should drop dead, I do not know whether I should be found in Heaven or in Hell"? I tell you nothing but certainties will suit my soul! I hope I never shall rest comfortable while under a doubt of my interest in Christ. Doubts may come—these we can understand—but to be comfortable under doubts, we hope we never shall comprehend! No, nothing but to—

"Read my title clear
To mansions in the skies"

can give me joy and peace through believing! "You *have* received Christ the Lord." Just pass the question around the gallery there, and ask yourselves down below, "Have I received Christ Jesus the Lord?" Say, "Yes," or, "No," and God help you to give the answer solemnly as in His sight!

II. As briefly as possible we turn to notice THE COUNSEL GIVEN—"As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him."

There are three things suggested by the word, "walk"—continuance, progress, activity.

To walk in a certain way means *continuing in it.* Now, Christian, you took Christ to be your All-in-All, did you not? Well, then, *continue* to take Him as your All-in-All. The true way for a Christian to live is to live entirely upon Christ. Living by frames and feelings is a dying form of life. "He lived by a feeling experience," said one—and a poor method of living, too! Christians have experiences and they have feelings, but, if they are wise, they never feed upon these things, but upon Christ, Himself. You took Christ to be your All-in-All at first. You did not, then, mix up your frames and feelings with Him—you looked entirely out of self to Him. Well now, continue in the same frame of mind! You sat down at the foot of the Cross and you said—

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

Well, then stay there! Stay there! Never get an inch beyond that position. When you get sanctified, still look to Christ as if you were unsanctified! When you are on the verge of being glorified, look to Him as if you were just newly come out of the hole of the Pit. Hang upon Christ, you who are the best, just as though you were the worst! The same faith which saved Mary Magdalene, which saved Saul of Tarsus—must save you in the moment when you shall be the nearest to the perfect image of Christ Jesus! It is "none but Jesus" now to your soul—let it be "none but Jesus—none but Jesus," as long as you live!

In walking, there is not only continuance, but also *progress.* After a man becomes a Christian, he has not to lay again the foundation, but he has to go on and to advance in the Divine Life. Still, wherever he shall advance, he is always to say, "None but Christ! Christ is all!" Depend upon it, every inch of progress that you make beyond a simple reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ will entail the painful necessity of your going back. If you begin to patch Christ's robe of righteousness with the very best rags of your own, no matter how cleanly you may have washed them, every rag will have to be unraveled, and every stitch will have to be cut! There is the Rock, Christ Jesus. Some Christians begin building their own stages on the Rock. How carefully they tie the timbers together. How neatly they plane and smooth them. And then they get high up upon these stages that they have built and they feel so happy—they have such frames! Such feelings! Such graces! Such fullness! And they are inclined to look down upon those poor souls who are crying, "None but Jesus!" By-and-by there comes a storm and the edifice they have built begins to creak, and crack, and rock to and fro—and they begin to cry, "Ah, where are we now? Now we shall perish! Now Christ's love begins to dry up! Now He will fail us!" No—no such thing! It is not Christ who is failing you! It is not the Rock that is shaking, but what you have built upon the Rock! Come down from the stage which you have built and, as Job says, "embrace the Rock for want of a shelter." I believe those souls have the most safety and comfort who simply trust to Christ. Was it not

Irving who said that he believed his good works had done him more harm than his bad works had done him, for his bad ones drove him to Christ, but his good ones led him to rely upon them? And, after all, are not our good works, bad works, for is there not something in all of them to make us fly to the fountain of the Savior's blood for cleansing?

"As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him," also implies *activity.* Christians are not to be lie-a-beds, nor forever to sit still. There is an *activity* in religion without which it is of little worth. Feed the hungry. Clothe the naked. Help the poor. Teach the ignorant. Comfort the miserable. But take care that when you do all this, you do it in Christ, and for Christ—and let no thought of merit stain the act! Let no reflection of getting salvation for yourself come in to mar it all, but in Christ Jesus walk day by day. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, if a thunderstorm were to come on just now while we are sitting here, and if the lightning should come flashing in at these windows and run with its blue flame down these columns, you and I might begin to feel some alarm! And if one were struck dead in our presence, in what kind of state would you and I likely to be amidst such confusion and alarm? If I were to choose the words which I would like to say at such a moment, they would be these—

"Nothing in my hands I bring—
Simply to Your Cross I cling."

You are on board ship in a storm just now. There goes a mast into the water! The lifeboats have all drifted away. The ship is pretty sure to be dashed on yonder rock! Pallor is on every cheek and turmoil every side. What is your prayer as you kneel down? What are your thoughts? Do you think, now, about your sermons, about your visiting the sick, about your prayers and your experiences? No! I tell you that they will seem to you to be nothing better than dross and dung when you are in such a state of apprehension! But you will cling to Christ's Cross and be conveyed to Heaven, let the stormy winds blow as they will! And if everything were silent, tonight—could we hear nothing but the ticking of the clock were we, ourselves, reclining on our death pillow? While loving friends wiped the clammy sweat from our brow, surely we would, each one, wish to say—

"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness!
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand!
All other ground is sinking sand."

Well, walk in Him just as you would walk in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, but walk on the mountaintops of life's activities!

III. Let us now say a few words on our third point—THE MODEL WHICH IS PRESENTED TO US HERE. We are to walk in Him *as we received Him.*

And how did we receive Him? Let us remember. You will not have to strain your memories much, for, I think, though other days have mingled with their fellows and, like coins worn in the circulation, have lost their

impression, yet the day when you first received Christ will be as fresh as though it were newly minted in time. Oh, that first day!—

"Do mind the place, the spot of ground
Where Jesus did you meet?"

Some of us can never forget either that place or that time. Well, how did we receive Christ?'

We received Him very gratefully, having no claim whatever to His Grace. We felt that we had done everything to deserve God's wrath. We confessed that there was no merit in us, but we perceived that there was mercy in Him—

"We saw One hanging on a tree
In agonies and blood"

—and as He told us to look at Him and assured us that there was life in a look, we did—and we were lightened, and we found life in Him! Surely we had shaken our hands of all merit, as Paul shook off the viper into the fire at Melita. We had no confidence, then, in any resolutions of our own, in any performances yet to come, much less in anything past. Well, then, we are to come now as empty-handed as we came then! Our song is to be—

"Nothing in my hands I bring—
Simply to Your Cross I cling."

How did we receive Christ? Well, we *received Him very humbly.* Whatever pride may be in our heart—and there is much of it—and, I suppose we shall never get rid of it till we are wrapped in our winding-sheets—there was as little that day as we ever had at any other time. Oh, how humbly did we creep to the foot of the Cross! We were then broken in heart and contrite in spirit. Ah, Christian, can you remember what humble views you had of yourself—what a sink of depravity you felt your heart to be? Do you not recollect Augustine's expression when he compares himself to a walking dunghill? And did you not feel yourself to be something of that kind—so base, so loathsome that you could only stand afar off and cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner"? And you cried to Christ just as Peter did, "Lord, save me!" And just as the sea seemed about to swallow you up, you laid hold upon His outstretched hand and you were saved! Now, tonight, do the same. Your danger is as great as ever out of Christ. Your sin is as great as ever out of Him. Come then, casting away all the pride which your experiences and graces may have worked in you—come to Him and take Him for your All-in-All!

How did we receive Christ? If I recollect rightly—and I think I do—*we received Him very joyfully.* Oh, what joy my soul had when first I knew the Lord! It was holy day in my soul that day. Perhaps we have never had such joyous days since then, and the reason has been, most likely, because we have been thinking about other things and have not thought so much about Christ Jesus the Lord. Come, let us again take Him! The wine is as sweet—let us drink as deeply as ever. Christ, the Bread of Heaven, is as nourishing. Come, let us eat as heartily as ever. Fill your omers, O you poor and weak ones! Gather much, for you shall have nothing left over. This Manna is very sweet—it tastes like wafers made of

honey. Come to my Master as you came at first and He will give you to drink of the living waters once again!

How did we receive Christ? I am sure *we received Him very graciously.* He stood at the door and knocked, and we said, "Come in." Your Savior, my dear Friends, was long a stranger to your hearts. "Come in," we said. We knew that He meant to take the best seat at the table. We understood that He came as Master and Lord, but we said, "Come in." We did not quite know all that the Cross might mean, but whatever it might mean, we meant to take it! Surely that day, when He asked us, "Can you drink of My cup, and can you be baptized with My Baptism?" our soul said, "We are able." And though we have been unfaithful to Him, yet I hope tonight we can take Christ as unreservedly as ever. Had I dreamed, when first I preached His Gospel, that the way of the ministry would be so rough and thorny, my flesh would have shunned it! But, despite all, let it be what it is and ten thousand times worse, come in, my Master! Come and take Your servant—let me lie like a consecrated bull upon the altar, to be wholly burned, and not an atom left! Brothers, do you not feel the same? On this platform I have sometimes prayed that if the crushing of us might lift Christ one inch higher, it might be so! And if the dragging of our names through mire and dirt could make Christ's Church more pure, we have prayed that it might be so! We have prayed that if any shame, if any dishonor, if any pain might put one more jewel in His crown than could be there in any other way, we might have the honor of suffering and being made ashamed for His sake!

And I think, Brothers and Sisters, though the flesh struggles, we may pray tonight, "Lord, bind the sacrifice with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar." We have received Christ and in that same way—*unreservedly,* we desire to walk in Him—

"Have you counted the cost? Have you counted the cost
You followers of the Cross?
And are you prepared, for your Master's sake,
To suffer all worldly loss?
And can you endure with that virgin band,
The lowly and pure in heart
Who, where ever the Lamb does lead,
From His footsteps never depart?
Do you answer, 'We can'? Do you answer, 'We can,
Through His love's constraining power'?
But do you remember the flesh is weak,
And will shrink in the trial-hour?
Yet yield to His love who around you now
The bands of a man would cast.
The cords of His love who was given for you
To His altar binding you fast.
You may count the cost, you may count the cost
Of all Egypt's treasure,
But the riches of Christ you can never count—
His love you can never measure."

"As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him."

But oh, some of you have never received Him, so my last word is to them. Do you ask, "What is the way of salvation?" It is by receiving

Christ. Oh, then come and receive Him! May the Holy Spirit's power lead sinners to Christ! You need not bring anything to Him. You need not bring a soft heart to Him. You need not bring tears of repentance to Him. But just come and take Christ. Remember, it is not what you are, but it is what Christ is that saves you! Never look at yourself, but look at the wounds of Jesus! There is life there. God help you to look—to look tonight! And if you shall find Him, our prayer shall be that from this day forth, you shall walk in Him and He shall have the glory!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 90.

A Prayer of Moses, the Man of God.

It may help us to understand this Psalm if we recollect the circumstances which surrounded Moses when he was in the desert. For forty years he had to see a whole generation of people die in the wilderness. In addition to the deaths which might occur among those who were born in the wilderness, the whole of that great host which came out of Egypt, numbering, probably, between two and three million persons, must lie in their graves in the desert so that there must have been constant funerals—and the march of the children of Israel could be perceived along the desert track by the graves which they left behind them. You do not wonder, therefore, at this expression of the awe of "Moses, the man of God" as he was so continually reminded of the mortality of mankind. And note how reverently and trustfully he turns to the ever-living and eternal God and rests in Him.

Verse 1. *LORD, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.* "Did not Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all our fathers dwell in You? And though we are now weary-footed pilgrims who have no fixed dwelling place on earth, we do dwell in You. You, Lord, are the true home of all the generations of Your people."

2. *Before the mountains were brought forth, or before You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.* God is the only Being who has had eternal and essential Existence independently of all others—and all others have owed their existence to Him.

3. *You turn man to destruction and say, Return, you children of men.* He sends us forth into life, and He calls us back again in death.

4. *For a thousand years in Your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.* Yesterday, while it was with us, was a short period of 24 hours. But when it is past, it seems like nothing at all. A thousand years, all big with events which we consider to be full of weight and importance, make up a long period in which myriads of men come and go—yet those thousand years, in God's sight, "are but as yesterday when it is past," or but as the few hours in the night during which the mariner keeps watch at sea and then is relieved by another. A thousand years are but "as a watch in the night" to the Eternal—and He

needs no one to relieve Him, for "He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

5. *You carry them away as with a flood.* They have no power to stem the torrent.

5. *They are as a sleep.* Our earthly existence is but "as a sleep." Many things are not what they seem to us to be in our fevered dreams. The time of awaking is coming and then things will appear very different to us from what they seem to be now.

5. *They are like grass which grows up.* Fresh, green, vigorous, lovely, restful to the eyes.

6. *In the morning it flourishes, and grows up; in the evening it is cut down and withers.* It needs no long period, ages upon ages, to destroy its beauty. Only let the swiftly-passing day come to its waning and the grass "is cut down and withers."

7. *For we are consumed by Your anger, and by Your wrath are we troubled.* If we had to endure the flames of God's anger, we would be consumed by it. But I think that Christians should not read this passage as though it applied to them. They are not under the Divine anger, nor need they fear being troubled by the Divine wrath, for His anger is turned away from them through the great atoning Sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ. But the children of Israel in the wilderness were being consumed by God's anger and by His wrath they were being troubled, so that the words of Moses did apply to them.

8, 9. *You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your Countenance. For all our days are passed away in Your wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told.* Like a romance, with which the Orientals still delight to beguile the passing hours. Such is the life of man—"as a tale that is told."

10. *The days of our years are threescore years and ten.* This was a gloomy fact to Moses, who lived to be 120 years of age and who probably remembered other men who had been far older than himself. Yet it is well that the ordinary period of human life has been shortened. It is still far too long for those who do evil, though it may not be too long for those who do good. Yet there are, even now, some who outlive their usefulness, and who might have been happier if they had finished their course sooner. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten."

10. *And if by reason of strength they are fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow: for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.* Where do we fly? That is the all-important point! The cutting of the string that holds the bird by the foot is a blessing or a curse according to the way in which it takes its flight. If we fly up to build our nest on yonder trees of God that are full of sap, then, indeed, we do well when we fly away. And we may even long for the wings of a dove, that we may fly away and be at rest.

11, 12. *Who knows the power of Your anger? Even according to Your fear, so is Your wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.* It has been well said that many men will number their cows, and number their coins, but forget to number their days! Yet

that is a kind of arithmetic that would be exceedingly profitable to those who practiced it aright. Counting our days and finding them but few, we should seek to use them discreetly—we should not reckon that we could afford to lose so much as one of them! Who would be a spendthrift with so small a store as that which belongs to us?

13, 14. *Return, O LORD, how long? And let it repent You concerning Your servants. O satisfy us early with Your mercy that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.* "If they are but few, yet let them be happy. Give us an abundance of Your mercy, O Lord, and let us have it at once, so that however few our days may be, every one of them may be spent in the ways of wisdom and, consequently, in the ways of peace and happiness."

15. *Make us glad according to the days wherein You have afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.* "Balance our sorrows with an equal weight of joys. Give us Grace equivalent to our griefs and if You have given us a bitter cup of woe, now let us drink from the golden chalice of Your love, and so let our fainting spirits be refreshed."

16. *Let Your work appear unto Your servants.* May we have Grace to devote ourselves entirely to God's service and do the work which He has appointed us to do!

16. *And Your glory unto their children.* If we may not live to see the success of our efforts, may our children see it! If the glory of that bright millennial age, which is certain to come in due time, shall not gladden our eyes before we fall asleep in Jesus, let us do the Lord's work as far as we can that our children may see His Glory.

17. *And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish You the work of our hands upon us.* Even if we die, let our work live. May there be *something* permanent remaining after we are gone—not wood, hay, and stubble, which the fire will consume, but a building of gold, silver, and precious stones which will endure the fire that, sooner or later, will "try every man's work of what sort it is."

17. *Yes, the work of our hands establish You it.*

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

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

"THE SHADOW OF A GREAT ROCK"
NO. 3031

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 14, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 18, 1869.

"A man shall be as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."
Isaiah 32:2.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon on previous portions of this verse, are as follows—
No. 2856, Volume 49—OUR HIDING PLACE and No. 1243, Volume 21—RIVERS OF WATER IN A DRY PLACE—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

EVEN in our usually temperate climate, we sometimes complain of the great heat, which is coolness itself compared with the terrible burning of Oriental lands. A journey through the Sahara Desert might make us long for even the heat of our hottest summer, unbearable though it seems to us to be. With the hot sand beneath his feet from day to day, with not a tree and scarcely so much as a bush within sight. With the sun pouring down torrents of heat as though he were full of wrath against the wayfarer, with water exceedingly scarce and what is to be obtained about as nauseous as one can conceive, the traveler through the wilderness finds it to be a "weary land," indeed, and longs for the time when he shall once again see the cultivated fields and the lands that flow with brooks and rivers!

Travelers tell us that when the heat has become so intense that every living creature seems to be exhausted—when birds, if there are any, droop their wings, and beasts lie down and pant out their very life—at such times they have been glad to see great rocks right in the center of the barren plain. And, creeping under their shadow, they have left it on record that they have found most refreshing coolness and have lifted up their hands in gratitude to God for the blessing of "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Though I have never experienced to the same degree what these travelers report, I remember one hot day in Northern Italy, when riding over a dry plain where the only living creatures seemed to be the lizards and the abundant flies which they were pursuing, and the myriads of mosquitoes that stung one almost to madness—a great rock was really a source of solid comfort. Though we could afford time to rest only for a little while beneath its shadow, we gratefully remembered it all day long and wished that we could have stayed until nightfall beneath the shadow of that "great rock in a weary land."

Writing under Divine Inspiration, the Prophet Isaiah describes the Lord Jesus Christ, in His Manhood, as being comparable to this great rock. In this wilderness life of ours, this wretched life apart from Him—to us pilgrims through this desert to the better land beyond—Christ is a great Rock and He casts a blessed shadow across our path in which we refresh ourselves and renew our strength to go on our way rejoicing.

I shall try to bring out the meaning of the text by noticing, first, *why our Lord may thus be compared to the shadow of a great rock.* Secondly, I shall show *when He is especially refreshing to us and,* thirdly, and practically, I shall ask, *what is our business with regard to Him?*

I. First, then, WHY MAY OUR LORD BE SAID TO BE A GREAT ROCK IN A WEARY LAND CASTING A REFRESHING SHADOW?

We may remember concerning Him, in the first place, that, *like a rock, He is always in the same place.* There are some shadows which you can create artificially and carry with you. There have been shadows which have been cast by great trees, but those trees have been removed. And if the traveler, in passing over the same route, should expect to enjoy their cooling shade, he would be disappointed. But, the great rock remains just where it was when Abraham, Isaac and Jacob sheltered beneath it—and the traveler, today, may do the same. It is just so with our Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be His name, He has not shifted His position! If any poor soul here wants to find Him, He is just where He used to be—that is, He is waiting at the Mercy Seat to receive every soul that will come and trust Him. Jesus Christ is not far away from any of you—He is so near that a prayer will reach Him, a sigh will find Him and a tear will get at His heart! Only turn your desires towards Him! Only say to Him, now, in the silence of your spirit, "Jesus, Master, cast Your shadow over my sin-burdened head. Protect my soul from the wrath of God and from the fierce heat of Hell!" Only ask this and it shall be given you, for Jesus is still waiting to be gracious and ready to bless you even now!

He is like a rock, too, *because His shadow is always there as well as Himself.* Wherever the sun and a rock are, there is sure to be a shadow. So, whenever God pours out the fierce beams of His wrath upon a sinner, let that sinner fly to Christ and he shall find a shelter from that wrath! Whenever conscience oppresses you and reminds you of your guilt, depend upon it that Christ has not lost His power to quiet conscience and to calm your fears. Sometimes a sinner fears that it is too late for him to find peace in Christ, or, possibly, he thinks it is too soon, or that he has sinned away his day of grace. Ah, poor Soul, all these suggestions are Satan's lies! If you really desire to have Christ's love shed abroad in your heart, that is a proof that Christ has already fixed His love upon you! If your head is now beaten upon by the fierce sunlight of God's wrath, you may come and find a shelter in the great rock of Christ's atoning Sacrifice! If you will trust in Jesus, you shall have the peace which only He can give—the peace which passes understanding. We rightly sing—

"Dear dying Lamb, Your precious blood
Shall never lose its power
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Is saved to sin no more"—

and they are not all saved yet—there are still some to be gathered and, therefore, Christ's blood has not yet lost its power to cleanse from sin! And Christ, as a rock, casts His welcome shade over all who come to Him to be thus refreshed!

Our Lord may also be compared to the shadow of a great rock *because the shadow of a great rock is broad.* I remember the time when, after a long, hot and dusty walk, I found myself at the top of a considerable elevation where there is neither shrub nor tree—but a huge cross which someone has erected there. And I remember well how my friend and I tried to get under the shelter of that cross, but there was only room enough in the shadow for one of us. We both tried to get under the shadow, for it was terribly hot in the sunshine, but the cross could not give shelter to the two of us, so we had to take turns as long as we waited on the hillside. But it is not so in the case of a great rock! The shadow there is sometimes so wide that if a whole caravan shall wish to rest there free from the sun's heat, they may all come and shelter under it—travelers, camels and all! So is it with my Master. He is no little Savior! He has already saved millions, but He is just as able to save unnumbered millions more! If the shadow of His Cross could only screen one sinner, what a scramble many of you would make in order to be that one. Yet I fear that the very freeness of the Divine Mercy makes many despise it, though it should not do so. If the whole of us felt the heat of the sun of God's wrath in our conscience and we were all to come crowding to Jesus, we would not hear Him say, "I cannot receive you all. I have not room for you all." If there were room in Christ for all but one, I should hear a cry from somewhere in this place, "O God, shut me not out, but receive me, even me!" Yet many of you are content not to get under the shadow of Christ though there is room there for you! There is room in Christ for the biggest sinner out of Hell! There is room for ten thousand times ten thousand sinners! There will be room for all of Adam's race who are ever led to come and put their trust in Him! It is the shadow of a Great Rock and, therefore, it is a broad shadow!

Further, *the shadow of a rock is free to all.* Nobody thinks of paying for a seat in the shadow of a rock, and nobody would wait to be asked to come under that shadow. No one would dream of needing preparation before sitting on the shady side of a great rock. Everybody who is weary seeks the shelter—every man who is wiping the hot sweat from his brow comes and stretches himself to rest beneath that genial shade even without an invitation! In like manner, Jesus Christ is as free as the air to all who will trust in Him! You do not need to make any preparation for coming to Him and although many invitations are given to you to come to Christ, this is because of your unwillingness to come to Him—not

because there are any hindrances on His part! When a soul is once brought to long for Christ, that soul may at once have Christ. The great difficulty is to make sinners feel their need of a Savior—they think that they do not need Him. They stand in the blazing sunshine and imagine that they will never faint beneath that fierce heat. But when their strength begins to depart, they are willing to come under the shadow of the Great Rock and there it stands, just as it always did, and they are invited to come to it, after all their neglect of it, and find a refreshing shelter there. Does not this Truth of God comfort some poor soul in my audience? Are there not some of you who have made the great mistake of supposing that you had to grow better, or to do some good thing in order to get to Christ? Well, then, let me assure you that as free as is the water in the drinking-fountain at the street corner, as free as is the air which enters into your lungs, so free is the ever-gracious Savior to every guilty sinner who will but come and seek a shelter beneath this "shadow of a Great Rock in a weary land!"

Once again, our Lord is like a rock *because His shadow is most refreshing.* I do not know how true they are, but there are some old country notions that certain trees give an unhealthy shade. I have been sometimes warned not to sit under such-and-such a tree—if I did so, I would have a headache and I know not what evil besides! But this I do know—the shadow of Christ never hurts anyone, but uniformly blesses in a thousand ways! When a man does but come and rest in Jesus, headaches and heartaches, as far as they have to do with moral and spiritual disorders, pass away. The believing man realizes that he is forgiven and, oh, what a blessed realization is that! Hear him sing—

"Now, oh joy! My sins are pardoned,
Now I can, and do believe!"

And with that sense of pardoned sin comes a sense of perfect peace with God! The forgiven man feels a joy which he never knew before—not the wild joy in which he once delighted, which first intoxicated him and then left him depressed and heart-broken, but a joy like the course of a great river, increasing as it flows, widening and deepening as months and years roll on!

It is a blessed thing to get under the shadow of Christ. I cannot tell you all the happiness I have personally felt since I first believed in Jesus, many years ago. Amidst many struggles, and wars, and fights, I can bear my testimony that there is no life like the life of one who trusts in Jesus! There is no happiness this side the grave that is comparable with the happiness of living by faith upon the Crucified Redeemer! I do but speak what I know to be true when I recommend all young people to come beneath the shadow of this Great Rock in the early part of their lives, that ever afterwards, even until life's latest hour, they may have the shelter which that Rock will surely bring! Never did I meet a Christian who repented of having trusted in Christ! And never have I heard of one who, in his old age, said that he had made a mistake in relying upon

Christ as his Savior. Never have I sat by the bedside of the dying to receive the recantation of a saint who told me that salvation by Grace, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, was all a deception, all a delusion! But often have these ears of mine heard expiring songs as full of melody as the songs of angels, and heard declarations of peace and joy from departing Believers that have made my heart leap and my eyes flash with joy at the very hearing! So much more deep and profound have been the joy of those who uttered such words of holy exultation and delight!

I have just one more observation to make upon this part of our subject—our Lord is like "a great rock in a weary land" because, *though it gives shade to others, that is because it bears the heat of the sun itself.* The rock is the interposing medium between the burning sunbeams and the weary traveler. Here is a delightful picture of the mediatorial work of Christ. He puts Himself between the wrath of God and us. The awful beams that streamed from the meridian sunshine of inflexible Justice concentrated all their fierce heat upon Christ and because they fell upon Him and were absorbed by Him, He now presents a cool and refreshing shade to all who come and trust in Him! Jesus suffered that we may not suffer. Jesus died that we may live. He was punished in order that we may be forgiven. He was crushed to death beneath the heel of Divine Vengeance against sin in order that we may be lifted up to Heaven by the hands of Infinite Mercy. Here, then, is the Gospel in miniature set before you! You can, in your mind's eye, see the Great Rock and its welcome shadow, the sun shining on the rock and the traveler protected by the rock. Oh, that all of you who know not the Lord Jesus Christ would come to Him now! As you seek a shade from the sun when his beams are too hot for you to bear, so seek a shelter from the fierce rays of the sun of God's wrath! There is no shelter but in Christ, but there is perfect protection in Him. To come to Him needs no long pilgrimage, no elaborate ceremonies—you can sit in your pew and trust in Jesus. There is life in a single look at Him! As soon as you trust in Him—

"The great transaction's done!"

And beneath the shadow of that Rock your spirit is secure forever!

II. But we must now pass on to notice that THERE ARE CERTAIN TIMES WHEN OUR LORD, LIKE THE SHADOW OF A GREAT ROCK, IS PECULIARLY REFRESHING.

Unto them that believe, Jesus is always precious, but there are times when He is peculiarly so. This was the case with them *when they were under conviction of sin.* What memories that expression awakens in some of us—"conviction of sin!" Why, it was to some of us a very martyrdom! I think it would have been less painful to have been burned alive at the stake than to have passed through those horrors and depressions of spirit which some of us passed through while we were seeking pardon, but seeking it in the wrong way. When God makes the conscience a target for His sharp arrows. When the ten great guns of the Law are all

fired at the sinner's soul. When shot after shot goes tearing through the man's false peace, blowing his self-confidence to pieces and leaving him wounded, mangled and maimed. When the man cries out in his agony, "What shal1 I do to find salvation? How shall I get rid of sin? God is righteously angry with me, how shall I appease His wrath? I fear that Hell will be my everlasting portion, how can I escape that awful doom?"—it is then that Christ becomes "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Sinners will never come to Jesus while they have anything of their own to rely upon—so may the lord strip us and bring us down to absolute bankruptcy and beggary as far as everything of our own is concerned! For then we shall look to Jesus and find everything in Him! So, in the time of conviction of sin, when the ten-thonged whip of the Law falls upon a man's conscience, Christ is indeed precious!

So too, dear Friends, *in times of trial* Believers find the shadow of this Great Rock to be most delightful and refreshing. I suppose that most of us, if not all, have had our trials. The dear child whom we loved so fondly has sickened and died. The husband or the wife, the delight of our eyes, has been borne away to the silent tomb. Possibly we were slandered by a cruel enemy, or forsaken by a false friend in whom we had implicitly trusted. It may be that our house was burned, or our business proved a failure and that losses followed on the heels of losses like Job's messengers with evil tidings. Yes, but, beloved Believer, in all these times of trial you have found Christ to be a blessed Comforter! And I will venture to say that the sharper your affliction has been, the sweeter has Christ been to you. I wonder how some people who have many troubles can get on without Christ? I marvel at you, consumptive young woman, and you, hard-working man with a growing family, trying to do without the consolations of our blessed Savior! I know that some people have the notion that religion is not meant for the poorest of the poor, but if there are any people whom it suits best, surely it is these! If it does not fill the cupboard, it makes the heart content with what it has! If it does not put broadcloth on the back, it makes the wearer satisfied with fustian! There is no one like Christ for the poor, and the needy, and the sick, and the sorrowing. He is, indeed, as "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" to all such poor tried souls.

Let me also remind you that *we shall know more about the refreshing shade of Christ when we come to die.* Not many weeks hence some of us must die. When there is such a large number of people gathered together, some of them must soon die. But all of us must, before long, gather up our feet in the bed and die—

"Our fathers' God to meet."

What must it be to die without a Savior? A shiver runs through my frame as I think of it. To die without a hope, how sad! But to die trusting in Christ, how blessed! I remember standing in the pulpit one sultry summer's afternoon, preaching of the joys of Heaven and there was one woman's eyes that specially caught mine as I was preaching. I knew not

why it was, but it seemed to fascinate me. And as I spoke of Heaven, she seemed to drink in every word, and her eyes flashed back again the thoughts I uttered. She seemed to lead me on to speak more and more of the streets of gold and the gates of pearl till, suddenly, her eyes appeared to me to be too fixed—and at last it struck me that while I had been talking of Heaven, *she had gone there.* I paused and asked if someone in the pew would kindly see whether the friend sitting there was not dead and, in a moment, her husband said, "She is dead, Sir." I had known her long as a consistent Christian woman and, as I stood there, I half wished that I could have changed places with her! There was not a sigh, nor a tear. She seemed to drink in the thoughts of Heaven and then straightway to go and enjoy it! If such a sudden departure is not ours, it will be much like it—we shall close our eyes on earth and open them in Heaven beneath the shadow of that Great Rock! In Heaven, they sit beneath Christ's shadow, and on earth we will do the same. So we will still sing—

"Where is the shadow of that Rock
That from the sun defends Your flock?
Gladly would I feed among Your sheep,
Among them rest, among them sleep."

But, my dear Hearers, *what will it be to have the shelter of Christ in the Day of Judgment?* We can never form right ideas of what that Day of Judgment will be—

"That day of wrath, that dreadful day
When Heaven and earth shall pass away"—

and weeping and wailing shall be the prelude to the sitting of the Judge upon the Great White Throne! Then, when every eye shall see Him and they, also, who pierced Him, it will be a blessed thing to have Him as the Rock of Ages to hide us from the wrath of that tremendous day—

"Day of judgment, day of wonders!
Hark, the trumpet's awful sound,
Louder than a thousand thunders,
Shakes the vast creation round!
How the summons
Will the sinner's heart confound!
See the Judge our nature wearing,
Clothed in majesty Divine!
You who long for His appearing,
Then shall say, 'This God is mine!'
Gracious Savior!
Own me in that day for Thine!"

III. Now lastly, if these things are so, and they are so, WHAT IS OUR BUSINESS?

Our business is *to get under this shadow if we are not already under it.* What is the use of a shadow to those who stand in the blazing sunshine? There is many a soul that stands in the sunshine longer than it needs and so feels faint and weary. And there are some who have thus got such a sunstroke as they will never lose this side of Heaven. I mean that they

have to go doubting and fearing all their spiritual life because they were so long before they trusted in Christ. I know that only the Holy Spirit can bring a sinner under this blessed shadow, but how base must be the human heart when it will not come and take what Christ so freely provides! Why will you die? Why will you perish when you need not? There is a shadow—why will you stand in the fierce light of the sun? All the bells of Heaven are ringing out, "Come and welcome!" All the angels of God are singing, "Come and welcome! Come and welcome!" From this open Book, from the Gospel preached by one of God's ministers tonight, there sounds this message, "Come and trust in the Incarnate Son of God!" I wish I knew how to put it in more melting tones, but it needs the Holy Spirit to bring it home to your hearts. Dear trembler, waverer, halting between two opinions, you who have so long put off coming to Christ, come now! I ask again, why do you continue to stand beneath the wrath of God when you need not linger there a moment longer?

"Come to Jesus,
Come to Jesus, Sinner, come!"

And when you have come, *take care to tell others what you have discovered.* Do not let any poor soul be without the knowledge of the way of salvation so far as you can tell it. Tell to those who are round about you, your experience of the comforts of true religion! This is the way to gather jewels for the Redeemer's crown. If you find that Christ deceives you, let us know, for, as honest men, we would not like to go on telling an idle tale. But if you find Him true. If He comforts you, and blesses you, do bear your testimony to others, for then, perhaps your child, your wife, your brother, your neighbor may come and trust Him too! I will be bound for Him that He will reject none of you who come to Him and I will be a bondsman for Him for another thing, that if you once have Him as your Savior, you will never grow weary of Him! You will say that it was the best day that ever dawned upon you when you gave your heart to the Crucified Christ, who, on Calvary's Cross, made the one Sacrifice for sin forever! Oh, yield your heart to Him! I see Him standing there with those pierced hands of His! He knocks softly at your heart's door—

"Admit Him, for the human breast
Never entertained so kind a guest
Admit Him, before His anger burns,
His feet depart, and never returns!
Admit Him, or the hour's at hand
When at His door denied you'll stand."

By the love of God in Christ Jesus, hold out no longer! Young man, I beseech you by the precious blood of Christ, give yourself to Him! Have you done it? Do you trust Him wholly? Then, rejoice and sing, you seraphs, and let Heaven be glad, for Christ sees the reward of His soul-travail, for a child is born in His House tonight that shall live to praise Him, both here and throughout eternity!

May the Lord bless everyone here, and His shall be the glory forever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MATTHEW 5:17-48.

Verse 17. *Think not that I am came to destroy the Law, or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.* The life-work and words of Christ are not an improvement of the Old Testament, or a doing away of it. It stands fast and firm, fulfilled, carried to perfection, filled to the fullest in Christ!

18, 19. *For verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the Law till all is fulfilled. Whoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he 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.* It is vain to teach the commandments without first doing them. The doing must always precede the teaching. If a man's example cannot be safely followed, it will be unsafe to trust his words.

20. *For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* The scribes and Pharisees were supposed to be righteous beyond all others. "No," says Christ, "you must go beyond them." They were, after all, superficial, flimsy, pretentious, unreal in their righteousness—and we must have a far nobler character than they ever attained, or we "shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

21. *You have heard that it was said by them of old time, You shall not kill; and whoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.* This is a proof that Christ did not come to abolish the Law, or to abate its demands in any degree whatever.

22. *But I say unto you.* Oh, what Divine dignity there is in this majestic Person whose *ipse dixit* is to shift all the sayings of the ages! He claims authority to speak, even though He should contradict all the Rabbis and all the learned men that went before Him—"I say unto you."

22. *That whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whoever shall say, You fool, shall be in danger of Hell fire.* Christ here shows us that the commandment, "You shall not kill," deals with anger, with angry words, with words of cursing, with words of derision—for all these are killing things, hurting and wounding things—and the passion of anger is forbidden under the command, "You shall not kill." Men have not thought so, but it really is so, for he who is angry with his brother is a murderer! There is the spirit, the essence of that which leads to murder in the passion which breeds malice and revenge. The Law of God is spiritual—it touches the emotions, the thoughts, the desires as well as the words and actions of men. If I desire ill for a man, I have within me that which would desire his death—

and what is that, after all, but murder in the heart? How strict is this Law, and yet how just and right!

23, 24. *Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has anything against you; leave there your gift before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.* It is said that in India there is a complete divorce of religion from morality, so that a man may be supposed to be eminently religious even while living in the utmost filthiness and vice. But it must never be so among us. We must never imagine that God can accept an offering from us while we harbor any enmity in our hearts. Perhaps, after reading this passage, you say, "If I had anything against my brother, I would go to him at once, and seek to be reconciled to him." That would be quite right, but you must go further than that, for Christ says, "If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that *your brother has anything against you*." It is much more easy to go to the man who has wronged you than to the one whom you have wronged. Yet the second is evidently the clearer duty, and should be attended to at once—neither can we expect the Lord to attend to us unless we attend to this duty.

25, 26. *Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver you to the judge, and the judge deliver you to the officer, and you be cast into prison. Verily I say unto you, You shall by no means come out till you have paid the uttermost farthing.* There is nothing like ending disputes at once, before the rancor grows and your adversary becomes determined to push you to extremes. Oh, for more of that spirit of yielding! You know how people say, "If you tread on a worm: it will turn." But, Brothers and Sisters, a worm is not an example for a Christian, even if the poor wounded creature does turn toward you in its agony. If you turn, turn to kiss the hand that smites you, and to do good to them that evilly treat you!

27, 28. *You have heard that it was said by them of old time, You shall not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.* So that the unholy desire, the lascivious glance, everything that approximates towards licentiousness is here condemned—and Christ is proved to be not the Destroyer of the Law, but the Confirmer of it! See how He shows that the commandment is exceedingly broad, wide as the canopy of Heaven, all-embracing. How sternly it condemns us all and how well it becomes us to fall down at the feet of the God of Infinite Mercy and seek His forgiveness—

"'Tis mercy—mercy we implore,
We would Your pity move—
Your Grace is an exhaustless store,
And You, Yourself, are Love."

29, 30. *And if your right eye offends you, pluck it out, and cast it from you: for it is profitable for you that one of your members should perish, and not that your whole body should be cast into Hell. And if your right hand*

offends you, cut it off, and cast it from you: for it is profitable for you that one of your members should perish, and not that your whole body should be cast into Hell. Give up the dearest, choicest and apparently most necessary thing if it leads you into sin. The same rule that bids you avoid sin, bids you also avoid all that *leads to sin*. If adultery is forbidden, so also is that glance with which the sin usually begins. We are to turn away our eyes from beholding that which leads towards sin and we are not to touch or taste that which would readily lead us into iniquity. Oh, that we had sufficient decision of character to make short work of everything which tends towards evil! Many persons, when their right eye offends them, put a green shade over it. And when their right hand offends them, they tie it up in a sling. But that is not obeying the command of Christ. He charges you to get rid of everything that would lead you wrong—make a clean sweep of it. You are wrong enough at your best, so do not permit anything to appertain to you which would lead you still further astray,

31, 32. *It has been said, Whoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, That whoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication.* Which is a sufficient and justifiable reason for divorce.

32. *Causes her to commit adultery: and whoever shall marry her that is divorced.* That is to say, who is divorced without sufficient cause.

32. *Commits adultery.* Among the Jews, divorce was the easiest thing in the world. A man might, in a pet, utter words which would divorce his wife. The Savior abolished that evil once and for all and made divorce a crime, as it always is "saving for the cause of fornication."

33, 34. *Again, you have heard that it has been said by them of old time, You shall not forswear yourself, but shall perform unto the Lord your oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all.* Christ thus abolishes the whole system of swearing, as it ought to be abolished in every place. And He goes on to show that He did not mean merely unclean, false oaths, or oaths taken as some men take them blasphemously, but every form and kind of oath, for He says, "Swear not at all."

34-37. *Neither by Heaven; for it is God's Throne: nor by the earth; for it is His footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yes, yes. No, no: for whatever is more than these comes of evil.* If words mean anything, this command of Christ is an utter abolishment of oaths taken before magistrates as well as everywhere else. I can make nothing else out of it—indeed, it must mean that because Christ contrasts His teaching with that of former ages—"It has been said by them of old time, You shall not forswear yourself, but shall perform unto the Lord your oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all." A man who cannot be believed upon his word, certainly cannot be believed upon his oath and, usually, when a

man tells a lie, the next thing he does is swear to it. When Peter denied his Master, the next thing he did was to curse and to swear, because he thought it likely that they would not imagine that he was a follower of Christ if he did curse and swear. So he gave that as a pretty clear proof that he had not been with Christ and was not one of His disciples. Alas, that we should need anything beside "Yes, yes," and, "No, no!"

38-43. *You have heard that it has been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That you resist not evil: but whoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue you at the Law, and take away your coat, let him have your cloak also. And whoever shall compel you to go a mile, go with him two. Give to him that asks you, and from him that would borrow of you turn not you away. You have heard that it has been said, You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.* There are many who do the second of those two things, but not the first.

44, 45. *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that you may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven: for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.* God constantly does that which many people regard almost as a crime, namely, doing good to the undeserving. It is the very genius of Christianity to help those who are utterly unworthy—to be kind and generous even to those who are pretty certain to repay us with ingratitude and malice.

46-48. *For if you love them which love you, what reward have you? Do not even the publicans the same? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.* Stretch towards the highest conceivable standard and be not satisfied till you reach it.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—708, 808.

—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 FASHION OF THIS WORLD"
NO. 3032

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 12, 1869.

"The fashion of this world passes away."
1 Corinthians 7:31.

IN this Epistle, Paul deals with many matters of conscience and explains them for the benefit of the troubled ones in the Church at Corinth. In the chapter out of which our text is taken, he writes wisely concerning the important question of marriage. And he recommends that during the time of persecution it is well to abstain from marriage, though he does not forbid it even under the pressure of those trying circumstances. Then, after he has spent a considerable time in looking at the subject from various standpoints, he says, "It remains that they that have wives, be as though they had none." He seemed to think that the whole matter of marriage was too small for him to take into any very serious consideration, seeing that the time was so short in which such questions could need to be discussed at all, "for," he said, "the fashion of this world passes away."

The Greek word used in this verse has, by some expositors, been read as though the Apostle referred to mathematical figures, as when the boy at school, working out the propositions in Euclid, draws upon his slate, circles, triangles and squares—and then almost immediately rubs the whole out and begins another set of figures. In that sense, the whole scheme or fashion of this world is only like the markings on a slate, or the chalk drawings on a blackboard—something not intended to last, but to be done away with almost immediately. So there is no need to be troubled about the things of this world, except so far as they have reference to the world to come, for the whole scheme, plan and fashion of this world passes away.

But an interpretation which is far more likely to be correct is that the Apostle meant, "The whole theatrical performance of this world's pageant passes away. The whole of its various acts, shows and manifestations passes away." If that is the meaning, Paul seems to be of the mind of the world's great poet, that—

"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players."

So he says, "The whole play passes away. The whole performance which is now upon the stage will soon be changed and all will be gone." Just as men put on mimic robes and one is arrayed as a monarch and another appears as a slave. Just as one is dressed in scarlet and fine linen and

another comes on the scene in the rags of a beggar but, as soon as the play is over, they all take off the clothes appertaining to their various parts and go to their homes in quite different garb. And so, all the pomp and glory of this world will soon have passed away and men will go to their own eternal dwelling place, the fashion of this world having passed away forever. It is to that thought that I wish to call your earnest attention just now. May the Holy Spirit teach us what He intended the Apostle to convey to our minds concerning the transitory character of all worldly things!

I. First, then, let us ask, WHAT IS THE FASHION OF THIS WORLD THAT PASSES AWAY?

I answer, first, it is *the whole world, itself, and all humanity dwelling upon it.* All that we see around us is passing away. Although, to some minds, this visible creation looks as if it might last forever, there are signs of decrepitude and decay which the thoughtful can easily discern. The very granite crumbles, the sea breaks its bounds, even the sun's lamp, at times, grows dull! All things bear signs that this world is but as the traveler's tent that is pitched tonight, only to be struck tomorrow morning. The day is coming, whether we wish it or not, when "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. The earth, also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up." As once by a deluge of water, so the second time by a deluge of fire, the whole fashion of this world shall surely pass away—"all these things shall be dissolved." We talk about the everlasting hills and speak of the sea as the hoary ocean, but there is nothing except God that is really worthy of veneration because of age. We read of His Son, in whom He has manifested Himself, that "His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow," to indicate the great antiquity of Christ—but all human beings are but things of an hour—and they and the world they inhabit shall soon have departed!

Vain man, who looks on this world as a thing that is lasting, should at least look upon himself as fleeting! Generations have followed each other till the whole earth resembles a beach when the tide is down, where ten thousand worms have each one cast up his little separate hillock and then gone from sight. What is there to remind us of past generations but their graves? Even their works have decayed before the time when all men's works are to be consumed. Since we have been our own little while in the world, how many have passed away! The funeral bell is almost always tolling—the sexton never ceases from his work. Every time the clock ticks, a soul takes its flight into the unknown land. While we have been sitting here, the great processes of decay, dissolution and death have been going on—and although we may not have noticed it, we ourselves have been passing onwards by an inevitable march towards the confines of the spirit world! We are in a dying world and none of us will be able to escape from the influences that are, in due time, to bear us away from this world which is itself passing away! So, Brothers and Sisters, if the Apostle meant nothing more than this, there is enough in the remembrance that this world and all who are upon it are passing away, to calm

our minds and to remind ourselves of the instability of mortal things—and of the necessity of securing something more substantial and enduring!—

"The time is short ere all that live
Shall hence depart, their God to meet!
And each a strict account must give,
At Jesus' awful Judgment Seat.
The time is short, oh, who can tell
How short his time below may be?
Today on earth his soul may dwell,
But tomorrow in eternity."

But, secondly, "the fashion of this world passes away" *in reference to all its honors and dignities*. All that was ever emblazoned on the roll of fame and thought to be written there forever, shall surely be blotted out. They who now wear royal crowns shall not always be crowned. Those who are now decorated with glittering satin and jewels shall not be always so adorned. Come to the graveyard and see how much is left of any of the Caesars! Look into the vault of Alexander and see how little is the greatest of the great! The monarch cannot be distinguished from his slave—and men cannot maintain their various ranks and degrees of dignity in the grave. Death, that great Radical and Communist, that awful leveler, is continually smiting down the mighty and with his dread axe he fells the haughty cedar of Lebanon as easily as he does the rush by the riverside. But there are those who will be kings when these kings of earth are no more regarded as royal, and there are those who will be peers of the heavenly reality when earthly peers have lost their patents of nobility. There are kings and priests whom the world knows not of who shall yet come forth from their obscurity—in the day when the King of kings shall be revealed, they shall also be revealed—but meanwhile, the fashion of this world, so far as its pomp and greatness are concerned, passes away.

Then, dear Friends, let us remember, in the third place, that *the civil fashion of this world* will certainly pass away too. It is necessary for good government that there should be judges, dignitaries, magistrates and so forth, and men think much of the power of governing their fellow creatures, and talk proudly about constitutions that are to last all down the ages, and establishments that will withstand the attacks of the years that are yet to come—but they make a great mistake. All these must pass away! The magistrate on the bench must be made equal with the prisoner at the bar. The great man must slumber in the dust with the beggar who was splashed by the mud front his horses' hoofs as he rode along in his pride!

Remember, too—and this is a solemn reflection that ought to press heavily upon every ungodly heart—that the association of the righteous and the wicked, which is part of the fashion of this world today, is passing away. Many of you are, at the present moment, being kindly cared for by Divine Providence more for the sake of your godly relatives than for your own sakes, for you are ungodly and, therefore, God cannot regard you in the same light as He does His own believing children. You are nestling under the same roof with your father, who is a saint of God—yet, if

you died as you now are, you would be lost forever. You are, at this moment, sitting in the same pew with one who loves the Lord Jesus Christ, but you are, yourself, Christless and hopeless. This congregation, as I look upon it, seems to me like a heap of corn upon the threshing floor, but there is much chaff mingled with it! I see here a great field of precious grain springing up, but the tares are mixed with the wheat. That is according to the fashion of this world—it must inevitably be so in the present state of things.

Even in the professing Church, itself, this is the fashion today, for the great dragnet has taken in its meshes, fish of every kind—some good and some bad. But this shall not be the fashion for long, for this present fashion passes away and, then the net shall be drawn to shore and they shall gather the good into vessels, but they shall cast the bad away. The great reaping time shall come, by-and-by, and then the tares shall be bound in bundles to be burned—while the wheat shall be gathered into the garner—

"East and West, and South and North,
Speeds each glorious angel forth,
Gathering in with glittering wing
Zion's saints to Zion's King.
Man nor angel knows that day,
Heaven and earth shall pass away.
Still shall stand the Savior's word,
Deathless as its deathless Lord."

Think of this, you who are living now in close relationship to Christian people! How will you bear to be separated from them when this present fashion passes away? O husbands of gracious wives, children of godly parents, ungodly parents of converted children, think of the time when this fashion shall be ended and the separating day shall come—and you are driven forth to the blackness of darkness forever, while your loved ones are walking with Christ forever in the home of the blessed in Glory!

Mark, too, fourthly, *that the busy fashion of this world* will also pass away. You are engaged in your shops most properly. You are toiling in your various callings, or pursuing your several professions. One is a lawyer and another is a doctor, but all this occupation passes away. There is a land in which there shall be no toiling for daily bread and no need to cast ourselves wearily upon our bed after too long and too trying a day of toil. There is a time coming when that extra ten pounds which seems so important now, or that extra ten thousand pounds, or that extra million pounds added to ones estate shall be thought to be of no more value than a single hair! When men come to die, how their business dwarfs to nothing! It casts a long shadow right across the pathway of life—but when they lie upon their last bed and gaze into eternity, they see things in a different light and estimate them at their real value! O Sirs, you who are pursuing earthly gain as though it were something substantial, are like the fools who hunt the will-o'-the-wisp and plunge after it in the morass to their own destruction! Can you carry your gold with you into the world where you are going? If you could hang it on the cerements that are to be wrapped about you in the tomb, how much richer would your

dead body be for all its golden decorations? What can your old buy for you beyond a thicker slab of stone to lie upon your corpse while the poor sleep under a lighter load in a field where the wild flowers grow?

Believe me, there is nothing here that is worthy of your pursuit! If you give your soul up to anything earthly, whether it is the wealth, or the honors, or the pleasures of this world, you might as well hunt after the *mirage* of the desert or try to collect the mists of the morning or to store up for yourselves the clouds of the sky—for all these things are passing away! It is difficult, sometimes, to realize that we are citizens of that country where worldly wealth has lost all value because of the infinitely more precious wealth, there, that is the common property of all the saints. It is difficult, sometimes, to realize what that land must be where we are to rest forever and yet serve God day and night in His Temple. But when we are indulged by the Holy Spirit with a faith's view of that better country and are permitted, for a little while, to think of the time when we shall gather our weary souls in these seas of heavenly rest and not a wave of trouble shall roll across our peaceful breast—then are we glad that the fashion of this poor weary word is so soon to pass away! But alas, the thought of death and the natural clinging that we all have to life, make us, sometimes, wish that this world would last forever and that its fashion were no so transient as it is! Yet, wish as you may, you sons of men cannot make the fashion of this world remain—it will soon be gone—every jot of it! So may you all have a portion that will last!

Once more, *even this world's religious fashions will pass away.* The time is coming when the Pharisee will no more stand and say, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week. I give tithes of all that I possess." Self-righteousness is a fashion that will not outlast the trial hour of death. The time is coming when men will no longer be able to put their trust in priests, or to imagine that occult influences can flow from human hands into their souls! The foolish fashion of Ritualism and ceremonialism will certainly pass away! It ought never to have existed, for it is a delusion and a snare, but it will pass away when He comes who abhors it with all His soul. This world's religion is sometimes that of mere formal orthodoxy—the mental acceptance of a certain creed, the laying hold of certain dogmas and fighting for the outward forms of them. All this is common enough in the religion with which many men are satisfied—but it will all pass away! In that day when nothing but genuine heart-work will endure the tests that will then be applied and when only the real regenerating work of the Holy Spirit will pass current with the Most High, all mere head-knowledge and notional religion will have melted and flowed away. Your unopened family Bibles with their great gilded clasps, your brass-bound prayer books and hymn-books, your mere formal family prayers read out in so orderly a tone, with no heart in the performance—all will pass away like the foam upon the waters! What cares God for all that you have to say if you say it not from your heart?

What value does He set upon a round of ceremonies if true soul-worship is absent from them?

All mere outward godliness and fictitious religion will pass away—and how naked and ashamed will the worldly professor be when God shall strip him of his tawdry robes! How foul will they look who thought themselves clean! How horrible will be the leprosy upon the brows of those who imagined that all was well because they covered their filthy sores from the sight of man! How desperate will be their doom who dreamed of going to Heaven, yet who have never trusted in Christ's great atoning Sacrifice! May none of us have anything to do with this world's fashion which will pass away, but may we all have that righteousness which will ensure to us the life everlasting!—

"We've no abiding city here!
This may distress the worldling's mind,
But should not cost the saint a tear,
Who hopes a better rest to find.
We've no abiding city here!
Sad truth, were this to be our home,
But let this thought our spirits cheer—
We seek a city yet to come.
We've no abiding city here!
Then let us live as pilgrims do.
Let not the world our rest appear,
But let us haste from all below."

This will suffice concerning the fashion of this world which passes away.

II. Now, just for a few minutes I am going to try to show you by way of contrast to what I have been saying, that THERE IS A FASHION THAT WILL *NOT* PASS AWAY.

There are some things that will remain. And among them is, first, *the life within the Believer which God's Holy Spirit has implanted*. Do you know what it is, dear Friends, to be born-again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which lives and abides forever? He who has a mere notional religion that springs from his own free will, will find that sooner or later it will die. But that incorruptible Seed of the Holy Spirit which constitutes us the living children of the last Adam, who was made a quickening Spirit, shall never die! That life came not from mortal man, neither can the teeth of Time fret it, nor the arrow's of Death kill it. This is one of the things that passes not away.

And, as the inner life of the Believer thus endures, so, thank God, *the outward truth also passes not away*. There is not a single Truth of God that is revealed in this blessed Book that shall ever become a lie. There is not one promise there that shall ever be revoked. What God has revealed in His Word is not for yesterday nor for today, alone, but for tomorrow, and until the world's end and throughout eternity! I know that there are those who would like to see a new Bible, or a revised version of it. I mean a revised version of the original Scriptures to suit their depraved taste! They would gladly have what they call "new developments" and "fresh light" worthy of this "advanced" generation! But, beloved Friends, there is nothing new in theology but that which is false—only the old is true—

for the Truth of God must be old, as old as God Himself! So let us rejoice that whatever may happen, and although the fashion of this world shall surely pass away, there is not a single text between the covers of this Book that shall ever lose an atom of its Divine Truth and force. Oh, no! The old Book is not effete and the Revelation it has brought to us will never grow stale! The promises well up with as rich consolation to us today as they did to the first of the martyr-band! The solemn oaths and Covenant of God stand as firm and fast today as when He first gave them to our fathers! So let us cling to the Holy Word and to the doctrines of God's Grace, for these are among the things that are to abide forever!—

"Engraved as in eternal brass
The mighty promise shines,
Nor can the powers of darkness erase
Those everlasting lines!
He that can dash whole worlds to death,
And make them when He please—
He speaks and that almighty breath
Fulfils His great decrees!
His very Word of Grace is strong
As that which built the skies.
The voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises!"

Yet again, as the life within, and the Truth revealed, so the *fruit of the inner life, wherein we are led by the Holy Spirit and the Word, shall remain.* They who build a worldwide empire will lose all that they have labored to gain. Men may pile up a city of marble only to see it become a heap of dust. But if you give a cup of cold water, in the name of Christ, to one who belongs to Him, you shall not lose your reward! Every holy thought, every devout purpose, every thankful hymn, every earnest prayer, every true-hearted sermon, every good work that is done for God in the power of the Holy Spirit lives beyond the possibility of death! The saints depart from earth in due season, but why? "That they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." Their works are still present before the mind of God and He accepts them. Not all that even Christians do shall abide, for "the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." Many a man—and many a good man, too, shall lose much of what he did—much of his preaching, much of his teaching, much of his so-called praying and alms-giving shall prove to be but wood, hay and stubble which shall be burned, though he, himself, being on the Rock, a believer in Christ, shall be "saved yet so as by fire." But happy is that man who so completely lives unto God and is so fully guided by the Holy Spirit and by the revealed Truth of God that he spends himself and is wholly spent in his Master's service—and so builds upon the one foundation, which is Jesus Christ, not wood, hay, and stubble, but gold, silver and precious stones which shall be found to his own joy and to God's Glory in the great testing time that is surely coming!

Further, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, it is a very sweet reflection that among the things that shall never pass away are such as these—the love that was fixed upon us before the day-star knew its place

or planets ran their round. The love that bought us upon Calvary's Cross. The love that has prepared a place for us that where Jesus is, there we, also, may be, to be like He and with Him forever—that love shall never pass away! So too, the power of God which brought us up out of Egypt and is leading us through the wilderness. The power that has fought our battles and has kept us safely to this day—that power shall never pass away! Then, too, the fullness of God upon which we have lived and from which we have been drinking such deep draughts to satisfy our great necessities—that fullness shall never pass away! There will come a time when everything of a spiritual kind which we have rejoiced in here, instead of passing away, shall be brighter than ever to our sight, nearer to us and better understood! Our true daylight draws near. It is twilight with us now, but not the twilight of the evening—it is the twilight of the dawn! Our pathway lies upward—we have already ascended somewhat, but we have to go far higher yet. Up the ladder that Jacob saw, we pursue our joyful way and there shall be no descent for us! There shall be no falling from the elevation to which Divine Grace lifts us, "for the path of the just is as the shining light that shines more and more unto the perfect day."

We shall soon see the King in His beauty and the land that is very far off. We may begin to put off our old week-day garments, for the heavenly Sabbath bells will soon ring out their welcome call. Let us shake ourselves from the dust, for our beautiful array is ready and we shall soon sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Eagerly anticipate—all of you who love the Lord Jesus Christ—eagerly anticipate your better portion! You daughters of sickness, you shall soon have done with all pains and pangs forever! You children of poverty, you shall soon have done with your anxieties and griefs concerning your many needs. You toil-worn workers in the vineyard of Christ and you who are oppressed with many cares, you shall be Marthas no longer, but you shall sit at Jesus' feet forever! As for you who have been mourning, and sighing, and crying—your weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning! Put off your sackcloth, for God shall gird you with the garment of praise. Forget the drought of the wilderness for You shall soon be in the Paradise of God and at His right hand where there are pleasures forevermore—

"O Paradise eternal!
What bliss to enter thee
And once within your portals,
Secure forever be !
They all around shall love us,
And we return their love;
One band of happy spirits,
One family above!
There God shall be our portion,
And we His jewels be—
And gracing His bright mansions,
His smile reflect and see.
O Paradise eternal,
What joys in you are known!

God of mercy guide us,
Till all is felt our own!"

The gist of all I wanted to say is just this. Brothers and Sisters, let us hold very loosely everything here, but let us get a very firm grip of everything that is to be hereafter! Let the visible begin, even now, to melt away and let the invisible take its true substantial form. If God has been prospering some of you—and He has been very gracious and kind to some of His people in temporal matters, set not your hearts on any of those things. Your garden, your house, your children, your gold—all the prosperity that God gives you—accept it, rejoice in it, use it as you ought, but do not abuse it—these things are not your God! You have no abiding city here, but you seek one to come and, oh, do give a grip as of steel to the things that are eternal! Never endure a doubt that Christ is really yours! If you have one doubt, may the Holy Spirit cast it out and give you the full assurance of faith! Never tolerate the question, "Is Christ mine?" If it must be raised, and it must, sometimes, never be content till you have settled it! With your face in the dust and your hands in the prints of your Savior's pierced feet, come now to Him again—cling to Him anew—make Him your All-in-All. And so, when the shadows thicken and the world grows dim, may the light stream full upon your eyes and your soul stretch her wings and soar away to her eternal rest!

The Lord bless you all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 9:1-38.

Verse 1, 2. *And as Jesus passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?* Christ's disciples were often inquisitive even when their Master was bent upon giving proofs of His practical benevolence. Fools may sometimes ask questions which wise men may not think it proper to answer, but on this occasion our Savior gave an answer to the enquiry which His disciples had put to Him.

3, 4. *Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day: the night comes when no man can work.* Think of our Lord being under the necessity of working—"I must work." Men say that, "Must is for the king," but here is the King of kings declaring that work is by the most urgent necessity laid upon Him—so will not you, beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, come under this Divine necessity? Will not you feel that you, also, must be doing all you can for your Divine Lord and Master?

5. *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.* While Christ was here on earth, He was the great Light-Giver—and He is still the great Light-Giver! And now that His visible Presence has been withdrawn from the world, His people are to be "the light of the world" by reflecting the light they have received from Him! In such works as you will be unable to perform after death, you are now to give light to the sons of men.

6-9. *When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went His way, therefore, and washed, and came seeing. The neighbors, therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is He. Others said, He is like he. But he said, I am he*—"There is no mistake about this! I know that I am that man!"

10, 11. *Therefore said they unto him, How were your eyes opened? He answered and said.* In his own quick, clear, intelligent way, for he was a man who evidently had twice as many eyes in his brain as other people had, even while he had none with which he could see! "He answered and said"—

11-14. *A man that is called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam and wash. And I went and washed, and I received sight. Then said they unto him, Where is He? He said, I know not. They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. And it was the Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.* You may be sure that the Pharisees would be in high dudgeon because Christ did that for, according to their stupid superstition, to make clay with spittle was a kind of brick-making which must not be done on the Sabbath—and they would, for that reason, condemn Christ as a breaker of the Sabbath!

15. *Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon my eyes, and I washed and do see.* Now that he has to deal with Pharisees, he will not waste a word upon them. The more often he tells the story, the shorter it becomes. That is not the usual rule with stories—they generally grow like snowballs as they roll along until, at last, you would hardly recognize the original story, so much has been added to it as it has been told again and again! But this honest, straightforward man cuts the story down to the barest details and yet tells it well.

16, 17. *Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This Man is not of God because He keeps not the Sabbath. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. They said unto the blind man again, What do you say of Him, that He has opened your eyes? He said, He is a Prophet.* He felt that he could safely go as far as that, for Jesus could not have worked such a miracle as that if He had not been a Prophet sent by God.

18-21. *But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How, then, does he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. But by what means he now sees, we know not; or who has opened his eyes, we know not. He is of age, ask him: he shall speak for himself.* These parents, though in humble life, were evidently like their son, sharp

and shrewd. So they referred the question to the one who knew how to answer it.

22-24. *These words spoke his parents because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already that if any man did confess that He was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, he is of age, ask him. Then again they called the man that was blind and said unto him.* They wanted to see if they could catch him in his talk, so they said to him, in a very pious fashion—

24. *Give God the praise: we know that this Man is a sinner.* Dear me, what wonderful "knowledge" those Pharisees had!

25. *He answered and said, Whether He is a sinner or not, I know not. One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.* There was no driving him out of that stronghold! That which is a matter of our own personal experience is a thing about which we may well feel positively certain. I wish we had more Christian people firmly established in their faith because it is a matter of deep, heart-felt, personal experience with them. I like to meet a man who can say, "I am willing to yield to opponents upon certain points concerning which I am not quite sure. But the fact of the efficacy of the Gospel of God's Grace, the power of the precious blood of Jesus to cleanse the heart and conscience, the Divine operation of the Holy Spirit within the soul—all these are Truths of God which I cannot and will not yield! Like this man, I can say, 'One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.'"

26, 27. *Then said they to him again, What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes? He answered them, I have told you already, and you did not hear: Why would you hear it again? Will you, also, be His disciples?* He carried the war into the enemy's camp, as well he might!

28. *Then they reviled him.* That is an unprincipled lawyer's rule—When you cannot answer the plaintiff's argument, abuse him! This was the last resort of those who knew that they had a bad case, or no case at all—"Then they reviled him."

28-31. *And said, You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spoke unto Moses: as for this Fellow, we know not from where He came. The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvelous thing that you know not from where He came and yet He has opened my eyes. Now we know that God hears not sinners.* The man meant, God does not open blind eyes by the hands of sinners. He does not work miracles to bear witness to the agency of ungodly men.

31-33. *But if any man is a worshipper of God and does His will, him He hears. Since the world began it was not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, He could do nothing.* Bravo! You who used to be blind—what an irresistible thing truth is, whoever handles it! These Pharisees, keen of intellect, well instructed in the letter of the Law of God, yet crafty up to their eyes in self-conceit, are like chaff driven before the wind when a plain-speaking man does but handle the Truth of the living God. Never be afraid or ashamed to spread the Gospel of Christ, my Brothers and Sisters! No—

"Speak His Word, though kings should hear,

Nor yield to sinful shame."

A beggar with the Truth of God is mightier than priests and princes with a lie!

34. *They answered and said unto him.* What could they say to him? Nothing but more reviling and abuse!

34. *You were altogether born in sins, and do you teach us? And they cast him out.* That is the last argument of all. "We cannot answer him, so let us turn him out!"

35. *Jesus heard that they had cast him out and when He had found him.* Oh, how He rejoices in finding those that are cast out by the world, or by the self-righteous! "When He had found him."

35, 36. *He said unto him, Do you believe on the Son of God? He answered and said.* Note the humility of the man's tone, how changed it is from that sharpness, that sourness to which he had been driven by his enemies. "He answered and said."

36. *Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?* He is a lamb before Christ though he was a lion before the Pharisees! That is the true Christian character—gentle, tender, humble, meek in the Presence of the God of Mercy—but with no trembling, no giving way in the presence of the adversaries of Christ and His Truth!

37, 38. *And Jesus said unto him, You have both seen Him and it is He that talks with you. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him.* He was no Unitarian! "He worshipped Him." And you, Beloved, cannot help worshipping Him who has opened your eyes spiritually! It is those who are still blind who will not worship Him. But once let us feel the touch of His light-giving finger. Once let us know that He has shed His eternal light into the darkness of our souls and we shall not be satisfied with the mere verbal avowal of our faith—we shall add to it our reverent adoration as this man did when he first said, "Lord, I believe"—and then "worshipped Him."

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

WHY CHRIST IS NOT ESTEEMED
NO. 3033

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 28, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT MAZE POND CHAPEL, LONDON

"We esteemed Him not."
Isaiah 53:3.

This must be the universal confession of the human race. From the highest monarch to the meanest peasant, from the loftiest intellect to the most degraded mind, from the admired of all men to the unknown and insignificant, this one confession must come—"We esteemed Him not." Whether we examine the sensualist rioting in the delights of the flesh or the formalist starving his body to fatten his pride, the merchant laboring to acquire wealth or the spendthrift recklessly scattering gold with both his hands, the profligate black with profanity, the moralist rejoicing in his goodness, or even the devoted Christian, we shall make them all acknowledge that either now or at some past period, they esteemed not Jesus! We make no exception, for even the holiest of God's saints, those who now are—

"Foremost of the sons of light,
Nearest the eternal Throne"—

those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb—even they once "esteemed Him not." And the brightest saints still upon the earth, those who are most earnestly and faithfully serving the Savior, at one time "esteemed Him not." I am going, first, *to prove that this was true.* Next, to dive deeper and try *to find out the reasons why we esteemed not Jesus.* And, afterwards, I want *to remind you of the emotions which this fact ought to create in our minds*—the fact that at one time—and in the case of many of us it was true not many years ago that "we esteemed Him not."

I. First, then, I have TO PROVE THAT THIS WAS TRUE.

Look, then, my Friends, first, at *the overt acts of your transgression against the Lord Jesus Christ.* Go back in imagination to the scenes of your youth and recollect your former transgressions. Some of you have your heads covered with the snows of many a winter and you have been for 40 or 50 years wearing the harness of the soldiers of Jesus Christ. You have fought the good fight ever since you enlisted under the blood-stained banner of the Cross, yet you can never forget some things that happened before that happy day when you first sang from your heart—

"'Tis done! The great transaction's done—
I am my Lord's, and He is mine."

It might not be profitable to mention in detail those sins of long ago, yet some of you have a very vivid remembrance of them and, although the Lord has graciously forgiven them and blotted them out of His Book of Remembrance, your own conscience will not let you forget them.

There are others of you who were, either by your early associations, or by the restraints of Sovereign Grace, kept from openly sinning against God as many others did, yet you know that *your lives were not in accordance with the Law of God.* You were, in comparison with many of your fellows, moral, upright, amiable, yet, as far as Christ was concerned, you "esteemed Him not." Your friends and companions could find no fault with your character, but you know, now, that all the while there was a fatal flaw which was plainly manifest to the eyes of God. In the case of some, the apparent excellence was all on the surface, but, underneath there was a mass of rottenness and sin of which they can only think now with shame and sorrow. That, too, has all been forgiven and forgotten by God—yet it lingers in their own remembrance in a most salutary fashion, for it makes them hate all forms of iniquity and turn from them with utter loathing.

Besides the overt acts of sin which some of you committed—and the less public but none the less deadly evils of which others of you were guilty—there was further evidence that you did not esteem Christ in the fact that *you did not esteem His Word as you should have done.* Possible, just to quiet your conscience, you read a chapter from it in the morning and another in the evening, or you listened to it while your parents read it at family prayer. But how dull and dry it seemed to you! You could revel in a novel and be completely fascinated with fiction, but the Inspired Truth of God was a weariness and a burden to you. I must honestly confess that before I knew the Lord, or was seriously seeking Him, although I found the historical parts of the Bible interesting, a great portion of the Scriptures appeared to me to be dull and meaningless. As for anyone reading the Word as a treat, I could no more understand how that could be done than a blind man could appreciate the beauties of the scenery that could be discerned by sightseers on the top of a mountain! I might perhaps be mentally charmed by some beautiful passages in the Bible, but as to its hidden spiritual meaning, I had no true perception. If I were sick and in fear lest I was about to die, down would come my Bible and I would read it diligently for a while! But as for taking it as my everyday companion—that idea never occurred to me until the Holy Spirit began to work conviction in my heart. And then I was glad enough to turn to the neglected Book to find an answer to the all-important question, "What must I do to be saved?" If you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, could each one relate your own experience, I expect you would, many of you, have to join with me in saying, "We esteemed Him not, for we did not hold in proper esteem the Sacred Scriptures in which He had been revealed to us."

Another proof that we did not esteem Christ was the fact that *we did not esteem His people.* We may have thought that, as a class, they were a

harmless set of enthusiasts, or we may have reviled them as hypocrites and deceivers although we had no reason for applying such titles to them. As for myself, from my earliest days I had the priceless privilege of being associated with those who practiced what they professed and I had such gracious examples set before me, both in my father's house and while I was at my grandfather's, that I ought to have appreciated Christian people at their true value, as I do now, when I delight to sing, with good Dr. Watts—

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

But why need I linger over the minor matters when you know, and I know, that *we did not esteem Christ Himself?* This is proved from the fact that we were so long before we sought Him as our Savior, before we came to Him and trusted Him as our All-in-All. How many years some of us lived without really praying to Him, or communing with Him! His name was not melodious to our ears, not entrancing to our heart. In those days, we might have adopted the Prophet's language as our own—"He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised and we esteemed Him not." "O You adorable Jesus!" a Christian will say, "my life, my hope, my joy, my light, my way, my end, my all! There was a time when Your groans in Gethsemane, Your agonies in Gabbatha and even Your death on Calvary's Cross seemed to be things of no account to me. You were no more to me, then, than was Barabbas! And had I mingled among the crowd that surged around Pilate, I might have cried with the mad mob, 'Away with Him! Crucify Him! Crucify Him!' I heard Your Gospel preached, but it was only like a tale to which I had so often listened that it no longer had any interest for me. O Jesus, You wondrous Incarnation of the Grace of God to guilty men, how could You so long endure the neglect and enmity of him who now, with shame and confusion of face, confesses that he esteemed You not?"

Ah, Brothers and Sisters! I feel that I cannot preach as I gladly would upon such a theme as this which touches me in the very depths of my soul. If I could, by any means, bring the Truth of the text home to your hearts. If the Holy Spirit were but poured upon you so that you would all inwardly confess, even if you did not audibly say, "We esteemed Him not," my objective would be gained and I would have proved the Truth of Isaiah's utterance.

II. Now, in the second place, we are TO TRY TO FIND OUT WHY WE DID NOT ESTEEM THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

The first reason that I would mention why we esteemed not Jesus is *because we esteemed ourselves so highly.* Self-esteem naturally keeps Jesus out of the heart. And the more our self-esteem increases, the more firmly do we fasten the door against Christ. Love of self prevents love of the Savior! The sinner sets up an idol-god—himself—on the throne where

God alone ought to sit! Hear this, O you heathen, and blush for the wickedness of men who live in this land of many privileges, in this enlightened age—and some of whom even profess and call themselves Christians! Instead of bowing down to blocks of wood and stone, or worshipping the sun, moon and all the host of heavenly bodies, they are worse heathens than even you are, for they prostrate themselves before *themselves* and adore their own merits, their own good deeds, their own charity, and so on! Christian, was not this the reason why you did not esteem Christ—because self was everything to you in the days of your unregeneracy? If anyone had then told you that your heart was corrupt to its very core, what would you have replied? You would have answered, "I feel that I am as good as anyone else whom I know and better than most of those I see around me." If you had been informed that all your good works were but varnished sins and that the very best of them were foul and full of faults, would not your blood have boiled with indignation? Or if someone had told you that your best righteousness was only like a heap of filthy rags, fit for nothing but to be burned, you would surely have replied, "I have a righteousness of which I have no reason to be ashamed. And although I do not say that it is perfect, yet I hope I shall have as good a chance of standing before God's Throne as anybody else will have."

"Such were some of you" and, as long as you thus highly esteemed yourselves, of course you did not esteem the Lord Jesus Christ! Does the man who is in perfect health esteem the physician? If all were always well, who would care for the doctors? Would they not laugh them to scorn? Does the man who is rich hold in high esteem the one who would give him alms? "No," he says, "give your alms to those who need them. I do not require them." Will a man who has the proper use of his limbs care for crutches? "No," he says, "hand them over to the lame. I have no need of them." In like manner, we did not esteem Christ because we felt that we had no need of Him. We thought that we could do very well without Him, at least for the present. There might come a time when He might be able to give us a lift over a fence, or if we came to a muddy place in the road, He might be willing to lay His cloak down for us to step on so that we might not soil our feet. But as for the rest of our journey, we thought we could get on very well by ourselves, though we might be glad for Christ to help us into Heaven at the last. Perhaps no one of us would have put the matter quite so plainly as I have done, but that would have been the practical effect of our self-esteem—and that is why we did not esteem Christ, for self-love had completely engrossed our hearts. Self and the Savior can never live in one heart. He will have all, or none. So, where self is on the throne, it cannot be expected that Christ should meekly come and sit upon the footstool.

Another reason why we esteemed not Jesus was *because we esteemed the world so highly.* We were like the man of whom John Bunyan tells us, who was quite willing that others should have the joys of the world to come so long as he could have all that he wanted in the present life. The

worldling still says, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," and to him this present evil world is the bird in the hand—and he thinks of all the bliss of Heaven as though it were but a bird in the bush. "Let me live while I live," he says, "and have all the happiness that I can here. And let them have the next world who can win it." With some of us, it is not very long ago since we also talked like that—and scorned the glories that are everlasting! And we put far away from us Jesus Christ and His great salvation. "We esteemed Him not" because we loved the earth and all its follies, because we were so busy gathering its poisoned dust into heaps, or delighting ourselves in its unsatisfying pleasures. It is not until the rope is cast loose that the balloon can soar above the clouds—and it is not until the cord that binds us to the things of this earth has been cut that our soul can hope to mount towards the things which are unseen and eternal! Until we have been weaned from the world, we shall never esteem Jesus as the chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely One in whom is all our delight!

A third reason why we did not esteem Christ was b*ecause we did not know Him.* It is true that we knew a great deal *about* Him, but we did not know HIM. We had read what the Evangelists had recorded concerning Him. We knew much concerning His doctrines. Perhaps we had even tried to keep some of His precepts, yet we did not personally and savingly know Him. There is a great distinction between knowing about Christ and knowing Christ Himself—between knowing what He did and knowing Who and what He is—really knowing Him in the sense in which He used that expression when He said, in His great intercessory prayer to His Father, "This is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." Yet it is only through Him, by the Infallible instruction of His ever-blessed Spirit, that we can thus know Him! As the Apostle John writes, "We know that the Son of God is come and has given us an understanding that we may know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." The poet was right when he wrote—

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

And Rutherford said, "Surely, my Lord, if the whole world could see You, the whole world must love You. If You would but open only one of Your eyes and look upon them, they must run unto You, ravished with delight, for You are so fair, my precious Jesus, that You only need to be seen to be loved." But the worldling has never seen Christ, so he does not know Christ and does not love Christ! Ah, poor worldling! If you had but seen my lord as I saw Him in the hour when He said to me, "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins"—if you could, with the ear of faith, have heard that Divine declaration, sweeter even than the music of the harps of Heaven—in a single moment you would have loved the Lord Jesus with such an ardent passion that the bonds of life would scarcely have been strong enough to keep you in this clay tenement, but you would have longed to

fly away and be with your beloved Lord forever! And, Worldling, could you have such a visit from Jesus as, now and then, the Believer is privileged to have—if you could experience but five minutes of the bliss that a Christian has, "Whether in the body, I cannot tell. Or whether out of the body, I cannot tell. God knows"—if you could thus be "caught up to the third Heaven" and hear unspeakable words, which it is not possible for a man to utter. If you could once behold our blessed Savior, you would be compelled to love Him, for He is so lovely, so gracious, so glorious that you could not any longer think unkindly of Him! Those who think wrongly of Christ have never known Him. And we who *do* know Him, confess with shame that the reason why, for so long "we esteemed Him not," was because we then knew Him not.

The last reason I will mention is the very core of all the other reasons. There need be no surprise that we did not esteem Christ, *for we were spiritually dead.* I will suppose that there sits, away yonder, a man over whom I want to exert a certain influence. I will further imagine that I am a skillful musician and that I touch the strings of my harp in such a manner as to bring forth the most delightful melody, yet the man takes no notice whatever of it. Then I turn to an instrument of quite another sort—a cornet or a bugle—and blow a blast that startles all of you—yet that one man still gives no heed to the sound! Why is it that, charm we ever so wisely, he is like the deaf adder and regards neither the sweetest nor the shrillest or loudest noise? I try to attract his attention in another way. I place before him the daintiest dish that the cleverest cook in all England can prepare, or I bring some rare delicacy from a distant land—but he regards the food no more than he did the music. I will try another plan to reach his senses. I will bring Him—

"The choicest flowers that were ever grown
Since Eden's joys were blasted."

I will hold them close to his face and let their fragrance ascend to his nostrils. Yet he heeds not! What will awake him? Let Heaven's thunder peals roll like the drums in the march of some mighty war-lord, but the man moves not. Let the lightning flash all around us till it seems as though the end of the world had come, but the man stirs not. What shall I do to awake him? Shall I beat him with a whip, or strike him with a sword? All is in vain and, at last, I perceive that the man is dead and that all my efforts have been wasted! Now the riddle is solved, the secret revealed, the knot untied—*the man is dead.* And so I wonder no longer that he esteemed not music, or food, or flowers. Or that he feared not thunder, lightning, or the sword. And, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, though the Holy Spirit has quickened us, there was a time when we were "dead in trespasses and sins" and, like Lazarus in his grave, we were becoming more and more corrupt as every moment passed!

III. Now, having proved the Truth of the text, and given you various reasons why we did not esteem Christ, let me, in conclusion, ask WHAT EMOTIONS OUGHT THIS FACT TO CREATE WITHIN OUR SOULS?

First, I think that the recollection of this Truth of God, that "we esteemed Him not," ought to produce in us *the deepest penitence.* I cannot understand that Christian who can look back upon his past life without a tear. If he can turn to the black pages of his history, which not only have no record of goodness, but are full of entries concerning his sins against his present Lord and Master, and yet not weep at the remembrance of them, surely he can never have learned the true nature of sin! O Christian, it would be becoming on your part to catch the spirit, if not literally to imitate the action of that "woman in the city, who was a sinner," of whom we read that, "when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house," she, "brought an alabaster box of ointment and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment." Our Lord's explanation of her conduct was that "she loved much." Is it because you love your Lord so little that you do not manifest your grief over your past sin as that poor woman did? Recollect that although you did not esteem Him, He had loved you with an everlasting love and He had purchased your soul's redemption at the great price of His own most precious blood! He stood before you, holding in His pierced hands the roll of the Eternal Covenant which set your soul at liberty and gave you a full discharge! Yet you did not esteem Him. O Christian, will you not weep even at the remembrance of the way in which you did treat the best Friend you have ever had? Recollect that you did virtually nail Him to the tree and pierce Him to the heart. Dr. Watts spoke for all Believers when he wrote the self-condemning words—

"'Twas you, my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were!
Each of my crimes became a nail,
And unbelief the spear.
'Twas you that pulled the vengeance down
Upon His guiltless head—
Break, break, my heart, oh burst my eyes!
And let my sorrows bleed."

And now, beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, having for a while allowed our penitential sorrow thus to find suitable expression, let us strike a higher note and, remembering that there was a time when we did not esteem Christ, *let us now rejoice in the great salvation which He has procured for us.* It is true that we have great reason for sorrow that we should ever have been so vile as not to esteem Him to whom we owe everything for time and for eternity. Yet we have much more reason to adore the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of that love of Christ which passes knowledge and which carried out to completion the wondrous plan whereby all our iniquities have been blotted out and we have become "accepted in the Beloved!" It was right that we should weep at the remembrance that we were numbered among the fallen, yet it is equally right that we should rejoice over the fact that we have been reclaimed! And what should be the very key-note of our song of rejoicing?

Should it not be the Sovereign Grace of God? The reason why the Lord chose us unto salvation was certainly not because we esteemed His Son, Jesus Christ, more than others did, for, "we esteemed Him not." If you ask me why God chose His people, I can only answer that it is for the same reason that Christ gave concerning the things that were hidden from the wise and prudent, but revealed unto babes, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Your sight."

There is one other emotion which every true Christian should feel—that is *hope for his fellows.* If I feel sorrow for my sin and joy for my deliverance, I ought also to have hope for other people! Perhaps someone here is saying, "I have brought my son to the House of Prayer time after time and I used to hope that God would have mercy upon him, but now I have given up all hope." Stop, my Brother! Do not talk like that! Do you not remember the time when it might have been said, concerning you and me, that we did not esteem Christ and, although your son does not now esteem Him, is that any reason why he should not yet do so? On the contrary, is not the manifestation of Divine Grace in your own case an encouragement to you in hoping for your son's conversion?

"Oh," says another venerable father, "I have long prayed in vain for one of my children. These hands, which are now palsied with age, have been lifted up year after year to the God of Grace, but I have lost all hope of my child's salvation." But, my hoary-headed Friend, think not that your prayers have failed, even though they still remain unanswered! They are all filed in Heaven and when the required number shall be complete, when that petition which God has determined shall be the "effectual" one shall be presented, your child shall be saved! But why should you despair concerning your dear one? You know that for many years you did not esteem Christ, yet He is "altogether lovely" to you now! Then why should not your experience be repeated in the case of your child?

"Ah," says another, "I live in such-and-such a district among many of the worst people in London. I have tried to bring them under the sound of the Word of God, but cannot induce even one of them to come! I feel as if I must give up even hoping for their salvation. They seem to me to be too bad to ever be saved." But, my dear Friend, you and I at one time did not esteem Christ—and if we really know what was in our own hearts, we shall say that these people are not much worse than we were! Yet suppose they *are* as bad as you think they are—remember that striking saying of Whitefield's—"Jesus Christ is willing to receive the devil's castaways." A very fastidious lady who heard that he said that, complained to the Countess of Huntingdon and said how sad it was that he should talk in such a vulgar way! The Countess said, "Mr. Whitefield is downstairs. I will send for him and let him answer for himself." When he came up and heard the lady's remark, he simply replied, "I had just been talking to a poor, sinful woman who had been to hear me preach, and the one thing that comforted her was the sentence to which this lady objects, 'Jesus Christ is willing to receive the devil's castaways.'" "Ah,"

said Lady Huntingdon and others who agreed with her, "That is quite sufficient justification for you."

I can testify from my own experience that God often blesses some of our rough expressions more than our highly-polished ones. I have seen so many souls saved through some of the odd and singular sayings that I have felt moved to utter that I intend, God helping me, to go on in the same style, even though some people may continue to find fault with me for doing so. I can certainly endorse Mr. Whitefield's remark, "Jesus Christ is willing to receive the devil's castaways." However vile and foul a sinner may be, I always feel, "That is just what I would have been but for the Grace of God." Therefore, instead of imitating the priest and the Levite who left the poor wounded traveler to die so far as they cared, I feel anxious to go to the very worst of my fellow men and to say to them, "Why, my dear Brother, there was a time when I did not esteem Christ, so I will not be angry with you because you say that you are not religious. I will not scold you because you do not read the Bible, or pray to God, or go to a place of worship. But I will try to win your esteem for my Master by telling you of His great love to sinners just like you. Though He was reigning with His Father in Heaven, He gave up all His Glory and came down to earth to live just as any other poor man might have lived, only that He was without sin. He went about doing good, healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, raising the dead and, at last, He willingly gave Himself up into the hands of wicked men and died, 'the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.'"

So I would try to make the Gospel very plain to my poor friend and tell him what the Lord had done for *my* soul—and assure him that, having saved *me*, there was no limit to His Grace and mercy! I always admire the argument of Charles Wesley in those familiar lines—

"His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me."

That was the same kind of argument that Paul used when he wrote, "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. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for the pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." Christian men and women, as you retire from this building, I leave these thoughts with you. At one time you did not esteem Christ, so now you have no right to be proud of your position as His followers, but should give to Him all the glory for your salvation! And you should hope for the salvation of others, even the very worst of your fellow creatures—

"While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return."

You may go to the very worst haunts of sin and vice in this city or anywhere else and, trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit, you may proclaim the Gospel of Christ to be the most abandoned men and women whom you can find, knowing that He is able "to save them to the

uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 26:14-45.

Verse 14, 15. *Then one of the twelve called Judas Iscariot went unto the chief priests and said unto them, What will you give me, and I will deliver Him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.* At what a price did the traitor sell our blessed Master! O you who have been redeemed with His precious blood, set a high value upon Him! Think much of Him, say much in praise of Him! Remember these thirty pieces of silver and never be guilty of despising the Lord of Glory, as these chief priests did when they paid the price of a slave for Him.

16-19. *And from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him. Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto Him, Where will You that we prepare for You to eat the Passover? And He said, go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the Passover.* See the absolute control which Jesus has over the minds of men! He can have any man's house that He wants and He knows who will be glad to welcome Him. Yet this same Jesus was about to die—and this shows how perfectly voluntary was His Sacrifice. He was not forced to stand in our place, nor was He compelled to suffer except by the constraint of His own great love. All was free, as became the freedom of His Grace. Then shall not our heart's love flow out freely to Him? Shall we need to be scourged to obedience? Oh, no, Beloved! So let us think what we can voluntarily do in honor of our Divine Lord who gave His all for us.

20-22. *Now when the evening was come, He sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, He said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me. And they were exceedingly sorrowful.* And well might they be sad.

22. *And began, every one of them, to say unto Him, Lord, is it I?* What anguish does that question always stir within the heart and mind of every true Believer! "Shall I ever betray my Lord and Master? Shall I ever deny or forsake Him?" God grant that none of us may ever do as Judas did!

23. *And He answered and said, He that dips His hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me.* He who had been entrusted with the charge of the finances of the little band of Christ's immediate disciples—he who carried the bag—was the one who was about to betray his Lord. Since then, Christ has often been betrayed by those who have been in positions of trust, those who have led the way among the disciples of Christ, those who have, as it were, been so familiar with Christ as to dip their hand with Him in the dish!

24, 25. *The Son of Man goes as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed Him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, You have said.* Judas seems to have been the last to ask the question, "Master, is it I?" Yet he was the guilty one—the one who had already covenanted with the chief priests to sell His Lord.

26-31. *And as they were eating, 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 give it to them, saying, Drink you all of it; for this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's Kingdom. And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Then said Jesus unto them, All you shall be made to stumble because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.* Observe our blessed Lord's habit of quoting Scripture. He was able to utter words of Infallible Truth which had never before been used, yet He constantly quoted from the Inspired Scriptures! Those who nowadays quibble at the Word of God and yet profess to be followers of Christ, find no excuse for their conduct in the example that He has left us, for He sometimes quoted Scripture when it might not have seemed to be necessary to do so! Brothers and Sisters in Christ, have your Bible first in your hearts, then at the tip of your tongue. I was going to say at your fingertips, so that you may always be able to give a good reason—a solid and Divinely-authoritative reason—for any statement that you may make!

32, 33. *But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto Him, Though all men shall be made to stumble because of You, yet will I never be made to stumble.* No doubt Peter said this from his heart, but "the heart is deceitful above all things." Peter may have thought that he was stronger than his brethren, yet he was the very one who proved to be the weakest of the whole Apostolic band! "Though all men shall be *made to stumble* because of You, yet will I never be *made to stumble*."

34. *Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto you, That this night, before the cock crow.* That is to say, before that period of time which was called the cock-crowing.

34. *You shall deny Me thrice.* According to *Mark's* record, the cock was to crow once before Peter had denied his Lord thrice, and this it did. And when he had given his third denial, it crowed a second time. And then his slumbering conscience was awakened and, "He went out and wept bitterly." Some persons who are well acquainted with the religious ceremonies of the Jews, say that the period called the cock-crowing was the time for the sacrifice of the morning lamb, and that it was about that time that Peter denied his Lord.

35. *Peter said unto Him, Though I should die with You, yet will I not deny You.* It is a great pity that Peter said this after he had received so plain a warning from his Master, yet he was not alone in his boasting.

35. *Likewise also said all the disciples.* They all felt quite sure that under no circumstances could they be so base as to forsake their Lord. And if you think of the washing of their feet by their Lord and Master, the wonderful words of Christ to which they had listened and that solemn Communion Service in the large upper room, you may not be surprised that they felt themselves bound to Christ forever—felt that they could never leave Him, nor forsake Him! Yet they all did.

36-39. *Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, Sit you here, while I go and pray yonder. And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then said He unto them, My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death; tarry you here, and watch with Me. And He went a little farther, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.* Christ had to tread the winepress alone, yet He showed how complete was His Humanity by wishing to have a few choice friends near at hand. Yet even the chosen three failed Him in His hour of greatest need.

40. *And He came unto the disciples, and found them asleep, and said unto Peter, What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?* Peter had constituted himself the spokesman of the Apostolic company, so the Master addressed the question to him, though it also applied to his companions—"What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?" They had all declared their devotion to Him, yet they had fallen asleep while He had bid them watch.

41-45. *Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Your will be done. And He came and found them asleep again; for their eyes were heavy. And He left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then He came to His disciples, and said unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.*

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REASONS FOR SEEKING GOD
NO. 3034

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 4, 1907.

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

"Seek Him that makes the seven stars and Orion, and turns the shadow of death into the morning, and makes the day dark with night: that calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out upon the face of the earth: The Lord is His name."
Amos 5:8.

IDOLATRY has been, in every age, the besetting sin of mankind. In some form or another, the unregenerate are all given to it and even in God's people there remains in their old nature, a tendency towards it.

In its grosser manifestation, idolatry is the desire of man to see God with his eyes, to have outward representation of Him who cannot be represented, who is too great, too spiritual to ever be described by human language, much less to be set forth by images of wood and stone, however elaborately carved and cunningly overlaid with gold! There is a great God who fills all space and yet is greater than space—whose existence is without beginning and without end, who is everywhere present and universally self-existent! But man is so unspiritual that he will not worship this Invisible One in spirit and in truth, but craves after outward similitudes, symbols and signs. If Aaron makes a calf, Israel forgets the Divine Jehovah's Glory and says of the image of an ox that eats grass, *"These are your gods, O Israel, which brought* you up out of the land of Egypt."

We are apt to imagine that it is a very strange freak of human depravity when men are led to worship visible objects and signs, but it is not at all unusual or singular! It is the general sin of all mankind. I suppose no man has been entirely free from it and every Believer has to contend against it in its subtler forms, for idolatry takes insinuating shapes, less gross in appearance than the worship of Dagon or Ashtaroth, but quite as sinful.

Take, for instance, the common religious idolatry of our own country which consists, in part, of reverence to holy places, as if under the Christian dispensation, which is not one of *type*, but of *fact*, holiness could dwell in stone, lime, wood, slate, iron and brass when architecturally arranged! English idolatry further reveals itself in reverence to an order of men, not because of their superior character, but because of certain mystic rites performed upon them, by virtue of which they are supposed to become the representatives of Heaven and the reservoirs of Divine Grace. How trustful are our English idolaters in these men when they behold them appareled in vestments which the

tailor has cut into fashions remarkably helpful to devotion! Without these priests and their sumptuous adorning and grotesque disfigurements, our modern idolaters cannot publicly worship—but in these they have as much as the Ephesians had in their great goddess Diana!

They can only worship their god by objects which appeal to the senses. An outward altar, an outward priest, an outward ritual, outward rites—all these are nothing but another form of the old idolatry of Babel and of Bethel! Man still turns from the unseen God. The unseen Priest who has passed within the veil, man still ignores. The *spiritual* feast upon the body and blood of Jesus Christ which is the joy of the saints, they know not! But the outward emblems are adored by some and held in great reverence by others. Bread and wine, which are but created and common things, even when placed on the table to assist us in Communion, are made into deities by the blind idolaters of this age! Could Egypt or Assyria do worse? Bread used at the ordinance is but bread and nothing other than ordinary bread. Its emblematic use imparts to it no measure or degree of sanctity, much less of Divinity! It is idolatry—flat, groveling idolatry—and nothing less, which on all sides is spreading its mantle of darkness over this land under the pretense of profoundly reverent piety!

Where Ritualism does not reign, how easy it is for men to be idolaters of themselves! What is self-reliance, understood as too many understand it, but idolatry of self? It is the opposite of dependence upon the living God, the great Source of power and wisdom. Reliance upon my own wisdom, upon my own resolution, upon my own strength of mind—these are idolatries in a subtle and attractive shape. What is much of our overweening affection to our children and to our relatives? What is our unsubmissive repining but idolatry? How is it that we rebel against God if our friends are suddenly taken from us? O man, why is it that your God has so little of your love and the creature so much? There is a lawful affection—up to that point you should go. There is an unlawful affection when, by any means, the creature comes before the Creator—to this you may not descend! Unlawful love, love which idolizes its object, is to be avoided with all our might!

Then, again, perhaps a less excusable form of idolatry, though no excuse is to be offered for any, is that in which men idolize their estates and their confidence in their accumulations—living only to acquire wealth and position—struggling in the race—not to win the crown which is immortal—but that poor wreath with which men crown the wealthy merchant, the diligent student, the eloquent barrister, the valiant men of arms! This is idolatry, again, for it is setting up an earthly object in the place of the Creator. To God is due all my love, my trust, my fear. He made me and, therefore, I am bound to serve Him—and whenever I lay down at the feet of any person or object, dominion over my powers, apart from God, I am at once guilty of idolatry!

I cannot stay to tell you all the various form which this idolatry assumes, but may God give us Grace to strive against them. And you who are still held captive by these idolatries, may He deliver! May He save you from leaning upon an arm of flesh, from trusting in what may

be seen and handled, and bring you to rely upon the Invisible God to whom alone belongs power and strength, and who has a right to our confidence and our service!

The text is addressed to those who have been guilty, either in word, or thought, or deed, of idolatry against God. It gives arguments to persuade them to turn away from everything else and to seek the true God. We shall read the text, first, *in its natural sense* and then, diving into its meaning a little more deeply, *we shall find spiritual reasons in it for seeking Jehovah, and Jehovah alone.*

I. First, then, IN THE NATURAL SENSE OF THE TEXT, we find a Truth of God which is plain enough, but which we need to constantly be reminded of, namely, that *Jehovah is really God.* If Jehovah were not really the Creator of the world, if He did not in very deed make "the seven stars and Orion," if He did not actually work in the operations of Providence, changing the night into day, and day again into night, we might be excused for not rendering Him service since homage might be safely withheld from an imaginary deity.

But, *as God is real* and exists as truly as we do, as our existence is dependent upon His Sovereign will and He is All-in-All, it is due to Him that we should "*seek His face.*" And simple as that utterance is, I have need to push it home to you. I am afraid, dear Friends, that many of you think of religion in its bearing towards God as being a very proper, but at the same time, imaginative, matter. You do not practically grasp the thought that God Is and that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. You do not lay hold upon the fact that as surely as there are fellow creatures round about you, there is a God close to you in whom you live, and move, and have your being. The worldly man puts his foot down on the earth and he says, "This is the main chance. I believe in this." He takes up certain fragments of that earth, yellow and glittering, and he says, "Ah, I believe in this. Here is something solid and I feel it." Just so, the created earth is real to him and God, who created all things, is to him but a shadowy being! He may not rudely deny His existence, but practically, he reduces his thought of God to a mere fancy and says in his heart, "No God." My attentive Hearer, I trust that you are not so unwise! You know that God Is, that He *Is* even if we *are not*, that He fills all things and that He dwells *everywhere*—and since He is the Creator, the First and Chief of all things, I trust you are anxious to seek Him and to yield your obedience to Him!

Note from the text that God is not only the true God, but He is *the glorious God.* I cannot understand how the heathen, supposing their gods had been gods, could worship such little, mean, base and contemptible beings! Think of Jove, for instance, the great god of Rome and Greece—what a disgusting animal he was! What a monster of sensuality, selfishness and folly! I should feel it hard, as a creature, to worship such a god as that, if he could be a god. But when I think of Him who made "the seven stars and Orion," who stretched out the heavens like a curtain and made the sky as a molten mirror—who is magnificent in the acts of

Creation, marvelous in the wonders of Grace and unsearchable in all the attributes of His Nature, my soul feels it to be her honor and delight to adore Him! It is an elevation to the soul to stoop to the dust before such a God! The more we reverence Him and the less we become in our own sight, the more sublime are our emotions. Well did even a heathen say, "To serve God is to reign." To serve such a God as ours is to be made kings and priests! Oh, were not our hearts perverted and depraved, it would be our greatest happiness, our highest rapture to sound forth the praises of a God so glorious! And our hearts would be always enquiring of Him, "Lord, what will You have me do? Your will is wiser and better than my own will. I ask no greater liberty than to be bound with Your bands of love! I ask no greater ease than to bear Your blessed yoke."

Since, then, the Lord is real and, moreover, so glorious as to be infinitely worthy of worship, we should seek Him and live.

Again, *Jehovah the true God, is most powerful* for He "makes the seven stars and Orion, and turns the shadow of death into the morning, and makes the day dark with night: that calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out upon the face of the earth: Jehovah is His name." Think reverently of Him, for He is not like the gods of the heathen, of whom the Psalmist said in satire, "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat." Contempt and ridicule are poured upon these wooden gods by the Prophet Isaiah when he tells of the workman who takes one end of a log and makes a god of it—and with the other part kindles a fire and warms his hands and cooks his food. Such a god as this it is indeed a degradation for the human mind to worship! But the true God, who has displayed His power in the glittering firmament and in the foaming sea, who is revealed with wonder to the eyes of the astronomer in the innumerable worlds revolving in boundless space—such a God we must reverence. In the hour of storm and tempest, when the Lord is abroad, riding in His chariot of thunder-cloud upon wings of the wind, casting forth His hailstones and coals of fire, making the earth shake at the sound of His voice and breaking the cedars of Lebanon with the flash of His spear, we feel we must adore Him! And as we bow before Him, reason endorses the worship which Grace suggests. Is not His power a cogent argument for seeking Him? Will not you who have hitherto lived without Him, now adore Him? A real God, so glorious and so powerful, should surely command your reverent adoration!

Further, *He is a God who works great marvels,* achieving wonders every moment which would astonish us if we were not so used to beholding them! They tell the story—'tis but a legend of the days of Solomon the Wise, that the king astonished all beholders by taking a seed and producing from it in a few moments, a full-grown plant. They cried, *"How* wonderful! How astonishing!" But the wise man said, "This is only what the Lord does every day. This is what He is performing

everywhere in His own time, and you see it, and yet you never say, 'How wonderful!'" When we have watched those who practice sleight-of-hand perform their feats, we have marveled greatly, but what are a few poor elicit tricks when compared with the ordinary, but yet matchless processes of Nature? Our fields and hedgerows teem with marvels never equaled by all the wisdom and skill of man! Walk into the grass field and you tread on miracles. Listen to the birds as they sing in the trees and you hear marvelous speech. If one little mechanical bird, with a few clockwork movements, were warbling out something like music in an exhibition, everybody would gather round it and some would even pay to hear it sing—and yet thousands of birds sing infinitely more sweetly than anything man can make—and men had rather kill them than admire them! Men fail to see the miracle which God is working in each living thing.

Turn your eyes above you to the starry firmament and watch the Pleiades and Arcturus with his sons, for though we know but little of them, they have won from many an observer an awestruck acknowledgment of the greatness of God, insomuch that it has been said that—

"An undevout astronomer is mad."

The order, the regularity, the manifest calculation and design which appear in every one of the constellations, in every single planet, in every fixed star and in every part of the great multitude of worlds which God has created are such decisive evidences that if men do not see something of God in them, they must be weak in their minds or wicked in their hearts! Surely, what is seen of God in this way has tended to make us worship Him. Many of you may know but little of astronomy, but still, you see every day that God is working everywhere around us and that Heaven and earth, and land and sea are teeming with the products of His marvelous skill. The revolutions of day and night and the formation and fall of rain are indisputable proofs of the Presence of eternal power and Godhead! Let us, therefore, seek the Lord.

How is it that a man can go up and down in God's world and yet forget the God who made the whole? I do not suppose that a man could have walked through the Exhibition at Paris without thinking of the emperor whose influence gathered all those treasures together and who attracted the kings and princes of the earth to visit it. And yet men will go through this world, compared with which the Paris "Exposition" was a box of children's toys, and will not recognize God therein! Oh, strange blindness! Mad infatuation that with God everywhere present and such a God—the God whom to know is life eternal, whom to delight in is present happiness and future bliss—man is willingly ignorant, blind to His own best interests, senseless to the sweetest and the most ennobling emotions and an enemy to his best Friend!

The surface of the text supplies us with motives for seeking GOD. Oh, that the Holy Spirit might supply us with Grace that we might *feel the motives* and be obedient to them!

II. We will now regard the text with a more spiritual eye.

We speak to those who are sensible of their departure from the living God and are anxious to be reconciled to Him by the forgiveness of their sins for Jesus' sake. But our text also has a word for the stubborn and unawakened. In many parts of Scripture the Lord has been pleased to invite the penitent to come to Him, but in this passage, in order that the invitation my miss none, it is made exceedingly wide in its character. Our text will appear to be very wonderful if we notice the context in which it stands—"You who turn judgment to worm word, and leave off righteousness in the earth, seek Him." There is no mention of those who thirst for Him, who are humbled and confess their faults! This exhortation is given to those who have no good points about them, but many of the most pernicious traits of character! Those who turn judgment into wormwood and leave off righteousness in the earth—even *they* are bid to seek God! Marvelous mercy! Who after this shall dare despair? If my hearer has, up to this day, lived a stranger to God, the text does not exclude him from seeking God, but, as with an angel's voice, it whispers, "Seek Him." If sin has perverted your judgments, yet seek the great Creator and Preserver! Seek Him, for you shall find Him! You are not bid to seek His face in vain—the command to seek Him implies the certainty of His being found of you!

The reasons given for seeking the Lord are, spiritually, these. The Lord "makes the seven stars." That is to say, the Pleiades. And He also "makes Orion." Now, the Pleiades were regarded as being the constellation of the spring, harbinger of the coming summer. We read of "the sweet influences of Pleiades." They are most conspicuous at the vernal period of the year. On the other hand, the Oriental herdsman, such as Amos was, when he saw Orion flaming aloft, knew the wintry sign right well. Both the Pleiades and Orion are ordained of the Lord—*He makes our joys and our troubles.* See, then, the reason why we should seek God, because if Orion should just now be in the ascendant and we should be visited with a winter of despondency, chilled by howling winds of fear and sharp frosts of dismay—if we seek God, He can withdraw Orion and place us under the gentle sway of the Pleiades of promise, so that a springtime of hope and comfort shall cheer our souls, to be succeeded by a summer of rare delights and fruitful joys! Do you hear this, poor troubled one? [See Sermon No. 818, Volume 14—THE PLEIADES AND ORION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Whatever your sorrow may be, the God who made Heaven and earth can suddenly change it into the brighter joy! By the dispensations of His Providence, He can do it! Your circumstances, which are now so desperate, can be changed by a touch of His hand within an hour. To whom can you better apply for succor? And if your heart is sick and sad with a sense of sin, and you are pining with remorse, His Grace can find a balm and cordial for your wounded conscience which shall give you peace at once! Before the clock ticks again, God can grant you perfect salvation, blot out your sins like a cloud and like a thick cloud your iniquities. Seek you the pardoning God! Seek Him, I say, for to whom else could you go? Where else could you look for

strength but to the Strong? Where else for mercy but to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?

The Lord, moreover, turns grief into joy. In the text it is added, "He turns the shadow of death into the morning." The long dark night of sorrow, blacker than darkness, itself, because it presages everlasting wrath. The night created by the grim shadow of death—cold, chill, terrible—may have fallen upon your soul, but the living God can at once turn this darkness into the brightness of the morning! When the sun arises with healing beneath his wings, the whole earth is made to smile, and even thus can the Lord at once make your whole nature glad with the light of His Countenance. Though you are ready to lie down in despair. Though you suppose that Hell yawns for you and will soon receive your guilty soul—He can turn this shadow of death into the morning of peace and joy! To whom, then, should you go but to this God? He has already given His dear Son to be the way of life for us sinners. Have you ever heard of another who gave His son to die for His enemies? Gad not about after other helpers, but come at once to your Heavenly Father's arms, and say with the prodigal, "I will arise and go to my Father." If you are willing to come to God, the way is open, for Jesus died. You must not come arrayed in the supposed fitness of your own good works or good feelings, but you must come resting on the finished work of the appointed Savior. If you look to Him, you shall be lightened. If you come with His name upon your lips, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you. Should not this be a reason for coming—that He can turn your night into day, your winter into summer?

But the text bears another aspect, namely, *that God can also turn your present joy into grief* and, therefore, you should seek Him. He makes the seven stars give way to Orion. "'He makes day dark with night." At this moment it may be that you are at ease—but how long will you be so? Though you have no God, you are content with what you possess in this world, satisfied with your daily earnings, or charmed with your yearly income. You are with your wife, your children, your estate. But remember how soon your joys may be taken from you! Have you not heard how often God's Providence has stripped the house, stripped the family, stripped the man's very soul of every comfort? Remember you not the story of Job who, in one day descended from riches to poverty? Know you not that although the wicked spread themselves abroad like a green bay tree, they shall suddenly wither? And though they are exceedingly proud and strong, they shall come to their appointed end like the ox fattened for the slaughter?

All our joys on earth are dependent on the Sovereign will of Heaven. Some of you know this by bitter experience, for you have seen the delight of your eyes taken away in a stroke and the comfort of your heart carried to the grave. Now, to whom should you fly for succor, but to Him upon whom all your present comfort depends and who can so soon take it all away? How prudent to be at peace with Him! How wise, above all wisdom, to be reconciled to the mighty God! But, alas for those who have

often been warned but who will not heed the warning! They have hardened their necks and will be suddenly destroyed. Their day will blacken into everlasting night! The proud sinner will die as others do—his eyes will pale and his brow grow cold, for he must face inexorable Death. And then, when he comes into the land to which the wicked are banished, he will enter into the outer darkness, darkness which shall be felt, in the land of confusion, where there is no beginning of hope, or end of misery—who would then desire to stand in his soul's place? Escape, then, before the darkness gathers! Seek Him, O man, who makes the day dark with night!—

"You sinners, seek His Grace,
Whose wrath we cannot bear.
Fly to the shelter of His Cross,
And find salvation there."

The last clause of the text suggests a fourth reason for seeking the Lord, namely, *God may make that which is a blessing to some a curse to others.* Did you observe it? Seek Him "that calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out upon the face of the earth." This may allude to the deluge, when the waters of the ocean covered the very tops of the mountains. But it may be equally well explained by reference to the clouds which yield refreshing rain. The sun draws up the waters of the sea, leaving the salt behind and when these exaltations have floated their appointed time in the air, they descend upon the thirsty earth to make glad the soil. Now, since the clause bears two readings, it were well to note how the actions of God oftentimes bear two renderings. There is, for instance, the gift of His dear Son, an unexampled act of love—and yet to some of you it will prove "a savor of death unto death." To the unbeliever, it will prove a terrible thing that Jesus ever came into the world! He is a precious Cornerstone to those who build upon Him, but those who stumble upon Him shall be broken—and if this Stone shall fall upon any man, it shall grind him to powder! That which is Heaven's greatest joy is Hell's greatest horror. When Christ shall come, the sight of Him shall draw forth the acclamations of His people, but it will also cause the utmost anguish to His enemies. They shall weep and wail because of Him. They shall call upon the rocks and mountains to fall upon them, and hide them from the face of Him who sits upon the Throne of God and from the wrath of the Lamb! Since you who so constantly hear the Gospel must have it made to you either a savor of death unto death or of life unto life, I pray that the Eternal Spirit may show you the wisdom of seeking God by Jesus Christ—and of seeking Him now!

It will be a dreadful thing, at the Last Great Day, to find the gentle Lamb become a Lion to you, to tear you in pieces when there shall be none to deliver! Why should that which is the meat of humble souls, become your poison? Why should the blood of that Savior in Whom so many have washed their robes, and made them white, be your condemnation? Remember that the blood of Jesus will be either upon you to cleanse you or upon you to condemn you! That dreadful cry of the Jews in the streets of Jerusalem, "His blood be on us, and on our children"—what a curse it brought upon their race in the massacres

within the city walls and in the bitter exile and suffering which they have so long endured! Take care that the same curse does not bring upon you an eternal exile from God! Seek His face, I beseech you! You may not long have the opportunity to seek it. The day of His mercy may close as closes this day with the setting sun. You may not survive to enjoy another day of Gospel invitation! May God the blessed Spirit, who alone can do it, make you seekers—and then make you finders—and His shall be the praise!

Thus much to the unconverted. The people of God can think over the text in relation to themselves. It is rich in priceless instruction to them, but time forbids me to direct their meditations. Farewell.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Psalm 139.

In this Psalm David praises God by specially dwelling upon the one attribute of Omniscience. If we really wish to praise God, we must think of Him as He is—and it is the best praise that we can render to God to describe Him as He is. And any one of His many attributes is so full of His Glory that if we give due honor to it, we shall have much to say upon it.

Verse 1. *O LORD, You have searched me, and known me*. It is true that God knows everything, but that is not what David says here. He makes a *personal* application of the universal Truth of God—"O Lord, You have searched *me*, and known *me*." He does not talk about God's knowledge of other men, but he speaks to God concerning himself—"O Lord, You have searched me, and known me." "You have searched me as if You were looking for contraband goods. You have ransacked me, You have gone down into my very heart and have spread out every secret part of my being—'You have searched me, and known me.'"—

"Lord, You have searched and seen me through.
Your eyes command with piercing view
My rising and my resting hours,
My heart and flesh, with all their powers."

2. *You know my sitting down and my rising up. You understand my thoughts afar off.* "What I do, and what I do not do—my sitting down for rest, and my rising up for action—You know me altogether, my most trivial deeds and my most important movements. My thoughts are so well known to You that even before I think them, You know what they will be. You need not come near to me in order to know me, so strong are Your eyes that if You only look at me from a vast distance, as a man looks at a star in the midnight air, 'You understand my thoughts afar off.' What I think and why I think it, whether it is sorrowful or hopeful, You understand my thoughts. Sometimes I cannot understand it myself, but You always understand it."

3. *You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.* "You have put a ring around me both in my staying and my going. I go to sleep, but You do not sleep. I cannot think of You

while I slumber, but You think of me and You 'are acquainted with all my ways.'"—

"Great God, Your penetrating eyes
Pervade my inmost powers.
With awe profound my wondering soul
Falls prostrate and adores.
To be encompassed around with God,
The Holy and the Just.
Armed with Omnipotence to save,
Or crush me into dust!
Oh, how tremendous is the thought!
Deep may it be impressed!
And may the Spirit firmly engrave,
This Truth within my breast!"

4. *For there is not a word on my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, You know it altogether.* "You not only know what it is, but You know all about it—even the word which I have not yet spoken, the word that is on my tongue, as well as the word that is *not* on my tongue—those seeds of speech that have as yet not grown into words, You know them altogether."

5. *You have beset me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me.* "Like men lying in ambush, 'You have beset me behind and before.' All that I have ever done and all that I shall ever *do,* You know it all. I am like one under arrest, upon whom the officer lays his hand so that he may have no opportunity of escaping. I am in Your grip. You have taken such a firm hold upon me that I cannot get away from You. In another sense, I am like a child enfolded in His mother's arms, for You have 'laid Your hand upon me.'"

6. *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high, I cannot attain unto it.* "I cannot climb up to Your glorious Throne—the very lowest step of it is far higher than my feet can reach! 'I cannot attain unto it.'"

7. *Where shall I go from Your spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your Presence?* "I do not want to do so, but it would be quite impossible for me to flee from Your Presence even if I wished to do so. Neither by steady marching, nor by rapid flight can I get away from You."

8. *If I ascend up into Heaven, You are there.* The Hebrew is, "You there," as if there was nothing else there but God.

8. *If I make my bed in Hell, behold You are there.* This seemed even more amazing to the Psalmist than that God was in Heaven, so He put in a, "behold"—"Behold, You."

9. *If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea.* "If I fly on the wings of light, which travels with inconceivable rapidity."

10. *Even there shall Your hand lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.* "I cannot go there except by Your leading and I shall not be there except by Your uplifting. There is no way by which I can keep away from God even if I try to do so. If, instead of living in the light, I seek to hide myself in the darkness, what then?"

11. *If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.* "The very night shall change its nature and turn from darkness into light!"

12. *Yes, the darkness hides not from You, but the night shines as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to You.* See, my dear Brothers and Sisters, how we dwell continually under the inspection of God? You have seen bees in a glass hive and watched all their movements, or you have put an insect under a powerful microscope and examined every part of it. Even so does the Omniscient God watch and examine you! Nothing is done by you that He does not observe. The poet speaks of the fierce light that beats about the throne of man, but you dwell in that far fiercer light which beats about the Throne of God!

13. *For You have possessed my reins.* "Those secret organs of my body which I cannot see, and whose working I can only imperfectly comprehend."

13. *You have covered me in my mother's womb.* "Even before I came on the stage of action, You were exercising wondrous care over me."

14. *I will praise You.* That is a good resolution for each one of us, as well as the Psalmist, to make! As God sees me, let me praise Him—it will be pleasing to Him to hear me praising Him. "I will praise You."

14. *For I am fearfully and wonderfully made.* Nobody can rightly study the anatomy of the human body and see the beautiful arrangement of the various veins, nerves, sinews, muscles and bones without saying with the Psalmist, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

14. *Marvelous are Your works; and that my soul knows right well.* To study God's marvelous works, you need not go abroad, for they can be plainly seen in your own body. This earthly house of your tabernacle, in which you dwell so long as you are in this world, is a masterpiece of Divine wisdom and skill!

15. *My substance was not hid from You, when I was made in secret, and curiously worked in the lowest parts of the earth.* God made us in His secret workshop by a marvelous method of Divine Power.

16. *Your eyes did see my substance, yet being not perfect; and in Your book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.* God's wonderful foreknowledge enabled Him to know us even before we knew ourselves, or anyone else knew us! And in the very making of us, the creation of our body and mind and spirit, God was beforehand with us.

17. *How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!* "I love to remember that You, my God, are thinking of me. I am not distressed or alarmed by that recollection. I do not say, 'How terrible are Your thoughts unto me, O God!' But, 'How precious'—how consoling, how full of promises of blessing to me—'are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!'"

18. *If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with You.* "You lull me to sleep and You awake me in the morning. And when I open my eyes, You are still there." Happy

Believer, who is always with God! Why should not You and I, dear Friends, always be consciously in the Presence of God? We are never right unless we are in that condition—and if we ever begin to forget God, we are in a wrong state of heart. If we can live from day to day without realizing that God is near us, we are falling into a sad and dangerous condition!

19. *Surely You will slay the* wicked, O God. It cannot be that God has seen all their wicked acts and read their evil thoughts, and yet will spare them! When men offend in the very presence of the judge, it is easy work for him to try them.

19. *Depart from me, therefore, you bloody men.* "You men of blood. You men stained with the blood of your fellows. Get away from me, for I do not want to be harboring criminals. God sees my company as well as myself, so depart from me!

20. *For they speak against You wickedly, and Your enemies take Your name in vain.* David could not bear even the thought that men should insult such a God—a lack of reverence to the All-Seeing One was altogether unbearable to him, so he bade those who were guilty of such wickedness to take themselves away from him.

21, 22. *Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate You? And am not I grieved with those that rise up against You? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them my enemies.* We are to love our own enemies, but we are not to love God's enemies, nor willingly to mix with them! How can Christians associate with the lewd and irreverent without becoming partakers of their evil deeds? Let us take note of what David says and realize that we cannot be the friends of God if we are the friends of God's enemies. Now the Psalmist comes back to his key-note. He began the Psalm with the declaration, "O Lord, You have searched me." Now he prays.

23. *Search me, O God, and know my heart.* "You have searched me, O God, but I pray You to do it again, and to keep on doing it—never take Your great searchlight away from me."

23. *Try me, and know my thoughts.* "I cannot hide them from You, and would not if I could."

24. *And see if there is any wicked way in me.* "Lord, look for the dross, to consume it! Look for the spots, to wash them away."

24. *And lead me in the way everlasting.* "Amen." Our hearts say, "Amen—so let it be."

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

ENQUIRING THE WAY TO ZION
NO. 3035

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 9, 1870.

"They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it."
Jeremiah 50:5.

I am going to take these words out of their context and use them as I believe they may very properly be used—as a description of those whom God is about to save. This is one of the signs and tokens of a coming salvation, "They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it."

You remember that Zion of old was *the place, above all others, where God manifested Himself.* To ask the way to Zion means, therefore, *to seek after God,* to desire to be reconciled to God, to long to be pardoned and accepted by God.

Zion was also the only place *where the offering of sacrifices was permitted.* Though the disobedient and idolatrous Jews offered sacrifices on the high places which they had profaned by their abominations, they did so contrary to God's commands. The only place where the sacrificial victims could be acceptably offered was in the Temple on Mount Zion. To come to Zion, today, means *to come to the one Sacrifice which God has provided for the sin of man,* namely, to Jesus Christ, His only-begotten and well-beloved Son, who is the one Propitiation for human sin and who has, by His death upon the Cross, made a full Atonement for the guilt of all who believe in Him.

Zion was also, in the olden time, *the appointed place of public worship* where the tribes went up on their solemn feast days, to join in the joyous Psalms that arose with thundering acclaim from ten thousand voices. There the multitude bowed in solemn prayer and there they heard the Word of the Lord. In a somewhat different form from that which we now observe, yet in a similar spirit to that in which we now meet, they worshipped God. So to ask the way to Zion means *to desire to worship the Most High,* to seek to become true and acceptable servants of the ever living God.

Zion of old was also *the place of delightful fellowship.* There friends met friends from the farthest ends of the land. He that dwelt at Dan gave the right hand of fellowship to him that dwelt at Beersheba when they came to their great general gatherings at Jerusalem. To ask the way to Zion, then, means *to seek to come to Christian fellowship, to* desire to be united in Christian bonds with Brothers and Sisters who love each other because they love one common Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, their blessed Savior!

Zion was, besides, *a place of rest.* It was looked upon as the abode of peace. Those who dwelt there were under the special protection of Heaven. To desire, therefore, to find the way to Zion is *to desire to find peace,* lasting peace, conscious peace with God, even "the peace of God which passes all understanding."

Zion, too, has been regarded *as a picture of Heaven.* To desire to know the way to Zion is, therefore, *to desire to know the way to Heaven.* To say, "Tell us the way to Zion," is the same thing as to say, "Tell us how we may reach that blessed state of salvation which shall secure for us a joyful entrance into everlasting bliss." There are two things stated in our text concerning the enquirers as to the way to Zion. First, *we have their enquiry* and, secondly, *we are told the direction in which their faces were turned*—"They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it."

I. First, then, we HAVE THEIR ENQUIRY—"They shall ask the way to Zion."

Who will do this? We will try to find out who they are who ask the way to Zion and, first, they are evidently *those who are weary of other ways.* They have been treading the way that leads to Hell. They have known and walked in the ways of pleasure and folly. They are familiar with the way of worldliness. Many of them have tramped along the miry way of self-righteousness and they have all run in the road of willful wickedness. Yet they are willing to leave all these ways, for a man cannot go in two opposite directions at the same time! He must go only in one or the other of them and, in asking the way to Zion, it is taken for granted that the truthful enquirer is weary of all other ways. Is it so with you, my Hearer? You are not yet saved, but are you discontent with all that you have ever known as yet? It is a blessed thing when God makes a man discontented with all but HIMSELF—when the way of sin is no longer so smooth and pleasant as it once was and the enjoyments of the world are no longer so delicious and alluring as they used to be. Surely, if this is your case, my Hearer, you are being weaned from the breasts of your vain delights that you may come to your Father who can make you truly blest!

I can only praise God from the depths of my heart if any of you who are not yet in the way to Zion, have had your way hedged up of late, for it may be that the thorns which have scratched and torn you, have only kept you from going yet further astray from the right road. I hope that even the wretchedness which arises through treading the paths of sin may drive many to find relief from it in the Savior who is, Himself, the way to God! Am I addressing any who are in such a condition at this moment? Surely there must be someone here who is saying, "I need to find something real, for I have tried the sham and found it useless. I want to get peace of conscience if I can, for I am distracted by the thought of my guilt. Wealth cannot satisfy me. I have abundance of this world's goods, yet I am not happy. Worldly ambition cannot satisfy my soul. I have gained the position for which I strove, but I am not content. My mind is driven to and fro as by a whirlwind. I am like a cockle-shell boat at the mercy of the stormy waves, or like the chaff from the

threshing floor that is driven before the wind. I have no rest, no peace, no satisfaction." Well, my dear Hearer, if you are in that state of mind and heart, I earnestly recommend you to ask the way to Zion—for that is the place of rest and contentment—and if you are sincerely asking the way, I am quite sure that it is because you are weary of all other ways.

Those who ask the way to Zion also thereby confess that *they are not yet saved.* It is a great work, a Divine work, to bring His people to confess that they are not yet saved, for the most of mankind have the notion that, somehow or other, all is well with them in the sight of God. This is especially the case with those who have been brought up religiously. If you have, from your childhood, been regular attendants at a place of worship. If you have been kept strictly moral and outwardly religious, it is exceedingly probable that you will slide into the idea which perhaps you would *not* express in so many words, but, still the idea is there—that you have, after all, very fair prospects with regard to the world to come. In Jeremiah's day there were some to whom the Lord said, "Trust you not in lying words, saying, The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, are these." And today the children of godly parents, the people who attend places of worship regularly and live an outwardly moral life, are very apt to say, "The people of the Lord, the people of the lord, the people of the Lord are we."

Perhaps some of you fancy that because you have been baptized, although you never were converted, or because you have dared to profane the Lord's Table by your presence, although you are quite unfit to be there, you are therefore saved. If that is the case with you, it will be a happy thing for you if you are led to enquire the way to Christ because you feel that you have not yet accepted Christ as your Savior. It will be a mercy for you if you are led to see that your natural condition, instead of making you a citizen of Zion, makes you a citizen of Sodom or of Babylon! Certainly you cannot become a child of God by birth, by blood, by Baptism, or by any ceremonial process—but only by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit! If you are not yet saved, I pray that you may be made to know that you are not. It is only God's gracious Spirit who can convict a man who thought all was well with him, that he is lost. Only the Holy Spirit can prove to him that he is not a Christian, though he thinks he is one! And when he is made to realize this, he will probably soon be transformed into that which he now fancies he is—a true child of the living God!

So those who ask the way to Zion are those who are weary of other ways and who feel that they are not yet in the way of salvation, the way of holiness.

Further, to ask the way to Zion proves that *the enquirer is not presumptuous*—that he does not think that he shall get to Zion, blunder on as he may. I believe that many men cherish the erroneous notion that if they are really sincere, and distinctly and decidedly moral, they will, somehow or other, by hook or by crook, get through the gate of pearl into Heaven. They say, "If we do not, who will? If it will not be well with us, then it must be far worse with a great many others who are worse than

we are." That is the kind of talk in which many indulge, but it is sheer presumption! O Sirs, believe me that being saved is not child's play! It is not a matter to be dreamed over. No man ever hit this mark by chance! No man's soul was ever saved by mere chance. Many a soul has gone to Hell through neglect, but never has even one soul gone to Heaven in that way! Remember that solemn unanswered question of the Apostle Peter, "If the righteous are scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" If it is only after stern fighting and struggling—and often a long and wearisome pilgrimage—that the Christian gets into Heaven and if even he is sometimes "saved, yet so as by fire," how shall they escape who neglect this great salvation? If they who serve God most diligently have nothing to glory in, what will be the portion of those who rebel against the Lord, or who simply "neglect" His great salvation? O Sirs, if the best of saints sometimes fear that they will be castaways at last, though that fear is needless if they are the Lord's—what will become of godless Sabbath-breakers, or of you who never read the Bible and never bow your knees in prayer, but who live as if there were no God, or as if it mattered not whether you served your Maker or abhorred Him? This fatal presumption will never do—and I hope there are some of you who have now done with it forever, who are no longer hoping to stumble into eternal life, but who are asking the way to Zion, knowing that there is but one way—and sincerely desiring to find it!

This enquiry, if it is honestly made, also proves that *those who make it are not conceited.* They ask the way to Zion for they do not think they know everything and they are willing to learn what they do not know. If a child should offer to tell them the way to Heaven, they would be glad to hear it. Or though the person who might deliver to them the message of salvation should be clothed in the garb of poverty, and although his language might be incorrect and ungrammatical, yet if he should tell them plainly what they must do to be saved, they would be willing to take the treasure even out of an earthen vessel and to find the priceless jewel in the mire! But when men boastfully say, "We know all that we need to know, so we have no need of any teacher. As for the Bible, we look upon it as an antiquated, worn-out old book and we, men of thought and intelligence, can do without it. Can we not study the rocks or the starry heavens, or the wide fields of Nature? What need have we of a voice from God to guide us?"—we can only reply, "Ah, Sirs, your boasting is that of fools! You must excuse the harshness of the word, but it is true, for wise men know their ignorance—and only fools boast as you have been doing. May you be emptied of all your pride—turned upside down as a man turns a dish bottom upwards and pours out all its contents. And when you find that there is nothing in you, go and ask the way to Zion with true humility! You will never be truly wise till you find out that you are not wise. And you will never really know till you are willing to admit that you know nothing except what God teaches you by His Word, His Spirit, or His servants.

There is another thing about this asking the way to Zion—*it shows anxiety on the part of the enquirers.* Sometimes when one wants to find a

certain spot in the intricate streets of London, one stops and asks a policeman, or someone else, which is the way to such-and-such a place. And an answer is given, with more or less clearness. But having gone in the direction indicated and not having found the place, one naturally asks again and, perhaps again! If you are afraid of missing the spot you want to find, there is seldom anything lost by asking—and it is always better to spend one minute in asking the way than to waste ten minutes in going wrong! He who is the most anxious to find the right way is the man who will ask the most often—and I trust there are some here who are willing to ask of the Word of God and to ask of God's servants—"Tell me, is this the road to Heaven, or am I mistaken? Is this the plan of salvation by which alone sinners can be delivered from the wrath to come? O Sirs, I cannot afford to be mistaken here, for my soul's eternal welfare depends upon it! A mistake here would involve everlasting misery! So, as before the living God, tell me the truth, even though it should hurt my feelings and make me angry, yet be faithful with me, O men of God! I ask you again and yet again, the way to Zion."

I think, too, dear Friends, we may say with regard to this enquiry, that *the man who makes it is not a skeptic.* He would not ask the way to Zion if he did not believe that there is such a place. There are some people who are continually trying to amuse themselves by pretending to be doubters. I speak what I really feel about this matter, for I do not believe in the honesty of nine out of ten of the doubts of which I hear, or of the new ideas that are constantly being brought forth concerning one Truth of God or another. I am sometimes asked why I do not preach more often against these heresies. What? Am I to tell everybody what any fool likes to say against God? Not I! If anybody else wants to propagate infidelity in that way, let him do it. I shall not blow a trumpet to call attention to the lies that men keep on inventing. If I answered everything that they have said up till now, they would say something else that was false next week. I have better employment than that of shining the devil's boots in this way! And besides that, I have the satisfaction of knowing that the most of you are not troubled by these heresies. You know, in your inmost souls, that His Book is true, that there is a God and that, before long, you will have to stand before Him to give an account of the deeds done in the body. If any of you do not believe the Bible, that does not affect the fact that it is true. And what I have to say to you is to charge you, as you love your never-dying souls, to escape from Hell and flee to Heaven—to point out to you which is the right road and to beseech you not to miss the overwhelming Glory of eternal life for the sake of indulging your foolish and fatal pride. There *is* a heavenly Zion—ask the way to it, press forward and find it!

I will make only one other remark upon this part of my subject. Those who sincerely ask the way to Zion *are evidently not asking out of mere curiosity,* for if they were, they would ask where Zion is and what sort of a place it is. And they would probably ask some very foolish questions concerning it. Instead of doing so, they simply say, "Show us the way." That is practical—they ask the way to Zion. I often fear that the

questions which are asked by many people concerning various mysterious or difficult Doctrines in the Bible are only asked in order to try to lull their consciences to sleep while they are living in rebellion against God. A man says to me, "Can you explain the seven trumpets of the Revelation?" No, but I can blow one in your ear and warn you to escape from the wrath to come! Another says, "Can you tell me when the end of the world will come?" No, but I can tell you how to be so prepared for it that you need not be afraid if it were to come tonight! I can urge you to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, so that, let the end of the world come when it may, you can await it with holy joy and enter into eternal bliss! We want more, especially among sinners, of practical questions and not mere captious and curious enquiries. There will be time enough for you to ask all proper and right questions and to have them answered—when you have sought and found the Savior. But meanwhile, my dear Hearer, your immortal soul is in jeopardy, so attend to that first of all. A man who is sinking in the sea is mad if he says, "I won't lay hold of that rope until I understand all about astronomy." A man in a burning house need not trouble his head about geology—his first business is to get to the fire escape—he can leave his study of geology till tomorrow. So you unconverted ones should "seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness," and all other things you need shall be added unto you.

This must suffice concerning the sincere enquirers who ask the way to Zion.

II. Now we will consider the direction in which these enquirer's faces are turned—"They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it."

If a man should ask you the way to a certain part of the town which lies toward the North, and his face should be turned toward the South, you would say, "Sir, that place is in the very direction from which you have come. You must turn your face the other way if you mean to get there." But suppose that he kept on walking in the same way in which he was going before he spoke to you? And suppose that he still asked the way, yet persisted in doing the very opposite to what he should do? You would at once know that he was merely mocking you and you would very likely pass on and say to yourself, "I will answer the civil enquiry of anyone who really needs directions, but I will not continue to answer the enquiry of a man who asks the way and when he is told, deliberately turns his face in the opposite direction!"

I hope I am addressing many who are saying, "We do want to be saved. We are in real earnest about it. We would do anything in our power to be true Christians and to have our sins forgiven." Shall I tell you how we can know whether your faces are turned in the right direction? *A man who has his face towards Zion is earnest about Divine things.* He used to trifle concerning eternal realities, or to assume the appearance of earnestness on certain occasions. When he heard an earnest preacher deliver an impressive discourse, he felt his spirit somewhat stirred, but he soon cooled down and was as careless as before. A man who has his face Zionward is constantly in earnest. He feels that the chief business of

his life is to get salvation and I believe that a man in real earnest about eternal life, sooner or later obtains it. I do not think there will be one lost sinner in Hell who will be able to say, "I honestly and earnestly sought the Savior, but I sought Him in vain." A man may be in earnest and yet, through lack of knowledge, he may miss the mark for a while. But I believe that sooner or later, the Light of God, by God's Grace, will come to him. If God continues to cherish the earnest desire within his heart, it will be a sign that He means to ultimately open the prison door and set the bound spirit at liberty! So earnestness is a good sign of the face being set Zionward.

Another sign that a man's face is towards Zion is seen when *he hears the Word attentively.* There is great hope for the man who constantly attends the preaching of the Gospel—that is to say if it is really the Gospel that he hears, and if it is honestly and earnestly preached—and if, while attending the House of Prayer, the man does not merely come in and go out, as a mere formal worshipper, but anxiously listens and watches to hear whether there is a message that is especially suitable for him. I know that I have some hearers who seem to go fishing in my sermons to see if there is something in it suited to their case that they can catch and appropriate to themselves. Like the little boy who used to listen so attentively that his mother asked him why he did so. He replied, "I heard a minister say once that if there was a word in the sermon that might be blessed to us, Satan would be pretty sure to try to distract your attention so that we might not hear it. So I want to hear it all and see if there is something that may be useful to me." I am satisfied that your face is set Zionward when you can honestly say, "I come to the House of Prayer and sit there not merely because it is the Lord's-Day and we must go somewhere to worship Him—not because I like to see the crowded congregation and to join in the joyous songs of praise, but because I hope that one of these days the minister will be guided by the Holy Spirit to let fall a handful on purpose for me—and that even I may know what it means to be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation."

Perhaps a better sign is when a man not only continually hears the Gospel preached, but frequently and as often as he can, *reads the Word of God with a view of finding something that may meet his case.* In some respects the preached Word has a very powerful influence over those who hear it because it comes with a living power from living lips—and God has ordained that by the preaching of His Word men shall believe and be saved. But in other respects, this Divinely-Inspired Word is far superior to anything that we can ever say, for it is the Infallible Word of God which lives and endures forever! Here is God's own Truth in God's own words—and when I find that any of you get up a quarter of an hour earlier in the morning so that you may be able to read a chapter before you go to work, or when I hear that you carry your little pocket Testament with you, so that in your dinner hour you may read a few verses with the prayer—"O God, save my soul while I read this, Your Holy Word!"—I feel that if you have not already found Christ, you soon will do so! At any rate, I am satisfied that you are enquiring the way to Zion and

that your face is turned towards Heaven! And I do not believe, my dear Friend, that you will long be in the habit off attentively reading the Word without finding some precious promise that shall come home to your spirit and bring you into the light!

There is still one better sign and that is this—I am so glad to know that some *of you have begun to really pray.* I expect that most of you used to pray, after a fashion, even when you were children. Your mother taught you to say a little prayer at her knee before she put you to bed. And many of you did not give up that habit until you went away from home. Perhaps you were apprenticed and possibly there was another apprentice in the room where you slept—and you had not the moral courage to kneel down while he was there. Well, I am sorry if it was so, yet I fear that where you *did* observe that form, you did not really pray! But now you do truly pray and from your heart you do really speak to God. It may be that there are others of you who have always used a printed or written form of prayer, yet till lately you never prayed in the true sense of that word. You used to read or recite the words just as the followers of Mohammed repeat their stereotyped form, but your heart was not in them and you were often half asleep even while you were uttering those meaningless words. But now you cannot help praying—you groan out poor broken sentences to God that you would not like to see in print. I recollect the time when I used to pray after this fashion, "O God, save me! I hear the Gospel preached whenever I can, but it does not bring peace to my heart. I am still without God, without Christ and without hope in the world! O Lord, do save me! Save, me, I beseech You. And save me now!" If that is the spirit in which you have prayed, never mind what your words may have been—if this has been your desire, your face is set Heavenward and I do not believe that the Lord will long let you cry thus unto Him without sending you a distinct answer of peace! You remember that the Lord said to Ananias, concerning Saul of Tarsus, as one of the evidences of the great change that had been worked in him, "Behold, he prays." And if that can also be said of you, there is good reason to hope concerning you! Surely the Holy Spirit has already been at work within you if you have begun to pray continually and to pour out your heart's supplication in secret before the living God!

Another good sign of sincerity is *when a man begins to forsake his old companions and shows that he likes the people of God far better.* In my early ministry in London, there was a certain friend—if he is not here tonight, he is usefully engaged elsewhere—who came to the service one Lord's-Day evening with no objective beyond a vain curiosity. But that night the Word of the Lord stung him to the quick and made him very angry. He wrote me a letter, the next morning, to tell me that I had insulted him—and I do not know what he was *not* going to do! He came again to see if I would do the same as before and the Word of the Lord cut him up far worse! But it was a very different letter that he wrote to me the next morning. He said that he had been in the habit of meeting, on Sunday nights, with half a dozen friends—most of whom are now members of this Church—and they used to, on Saturday, draw at the top

of a sheet of notepaper a little sketch signifying, "Drop in on Sunday night—pipes and tobacco at seven." Then the man went on to tell me that if these former friends of his would not come with him to the House of Prayer, they would be friends of his no longer, for that old mode of spending the Lord's-Day evening would never suit him again! That is one of the sure signs of the working of God's Grace, when a man says to his old companions, "Now, Sirs, I cannot be your friend if you are not God's friends. As far as worldly matters are concerned, I will help you when I can. I will not break my friendship with you in that respect. But as to spending my leisure hours in the places of sin where you find your delights, I cannot do it. I fear I am not yet converted. I am afraid I am not a Christian, but this much I know—I cannot find my pleasure any longer where I used to find it."

Ah, my Friend! When you talk like that, you have your face set Heavenward! Even if you are not actually on the road there, you are certainly in a hopeful condition and I trust that, before long, there will be something better even than that to be said concerning you! You will go to the houses where the name of Christ is like ointment poured forth and though you may sit still and hold your tongue, you will be thinking, "I wish I had a share in these precious things, and I do delight to hear these people talk about them." I know some learned men who have been delighted to listen to a very poor woman as she was talking of the joy of the Lord only a little while before she passed into the spirit-land. It is usually a sure sign that we are in love with the Master when we are in love with His servants and when we find delight in the company of His people. It is surely because there is a secret drawing of our hearts towards Him. It indicates to me, my Friend, that your face is set Zionward when you begin to hate the company of the loose, the frivolous, the wicked—and to choose the company of the earnest, the truthful, the godly, the prayerful, the lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ!

I shall only detain you while I mention the best sign of all—a sign, dear Friends, which I believe is present in many of you—namely, that *you are beginning to repent of sin and beginning, though you hardly dare to think that you are, to believe in Jesus!* Only a few days ago you did really think that you had believed in Jesus, though you are afraid to think so tonight, and you would not like to be deceived about so important a matter. Yet at times there is a most blessed brokenness of heart about you. You cannot look back on your past history without feeling that your tears must flow as you mourn that you should ever have lived as you have lived—that you should have had so many privileges and should have slighted them—that you should have had so many warnings and should have despised them. You do not imagine that this feeling is true repentance, but I believe that a truly repentant soul scarcely ever thinks that it does repent as it ought to do. When a man is most tender in heart he generally says, "I grieve that I feel so hardened and that I am not as tender as I ought to be." Remember this—there never was a saint who repented as much as he should have, for

repentance should be perfect and no Christian has ever attained to that height.

As for believing in Jesus, I know that there are some of you who—when you have just been reading the very sweet promise in the Scriptures and your heart has been enabled to rest upon it—have had thoughts like these, "I cannot say that I really do believe in Jesus, but I do desire to believe in Him. And one thing I know, if He is not yet mine, I will never be fully at rest with anyone but Himself—

"'Other refuge have I none.'"

"If I cannot nestle under His blessed wings, I will never try to hide under any others." You sometimes hope that you really have trusted in Jesus—and I think that you have done so, although your faith is very feeble. Remember, however, that even a feeble faith is a saving faith! Though your faith is no bigger than a mustard seed, so that you can hardly see it, it will bring salvation to you! Even if you cannot see it, God can. If you do but touch the hem of Christ's garment, virtue will flow out of Him to the saving of your soul!

There are some who go to Heaven rejoicing all the way. I hope you may be of that happy number. But there are others, like those who are mentioned in the fourth verse of this very chapter, who go "weeping." There are tears at every step—"going and weeping." Yet, when they get to Heaven, they will not be asked whether they came weeping or laughing. It is better to go weeping to Heaven than to go laughing to Hell! There are some who go weeping to Heaven—they seem every day as if they must surely perish on the road, yet they get there at last—and, dear Friend, if your face is set Zionward—if you can truly say, "There is none but Jesus for me. He is all my hope and all my trust," you may rest content that you also will get to Heaven at last! If you are really trusting in Christ, you are sure of Heaven, even if you have but one single grain of living faith in the Crucified Savior—

"The feeblest saint shall win the day,
Though death and Hell obstruct the way!"

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 32.

In this Psalm we have the Gospel of the peace of God as David knew it for himself and wrote it for the benefit of others.

Verse 1. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.* Hear this Inspired declaration, you who have transgressed the Law of your God! You who cannot plead a righteousness of your own, you who are conscious that you are sinners in the sight of God—here is a door of hope for you! Here is a possibility of blessing even for those whose lives have been full of sin and transgression! This is not a blessing of the Law, but a blessing of the Gospel—"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

2. *Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity.* Even God does not keep it recorded against him. The man has committed iniquity, but it is no longer laid to his charge, even by Him whose all-

seeing eyes have witnessed it! "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity."

2. *And in whose spirit there is no guile.* No shuffling, no deceit. He deals honestly with God and with himself—and with his fellows—and God deals righteously with him, and yet covers his sin, forgives his transgression and imputes not to him his iniquity!

3, 4. *When I kept silent, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.* While under a sense of sin, David could not pray. Or his prayer, if he did offer one at all, turned into a kind of roaring, like the cry of a wounded beast. He was so heavy in heart, his whole being was so scorched and parched by the fire of God's righteous anger because of his sin, that the very ducts of his tears refused to supply him with any further streams and he had to cry, "My moisture is turned into the drought of summer." Oh, what a burden sin always brings with it! And what a dreadful thing it is to be crushed under the almighty hand of God when He convinces us of our guilt by the effectual working of His Holy Spirit! When David was in that condition, what did he do in order to get peace with God and to find rest for his soul? Listen—

5. *I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah.* He made to the Lord a full, childlike confession of his sin, iniquity and transgressions—evidently putting his heart's trust in the mercy of God. And soon all the burden that oppressed him was removed and the fierce burnings of Divine Vengeance within his spirit were quenched—and his storm-tossed heart was at rest in his God! "You forgave the iniquity of my sin."

6, 7. *For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him. You are my hiding place.* See where a sinner can find a safe shelter—only in his God. Christ Jesus, the Son of God, is the appointed Judge of all mankind, yet it is to Him that we fly for refuge, crying—

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee!"

It is strange that He from whose lips the storm of wrath against sin comes, is the hiding place of His people! He draws the sword of Infinite and Infallible Justice against all iniquity and then He furnishes, in His own great heart of love, the sheath into which that sword of justice is plunged! So today the Believer says to Him in a fuller sense even than David understood the term, "You are my hiding place."

7. *You shall preserve me from trouble: You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.* The once heavy heart shall dance for joy! The spirit that was so grievously burdened shall take up the note of glad thanksgiving when the Lord's free Sovereign mercy brings forgiveness to His repenting children.

8. *I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go: I will guide you with My eyes.* A good servant frequently does not need even a word from her mistress to guide her as to some duty to be performed, or some fault to be avoided—a look is all that is necessary, just a glance of the eyes gives the necessary guidance. So the Lord says to His watchful servant, "I will guide you with My eyes." But, like the attentive servant, we must be keenly on the watch for this indication of our Lord's guiding eyes.

9. *Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.* If you will be like a horse or a mule, do not be surprised when you are made to feel the bit and bridle which are appropriate for such creatures! And if a whip and spur are added, remember that you brought such treatment upon yourself! No, do not be so foolish, but give heed to the Divine Injunction—"Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you."

10. *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.* The backsliding child of God will smart under the strokes of his Father's chastising rod, but still sterner treatment will fall to the lot of "the wicked." On another occasion, David wrote, "The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God."

10. *But he that trusts in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.* What a number of blessed fences there are around a Believer! Just now David wrote, "You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance." And now he says of himself or his fellow Believer, "He that trusts in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about." What more can he need?

11. *Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, you righteous: and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.* The Psalm began with blessedness and it ends with holy gladness! It was necessary to go down into the Valley of Humiliation for a while, but the Lord brought the Psalmist up to the mountaintop again, so that he felt that he must have others join him in his gladsome song—"Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart." May all of us be fitted, by God's Grace, to join that singing and shouting company, 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.

PROVING GOD
NO. 3036

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 19, 1856.

"Prove Me now."
Malachi 3:10.

IT was my pleasure and my privilege, some time ago, to address you from the whole of this verse—"Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in your 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."

If I rightly remember, we had at that time enough room, but very soon afterwards, when we strove to serve our God more, He did really pour us out such a blessing that we had not room to receive it! Then we enlarged this house—still the blessing flowed so copiously that there was no room to receive it and I might have preached again from the same text, to remind you again of the promise. This morning, feeling that we are about to enter on a new enterprise to God's honor and Glory, I thought I would endeavor to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, for which purpose I select such a text as this, "Prove Me now."

According to the laws of our country, no man can be condemned until his guilt is proved. It were well if we all carried out the same justice toward God which we expect from our fellow men, but how frequently will men condemn the acts of their God as being hard and unkind! They do not *say* so—they dare not—they scarcely admit that they *think* so, but there is a kind of lurking imagination hardly amounting to a deliberate thought which leads them to fear that God has forgotten to be gracious and will no longer be mindful of them. Let us never, my Friends, think harshly of our God till we can prove something against Him. He says to all His unbelieving children who are doubtful of His goodness and His Grace, "Prove Me now. Have you anything against Me? Can you prove anything that will be dishonorable to Me? Wherein have I ever broken My promise? In what have I ever failed to fulfill My word? Ah, you cannot say that. Prove Me now, if you have anything against Me—if you can say anything against My honor—if you have hitherto not received answers to prayer and blessings according to promise. Set me down as false, I beseech you, until you have so proved Me."

Moreover, not only is it unjust to think ill of anyone until we can prove something against him, but it is extremely unwise to be always

suspicious of our fellow creatures. Though there is much folly in being over credulous, I question if there is not far more in being over suspicious. He who believes every man will soon be bitten, but he who suspects every man will not only be bitten, but devoured! He who lives in perpetual distrust of his fellow creatures cannot be happy—he has defrauded himself of peace and happiness—and assumed a position in which he cannot enjoy the sweets of friendship or affection. I would rather be too credulous towards my fellow creatures than too suspicious. I had rather they should impose upon me by making me believe them better than they are, than that I should impose upon them by thinking them worse than they are. It is better to be sometimes cheated than that we should cheat others—and it is cheating others to suspect those on whose characters there rests no suspicion. We acknowledge such morality among men, but we act not so towards God—we believe any liar sooner than we believe Him! When we are in trial and trouble, we believe the devil when he says God will forsake us. The devil, who has been a liar from the beginning, we credit—but if our God promises anything, we say, "Surely this is too good to be true." And we doubt the fulfillment because it is not brought to pass exactly at the time and in the way we anticipate! Let us never harbor such suspicions of our God. If we say in our haste, "All men are liars," let us preserve this one Truth of God, "God cannot lie." His counsel is immutable and He has confirmed it by an oath, "that we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" in Christ Jesus. Let not our faith, then, dally with fear. Let us rather seek Grace—that we may confidently believe and assuredly rely on the words which the lips of God speak. "'Prove Me now,' if any of you are suspicious of My Word. If you think My Grace is not sweet, taste and see that the Lord is gracious. If you think that I am not a rock and that My work is not perfect, come now, tread upon the rock and see if it is not firm—build on the rock and see if it is not solid. If you think My arm shortened that I cannot save, come and ask and I will stretch it out to defend you. If you think that My ear is heavy that I cannot hear, come and try it—call upon Me and I will answer you. If you are suspicious, make proof of My promises, so shall your suspicions be removed. But, oh, doubt Me not until you have found Me unworthy of trust! 'Prove Me now.'"

In these words I find *a fact couched, a challenge given, a time mentioned*, and *an argument suggested*. Such are the four points I propose to consider this morning.

I. First, then, we have THE FACT that God allows Himself to be proved—"Prove Me now."

In meditating on this subject, it has occurred to me that all the works of Creation are proofs of God—they evidence His eternal power and Godhead. But inasmuch as He is not only the Creator, but the Sustainer of them all, they make continual proof of Him, His goodness, His faithfulness and His care. I think when God launched the sun from His hand and sent it on its course, He said, "Prove Me now; see, O sun, if I

do not uphold you till you have done your work and finished your career. You may rejoice 'as a strong man to run a race,' but while you fulfill your circuits, and nothing is hid from your heat, you shall prove My Glory and shed light upon My handiwork." When the Almighty whirled the earth in space, I think He said, "Prove Me now, O 'seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night,' refreshing you with incessant Providences." And to each creature He made, I can almost think the Almighty said, "Prove Me now. Tiny gnat, you are about to dance in the sunshine—you shall prove My goodness. Huge leviathan, you shall stir up the deep and make it frothy—go forth and prove My power. You creatures whom I have endowed with various instincts, wait on Me—I will give you your meat in due season. And you, you mighty thunder and you swift lightning, go teach the world reverence and show forth My Omnipotence." Thus, I think, all God's creatures are not merely proofs of His existence, but proofs of His manifold wisdom, His loving kindness and His Grace! The meanest and the mightiest of His created works, each and all, in some degree prove His love and teach us how marvelous is His Nature. But He has given to man this high prerogative above all the works of His hands, that he alone should make designed and intelligent proof. The things of earth prove God—the cattle on a thousand hills low forth His honor and the very lions roar His praise! Yet they do it not with intent, judgment and will—and although the sun proves the majesty and the might of its Master, yet the sun has neither mind nor thought and it is not its intention to glorify God. They do but prove Him unintentionally. But the saint does it *intentionally*.

It is a great fact, Beloved, that *God will have all His children to be proofs of the various attributes of His Nature*. I do not think any one of the children of God proves all of God, but that they are all proving different parts of His one grand Character so that when the whole history of Providence shall be written and the lives of all the saints shall be recorded, the title of this book will be, "Proofs of God." There will be one compendious proof that He is God and changes not—that with Him there "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." You will remember how one saint peculiarly proved the long-suffering of God in that he was permitted to pursue his career to the utmost verge of destruction—and while he hung on a cross, the patience that had borne with him so long, brought salvation to him at last! He was "in the article of death," falling into the Pit, when Sovereign Grace broke the fall, everlasting arms caught his soul and Jesus Himself conducted him to Paradise! Then again, you will remember another saint who plunged into a thousand sins and indulged in the foulest lust—but she was brought to Christ! Out of her did He cast seven evil spirits and Mary Magdalene was made to prove the richness of our Savior's pardoning Grace as well as the sweetness of a pardoned sinner's gratitude! It is a fact that the Lord is ready to forgive—and this woman is a great proof of it. There was Job who was tortured with ulcers and made to scrape himself with a potsherd. He proved "that the Lord is full of pity and of tender mercy."

From him we get evidence that God is able to sustain us amidst unparalleled sufferings.

Let me note how Solomon proved the bounty of God. When he asked for wisdom and knowledge, the Lord not only granted his request, but added riches and wealth and honor to his store. And how did Solomon magnify this proof of Divine bounty as he translates the experience of his dream into the counsel of his Proverbs? While he advises us to get wisdom, he assures us that "length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor." And then, once more, how great a proof of God's special Providence in maintaining in this world "a remnant according to the election of Grace" we derive from the history of Elijah. There sat the venerable Seer beneath a juniper tree in the lonely desert—a great but sorrowful man—an honored but a dejected Prophet of the Most High. Do you mark him as he comes to Horeb, takes up his lodging in a cave and complains in the awful solitude of his soul, "I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away"? Oh, had his fears been realized, what a blank would earth have been without a saint! But Elijah proved from the mouth of God the impossibility! He learned for our sakes, as well as his own, what a reservation God has made in reasons of direst persecution! It is proved that there shall always be a Church in the world while earth's old pillars stand!

Nor need we suppose that the testimony of the witnesses is closed. Each of God's saints is sent into the world to prove some part of the Divine Character. Perhaps I may be one of those who shall live in the valley of ease, having much rest, and hearing sweet birds of promise singing in my ears. The air is calm and balmy, the sheep are feeding round about me and all is still and quiet. Well, then, I shall prove the love of God in sweet communing. Or, perhaps I may be called to stand where the thunderclouds brew, where the lightning plays and tempestuous winds are howling on the mountaintop. Well, then, I am born to prove the power and majesty of our God amidst dangers! He will inspire me with courage! Amidst toils He will make me strong! Perhaps it shall be mine to preserve an unblemished character and so prove the power of sanctifying Grace in not being allowed to backslide from my professed dedication to God. I shall then be a proof of the Omnipotent power of Grace which alone can save from the power as well as the guilt of sin! The divers cases of all the Lord's family are intended to illustrate different parts of His ways—and in Heaven I think one part of our blest employ will be to read the great book of the experience of all the saints and gather from that book the whole of the Divine Character as having been proved and illustrated! Each Christian is a manifestation and display of some attribute or other of God—a different part may belong to each of us, but when the whole shall be combined, when all the rays of evidence shall be brought, as it were, into one great sun and shine forth with meridian splendor—we shall see in Christian experience a beautiful Revelation of our God!

Let us remember, then, as an important fact, that God intends us to live in this world to prove Him. And let us seek to do so, always endeavoring as much as we can to be finding out and proving the attributes of God. Remember, we have all the promises to prove in our lifetime—and it shall be found, in the Last Great Day, that every one of them has been fulfilled! As the promises are read through now, it may be asked, "Who is a proof of such a promise?" Perhaps the question relates to some promises of almost universal application—and millions of saints will rise and say, "We proved the truth of that." Or there may be a promise in the Bible that it will seldom fall to the lot of one of God's children to prove—it is so peculiar and few shall have been able to understand it. But mark, there will be some witnesses to attest it, and all the promises shall be fulfilled in the united experience of the Church. Such, then is the fact—God allows His children to prove Him.

II. And now, secondly, we have here A CHALLENGE GIVEN TO US—"Prove Me now." "You who have doubted Me, prove Me. You who mistrust Me, prove Me. You who tremble at the enemy, prove Me. You who are afraid you cannot accomplish your work, believe My promise and come and prove Me."

Now, I must explain this challenge to you, as to the way in which it has to be carried out. There are different sorts of promises given in God's Word which have to be proved in different ways. In the Bible there are three kinds of promises. In the first class I will place the conditional promises, such as are intended for certain characters—given only to them and then only on certain conditions. There is a second class, referring exclusively to the future—the fulfillment of which does not relate to us at the present time. Then there is a third and most glorious class called absolute promises, which have no conditions whatever, but which graciously supply the requirements that the conditional promises demand.

To begin with *conditional promises*—we cannot prove a conditional promise in the same way as an absolute one. The manner of proving must accord with the character of the promise to be proved. Let me mention, for example, "Ask, and you shall receive." Here it is quite obvious that I must ask in order to verify the promise. I have a condition to fulfill in order to obtain a benefit. The way to test the faithfulness of the Promiser and the truth of the promise is plainly this—comply with the stipulation. Very different is the promise and equally different the proof, when God says, "I will put My spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes." Here we have the simple will of the Almighty. Such a promise is to be proved in a very different manner from the fulfillment on our part of a condition—but more of this soon.

In order to prove conditional promises, then, it is necessary for us to fulfill the condition that God has annexed to them. He says, "Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house, and prove Me now herewith." No man can prove God, with reference to this promise, till he has brought all the tithes into the storehouse—for it

is, "herewith," this promise has to be proved. Suppose the Lord says, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." The only way of proving Him is by calling upon Him in the time of trouble. We may stand as long as we like and say, "God will fulfill that promise." Yes, that He will, but we must fulfill the condition! And it behooves us to seek Grace of Him to enable us to do so, for we cannot prove such promises unless we fulfill the conditions appended to them. There are many very sweet conditional promises—one of them helped to save my soul at rest, it was this, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." The condition there is, "Look unto Me." But you cannot prove it unless you look unto Christ! Here is another, "Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." What a blessed promise that is! But then you cannot prove the promise unless you call on the name of the Lord. So that whenever we see the promise to which a condition is attached, if we wish to prove it in our own experience, we must ask of God to give us Grace to fulfill the condition! That is one way of proving God.

But some will say, "Do not these conditions restrict the liberality and graciousness of God's promises?" Oh, no, Beloved, for first, the conditions are often put to describe the persons to whom the promises are made. Hence, my Brother, when it is written, "He forgets not the cry of the humble," the promise fits your chastened soul. When the Lord says, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembles at My Word." And when He says, "I will satisfy her poor with bread," you can, some of you, take comfort that the promise finds you in the fit condition to receive the blessing! But again, if the condition is not a state, but a duty, then let it be prayer—He gives the spirit of prayer! Let it be faith—He is the Giver of faith! Let it be meekness—He it is who clothes you with meekness! Thus the conditions serve to commend the promises to God's own children and to show the bounty of Him who gives "Grace for Grace."

But then there is *the absolute promise* and that is the largest and best promise of all, for if they were all conditional promises and the conditions rested with us to fulfill, we would all be damned! If there were no absolute promises, there would not be a soul saved! If they were all made to characters and no absolute promise were made that the characters should be given, we would perish, notwithstanding all God's promises. If He had simply said, "He that believes shall be saved," we should all be lost, for we could not believe without His Grace. Now, the absolute promise is not to be proved by *doing* anything, but by *believing in it*. All I can do with an absolute promise is to believe it. If I were to try to fulfill a condition, it would not be accepted by God because no condition is appended to that kind of promise. He might well say to me, "If you have fulfilled the condition of another promise, you shall have it, but I have put no condition to this one. I have said, 'I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My ways; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.' That is a promise without any condition." Although the child

of God may have sinned, yet the promise stands good that he shall be brought to know his error, to repent, and be wholly forgiven! Such a promise we can only believe—we cannot fulfill any condition relating to it. We must take it to God and say, "Have You said that Christ 'shall see of the travail of His soul'? Lord, we believe it. Let Him see of the travail of His soul. Do you say, 'My Word shall not return unto Me void"? Lord, do as You have said. You have said it, Lord—do it." Has He said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out"? Then go and say, "Lord, I come now. Do as you said." On an absolute promise, I can tell you, faith gets good foothold! Conditional promises often cheer the soul, but it is the absolute promise which is the rock that faith delights to stand upon!

Now, beloved Friends, what promise has been laid this day to your hearts? Many of you have one that God gave you when you arose from your beds. I am always sure to have the most happy day when I get a good text in the morning from my Master. When I have had to preach two or three sermons in a day, I have asked Him for a morning portion, and preached from it. And I have asked Him for an evening portion, and preached from it, after meditating on it for my own soul's comfort—not in the professional style of a regular sermon-maker, but meditating upon it for myself. Such simple food has done more good than if I had been a week in manufacturing a sermon, for it has come warm from my heart just after it has been received in my own conscience and, therefore, it has been well spoken, because well known, well tasted, and well felt! What is your promise, then? Is it a conditional one? Then say, "Lord, I beseech You, enable me to fulfill the condition." And if the promise is applied to your soul with a condition, He will give you both the condition and the promise, for He never gives by halves. Has He put into your soul, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts"? Then He will give you Grace to forsake your ways and your thoughts too! He will not give you the conditional promise without, in due time, giving you the condition, too.

But have you got an absolute promise laid to your soul? Then you are a happy man! Has God laid to your inmost spirit some of those great and precious promises, such as this, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed"? Pause not to ask for conditions—take the promise just as it is! Go on your knees and say, "Lord, You have said it." Again, has the Lord promised, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you"? Plead it! Or are you in trouble? Search out the suitable promise and say, "You have said, 'When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you.' I believe you, Lord! I am tried, but you have said I shall have no trial that I am not able to bear. Lord, give me all-sufficient Grace, and make me more than conqueror!" Go and prove God! Be not afraid with any amazement. If He gives you a single word, He means that you should bring it to Him and tell it to Him again—for you know He has said, "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." Do, I

beseech you, put the Lord in mind of His own promises and He will most assuredly fulfill them! Here is a challenge to all the redeemed, "Prove Me now."

III. In the third place, there is A SEASON MENTIONED—"Prove Me now."

Do you know what is the most perilous time in a Christian's life? I think I could hit upon it in a moment—"now." Many persons—I might well near say all Christians—are always most apprehensive of the present hour. Suppose they are in trouble? Though they may have had ten times worse troubles before, they forget all about *them* and, "now," is the most critical day they ever knew! Or, if they are at ease, they say—

"Far more the treacherous calm I dread
Than tempests rolling over my head"—

and they think no position in life more dangerous than "now." The lions are before them—how great their danger! And when, a little while ago, they lost their roll in the arbor of ease, how dreadful it was then! And when they got to the slippery ground, going downhill, "now" seemed their greatest danger! When they get a little further and Apollyon meets them, "Here," they say, "is the worst trial of all." Then comes the Valley of the Shadow of Death and they say, "Now this is the most serious period of my life!" In fact, it is right that we should feel in some degree that "now" is just the time we ought to be guarded. Yesterdays and tomorrows we may leave, but "now" is the time we must be watchful. God never lays tomorrow's promise on my heart today, because I am not in immediate need of it. The promises are given in the time, in the place and in the manner He has designed and intended they should be fulfilled. But no doubt some of you will sympathize with me when I say that "now" is the time when the Christian thinks he can trust God the least. "Oh," he says, "if I were in the same state as I was before, I would be happy. I believe that I could have trusted my Master better then, but just now I cannot lay my head so confidently on the Savior's breast. I remember, when I was sick, how sweet the promises were. I could then say—

"'Sweet to lie passive in His hands,
And know no will but His.'

But now I am altered. Somehow or other, a languor has come over me. I cannot believe that I am a Christian." You compare yourself with some Brother and feel quite sure that if you were only like he, you would have faith. Go and speak to that Brother and he will say, "If I were like *you*, I would be better off." And so they would change experiences, each failing to trust God under his own circumstances. But the Lord is pleased to always give us a word that suits the particular position we may be in—"Prove Me now."

To allegorize a moment. There is a ship upon the sea. It is the ship which the Lord has launched and which He has said shall come to its desire haven. The sea is smooth. The waves ripple gently and bear the ship steadily along. "Prove Me now," says the Lord. The mariner stands on the deck and says, "Lord, I thank You that You have given me such smooth sailing as this. But ah, my Master, perhaps this very ease and

comfort may destroy my Grace." And a Voice says, "Prove Me now, and see if I cannot keep you amidst the storm." Soon the heavens have gathered blackness, the winds have begun to bluster and the waves lift up their voices while the poor ship is tossed to and fro on the yawning winds. I hear a Voice which says, "Prove Me now." Look, the ship has been dashed upon the rocks—she has been broken well near in sunder and the mariner sees her hold filling with water, while all his pumps cannot keep her empty! The Voice still cries, "Prove Me now." Alas, the ship well-near sinks—another wave will be enough to swamp her! It seems as if one more drop will submerge her. Still the Voice cries, "Prove Me now." And the mariner does prove God—and he is delivered safely from all his distresses. "They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end," but, "so He brings them unto their desired haven." Now the ship is scudding merrily along before the winds and, lo, she comes to the verge of the horizon. The mists have gathered round her. Strange phantoms dance to the waves of night—a lurid light flits through the shades and soon the darkness come again. Something broods about the ship that the mariner has never seen before. The water is black beneath his vessel's prow. The air hangs damp and thick above him. The very sweat is clammy on his face. Fresh fear has got a hold of him that he never felt before. Just then, when he knows not what to do, a Voice cries, "Prove Me now." And so he does! He cries unto the Lord and is saved!

Ah, dear Friends, I might give you a hundred illustrations. I think this old Bible speaks to me today. I have wielded it in your midst as God's soldier. This sword of the Spirit has been thrust into many of your hearts and though they were hard as adamant, it has split them in sunder! Some of you have had sturdy spirits broken in pieces by this good old Jerusalem blade. But we shall be gathered together tonight where an unprecedented mass of people will assemble, perhaps, from idle curiosity, to hear God's Word—and the Voice cries in my ears, "Prove Me now." Many a man has come, during my ministrations, armed to his very teeth and having on a coat of mail—yet has this tried weapon cut him in two and pierced to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow! "Prove Me now," says God, "go and prove Me before blasphemers! Go and prove Me before reprobates, before the vilest of the vile and the filthiest of the filthy! Go and prove Me now." Lift up that life-giving Cross and let it again be exhibited! Into the regions of death go and proclaim the Word of Life! Into the most plague-smitten parts of the city, go and carry the waving censer of the incense of a Savior's merits and prove, now, whether He is not able to stop the plague and remove the disease!

But what does God say to the Church? "You have proved Me before. You have attempted great things, though some of you were faint-hearted and said, 'We should not have ventured.' Others of you had faith and proved Me. I say again, 'Prove Me now.'" See what God can do just when a cloud is falling on the head of him whom God has raised up to preach to you! Go and prove Him now—see if He will not pour you out such a

blessing as you had not even dreamed of—see if He will not give you a Pentecostal blessing! "Prove Me now." Why should we be unbelieving? Have we one thing to make us so? We are weak—what of that? Are we not strongest in our God when we are weakest in ourselves? We are fools, it is said—so we are, and we know it—but He makes fools to confound the wise. We are base, but God has chosen the base things of the world. We are unlearned—

"We know no schoolman's subtle art"—

yet we glory in infirmity when Christ's power rests upon us. Let them represent us as worse than we are! Let them give us the most odious character that has ever been given to man—we will bless them and wish them good. What though the weapon are a stone, or even the jaw-bone of an ass, if the Lord directs it? "Do you not know," say some, "what wise men say?" Yes, we do, but we can read their oracles backwards. Their words are the offspring of their wishes. We know who has instructed them and do you shrink from the Truth of God, or do you shrink from His Grace? In either case, you have not the love to your Master that you should have. If you are brave men and true, go on and conquer! Fear not, you shall yet win the day! God's holy Gospel shall yet shake the earth once more! The banner is lifted up and multitudes are flocking to it—the Pharisees have taken counsel together—the learned stand confounded—the sages are baffled. They know not what to do! The little ones God has made great and he that was despised is exalted. Let us trust Him, then. He will be with us even to the end, for He has said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

IV. The last division of my subject is AN ARGUMENT and I have already preached on that—"Prove Me now."

Why should we prove God? Because, Beloved, *it will glorify Him if we do*. Nothing glorifies God more than proving Him. When a poor hungry child of God, without a crust in the cupboard, says, "Lord, You have said that bread shall be given me and water shall be sure. I will prove You"—more Glory is given to God by that simple proof of Him than by the hallelujahs of the archangels! When some poor despairing sinner who has been fluttering round the Word, in hopes that he may—

"Light on some sweet promise there,
Some sure defense against despair"—

when such an one gives credence to God's promise in the very teeth of evidence against him, staggering not at the promise through unbelief, then he glorifies God! If you are, this morning, in your own apprehension an almost damned sinner, and you feel yourself to be the vilest of all—if you will believe this, that Christ loves you and that Christ came to save you, sinner as you are—you will glorify God as much by doing that as you will be able to do when your fingers shall sweep across the string of the golden harps of Paradise! We glorify God by proving Him. Try God. This is the way to bring out the glorious points of the Christian character. It is in being singularly qualified for the duties of our holy Christian warfare, in being singularly courageous and singularly ready

with the martyr-spirit, to imperil ourselves for His service, that we may bring glory to God! God says, "Prove Me now." Saint, will you rob Him of His honor? Will you not do that which shall crown Him, in the estimation of the world, with many more crowns? Oh, prove Him, for by so doing you will glorify His name!

Prove Him again, for *you have proved Him before.* Can you not remember that you were brought very low and yet you can say, "This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles"? What? Will you not prove Him again? Mind you not the goodness you have proved? When you said, "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well near slipped," did He not support you so that you could say with the Psalmist, "Nevertheless I am continually with you: you have held me by my right hand"? Has your foot slipped? Can you not thus far witness to His mercy? Then trust in it to still hold you up!

Again, accept this challenge! Prove God's Word, as He has called you to do, and *how much blessing it will give to yourself!* Beloved Brothers and Sisters, we endure 10 times as much anxiety in this world as we need because we confide not in Divine promises half as much as we might. If we were to live more on God's promises, and less on creature feelings, we would be happier men and women, all of us! Could we live always in faith on the promises, the shafts of the enemy could never reach us. Let us constantly, then, seek to prove Him! How much good Mr. Muller has done by proving God! He is called by God to a special work. What does he do? He builds an orphan asylum and trusts to God. He has no regular income, but he says, "I will prove to the world that God hears prayer." So he lives in the exercise of prayer and though he may, at times be brought to his last shilling, yet there is never a meal that his children sit down to without sufficient bread. Our work may be different from his, but let us seek, whatever our work is, to do it so that when anyone reads of it, he will say, "He tried God in such-and-such a promise and his life was a standing proof that that promise did not fail." Whatever your promise is, let your life be seen to be the working out of the problem which has to be proved, and like any proposition of Euclid, which is stated at the beginning and proved at the end, so may we find a text put at the beginning of our lives as a promise to be fulfilled—and seen at the close, demonstrated, proved, and carried out!

But, dear Friends, let me just conclude by asking those here who have been brought to know their lost and ruined state, to remember this message, "Prove Me now." Thus says my God unto you, O Sinner, "Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." My dear Hearer, are you lost and ruined? Prove God now! He says, "Call unto Me, and I will answer you." Come now, and call unto Him. "Knock," He says, "and it shall be opened unto you." Lift up the knocker of Heaven's door and sound it with all your might! Or, suppose you are too weak to knock—let the knocker fall down of itself. He has said, "Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Go and prove the promise now! Try to prove it. Are you a poor,

sick and wounded sinner? You are told that Jesus Christ is able and willing to heal your wounds and extract the poison from your veins. Prove Him, prove Him, poor Soul! You think yourself to be a lost one—therefore I urge you, in Christ's name, to prove this promise—"I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins." Take this to Him and say, "O God, I need faith to trust Your Word! I know You mean what You have said. You have said, this morning, by the mouth of your minister, 'Prove Me now.' Lord, I will prove You now, this very day, even till nightfall if You do not answer me! I will still keep fast by Your promise."

Do this, my Beloved, and you will not be gone long before you will be able to sing—

"I'm forgiven, I'm forgiven!
I'm a miracle of Grace."

Now, do not stand still and say, "God will not hear such an one as I am. My disease is too bad for Him to cure." Go and see, put your hand on the hem of His garment and then if the blood is not staunched, go and tell the world that you have proved God wrong. Go and tell it, if you dare. But oh, you cannot. If you touch the hem of His garment, I know what you will say—"I have tasted that the Lord is gracious. He said, 'Trust in Me, and I will deliver you.' I have trusted in Him and He has delivered me!" For the promise will always have its fulfillment. "Prove Me now," says God.

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PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 25, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 13, 1870.

"And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent you this day to meet me: and blessed be your advice, and blessed be you, which has kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with my own hand."
1 Samuel 25:32, 33.

THESE verses are taken from the story of David's coming into contact with Nabal the churl. Nabal was a great sheep-master and David and his 600 men had been especially careful not to injure his flocks, but had protected them from any pilfering that might have been practiced by wandering bands of desert rangers. At that time Nabal was shearing his sheep and David, who was in some measure of need, thought it a suitable time to ask something from him, according to Eastern custom, in return for the services which he had rendered to his shepherds. So he sent 10 of his young men to ask Nabal for the *backsheesh,* but, instead thereof, they received an insulting message to take back to their master. Thereupon, David—who seems to have been always of a quick spirit, whether for right or for wrong—who made haste to obey God's commandments, but who made equal haste to obey his own impulses—girded on his sword and bade every man do the same and declared that they would march to the house of this churl, Nabal, fall upon him at once and destroy him and all that appertained to him, root and branch. While he was marching in haste to carry out his stern determination—as God's Infinite Goodness would have it, Abigail, the wise wife of the foolish Nabal, met him and confessed that her husband was a man of Belial. She pleaded that she had not seen the messengers whom David had sent, besought him to accept the provisions she had brought and urged David to leave the avenging of himself to God, so that when he came to be king, it would be no grief of heart to him that he had shed blood needlessly, or had acted as his own avenger. David who had Divine Grace in his spirit, although he was on his way to do wrong, felt the force of Abigail's rebuke, sheathed his sword, thanked her and thanked the Lord, too, that he had thus been preserved from committing a great sin which might have left a great stain upon his character and been a source of trouble to him for the rest of his life.

Learn from this, dear Brothers and Sisters, that the best of men need to be always on the watch, lest, in some sudden temptation, they should be carried off their feet. You may fancy that you have no occasion to fear certain forms of temptation, but you do not know what you may do. The

wall of resolution may be strong in one particular wind, but let the wind only blow from another quarter and the wall may speedily fall. You may think yourself to be strong simply because, as yet, you have not been tested and tried as you will be sooner or later—and then, in a single moment, when you are least prepared for it, you may be overthrown. Remember our Lord's words to His disciples, "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch," for, in such an hour as you think not, temptation may come upon you and woe be unto you if you are not found watching! Therefore, commit yourselves unto the Lord and, "watch and pray that you enter not into temptation."

Here, too, we may observe what a blessed thing it is when, in hours of crisis, the God of all Grace is pleased to interpose to preserve us from committing a certain sin into which we had almost fallen. Our steps had well-near slipped, but, just then the Lord sent some angelic messenger to us, even as Abigail came to David. For that Almighty Love which has manifested itself in restraining Grace, let us render grateful songs of thanksgiving as we look back upon our past lives, for we can scarcely tell how often we should have dishonored our character and our profession if it had not been that God came to our rescue and kept back His servants from presumptuous sins.

The subject upon which I am to talk to you, as the Holy Spirit shall graciously guide me, is the great blessing of being prevented or preserved from sin. I shall speak first upon *the blessing itself.* Then, for a few minutes, upon *the means which God employs to secure it.* And then, thirdly, upon *the great blessedness of which we may be partakers if we endeavor, like Abigail, to prevail with others so as to prevent them from going into sin.*

I. First then, we are to consider THE GREAT BLESSEDNESS OF BEING PREVENTED FROM SIN.

It is an unspeakable blessing to have sin forgiven. We cannot measure the heaped-up blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered. But surely there is a very special favor rendered by God's Grace to those who are kept from the grosser sins into which so many others fall and who are converted early in life after having been hedged about by Divine Grace and not allowed to plunge into the foul kennels of iniquity in which others riot and revel. Those who are thus preserved not only have to sing of *repenting* Grace, as they must do however purely they may have lived, but they can also tell of the *restraining* Grace of God which would not let them wander into the paths of the destroyer as others did!

To be kept from sin is to be kept from many evils for, in the first place, *sin has such a hardening effect upon the conscience.* There is no man who ever sins without having some trace of it left upon his mind and heart. For one thing, it is more easy for him to sin the next time. An impulse has been given and a habit begun which will make it almost inevitable that he shall fall into that particular sin again. He who has served Satan once will be likely to serve him ten times and, on each succeeding occasion, he will serve him more vigorously and readily. He will not need

nearly as much temptation, but will go greedily after evil when the habit of sinning has taken firm hold upon him. But there are some who have been kept from overt acts of evil and so, when they hear the Gospel, they receive it like good ground into which the seed falls and brings forth abundant fruit. But there are others who, because of iniquity, are like the highway trodden hard by the feet of many—and when the good seed falls there, the birds of the air find it an easy task to steal away the grain because it has not penetrated below the surface. Do not imagine that you can live for twenty, thirty, or forty years in sin and yet be just as likely to be converted as anybody else is! I know that God can, if He pleases to do so, call you at the 11th hour as easily as at the first, but, as far as you are concerned, if you harden your neck, you have no right to expect that He will do so, but rather to expect that you shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. So that it is a mercy to be kept from sin in order that this hardening process may not even begin within our mind and heart!

Besides, *he who sins in a little way makes that sin, as it were, a steppingstone to something worse*. David wisely prayed, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse You me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant, also, from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright and I shall be innocent from the great transgression." He seemed to feel that he would not go on to the great transgression if he was restrained from presumptuous sins—and he was right in thinking so. You dear young people who through the Lord's loving kindness and tender mercy, have been brought up among gracious influences, know that you have sinned and that your sin has done your soul such evil as only God's Grace can remedy—yet you may thank the Lord that you have not been permitted to learn to sing the song of the drunkard, or to live an unchaste life, or to forsake the assembly of God's people—and so put yourselves out of the reach of the usual means of Grace, as perhaps you would have done by this time if you had not been checked while you were children. A gentle stream, if it is allowed to flow unhindered, becomes at last, a foaming torrent that sweeps away its own banks and causes loss and damage far and wide! Thank God that the current of your life was checked and guided while it was but a stream! May the torrent of sin never overflow your character and career.

There is this blessing about being restrained from sin, namely, that *it saves us from much sorrow in later life*. It should be no grief or offense of heart unto David, said Abigail, to think that he had shed blood causelessly, or had avenged himself. No sinner, when converted, although God has forgiven him, can ever forgive himself—and no child of God, although God has blotted out his sin, can ever blot it out of his own memory as long as he is here on earth. You can see that David was a different man, after his great sin, from what he had been before. He still sang Psalms to God, but there was a hoarseness about his voice which was not there before his great transgression. His Psalms were Psalms of sorrow, whereas before they were glad and joyful Psalms that tripped to lightsome music. I remember once hearing a strange sort of preacher say

that sin did a Believer no harm—a more terrible Doctrine than that could drop from no man's lips, but then he added—"except that it destroys his peace of mind." And it seemed to me that such a result as that was harm enough even if there was nothing else. "He that wears the herb called 'heart's-ease' in his bosom," says Bunyan, "is a happy man even though he sings in rags." But he whose heart smites him, as David's heart did, need want no harder blow! May those of you who are unconverted be preserved from gross sin—and may those of us who are saved be preserved from falling by temptation into any evil, lest we have to wring our hands in anguish and go with broken bones to our graves.

Further, he who is kept from sinning has to bless God that *the consequences of his sin upon others are averted*. It is a dreadful thing to know that there will be some in Heaven who were the means of sending others to Hell. I have sometimes wondered what must be the emotions of those who have sinned—especially in the foulest sense—when they are converted, but find themselves quite unable to induce their fellow sinners to even listen to the Gospel. Mr. Whitefield tells us that as soon as he had tasted that the Lord was gracious, he tried to think of all the companions with whom he had been accustomed to play cards, or to indulge in any kind of sinful sport. And he thanked God, he said, that he never gave himself any rest until he had done all that was in his power to bring them to the Savior. You, my Friend, were once an infidel and you are now a Believer—but you cannot recall the words that you spoke in those past days. You may refute, to your own satisfaction, the arguments you then used, but you cannot so readily make others see the force of your refutation. You, my Brother, were known, at one time, to use language which was unclean. You abhor it now and you rebuke it when you hear it from another—but you cannot make others forsake the habit which they learned from you. You cannot get out of your boy's memory that song which you used to sing in his hearing—you cannot get out of your daughter's heart that evil word which she heard you utter. It must go on rankling forever in her spirit and doing everlasting mischief unless the Sovereign Grace of God shall intervene to prevent such a calamity. What a blessing it is to begin with God in our youth before we have helped to pull down the walls of Zion, or even cast a stone against them! It is an unspeakable blessing to be saved in old age and to be able to sing of triumphant Grace which has blotted out innumerable iniquities. But it must be—at least on this side of Heaven—a cause of constant regret to such a late penitent that he should have worked so much evil which it is not possible for him to repair.

Besides, dear Brothers and Sisters, it is always a blessing to the Christian—to whom I speak now—to be kept from sin, *for thus his character is preserved* and much of his influence for good will depend upon his character. When backsliders are restored, we cannot help standing in some doubt concerning them—and let them afterwards live as carefully as they may, it will be very difficult for them to ever honor the Church as much as they have dishonored it. If there is but one waterfall in a river—only one in a thousand miles—everybody hears

about it and it is marked on the map. But if another river should flow on smoothly, gladdening the meadows on either side, and bearing navies out to sea, it would not cause such a noise as that one waterfall would make! In like manner a holy life is not talked of, by an ungodly world, one half as much as one unholy act of an inconsistent professor! How they delight to speak of that! How they roll the story of the sins of God's people under their tongues as sweet morsels! You may repent of your backsliding, you may become even more zealous afterwards, as you should do, but my dear Brothers and Sisters, after having once stained your reputation, it is not easy to wipe out the blot. It is infinitely better to be kept true to our first profession until we enter into Heaven, upheld and preserved by the love and Grace of God.

And, only once more upon this part of the subject, you may rest assured that even if sin is forgiven and Divine Grace enters the heart, *never is it better to sin than not to sin.* There is a house on fire. Well, we are grateful if the fire engine comes rattling up almost immediately, if the water supply is abundant and if, by great exertions, every life is saved and much of the property is preserved from destruction. Yet it would have been a greater blessing if there had not been any fire at all. There is serious sickness in the home, but the physician is skillful, the nurse is wise and watchful, the disease takes a favorable turn, the man's life is preserved—he is restored to health and is thankful for his recovery. Yet he would rather not have been sick. There is a wounded soldier. He is carried on an ambulance to the hospital, the surgeons extract the bullet that injured him and bind up his wounds. The man is ultimately restored to the ranks, but he will carry to his grave the scars of the wounds that he has suffered. It would have been a great deal better for him if he had not been wounded at all. So is it with the wounds that sin has made. Let the results of evil be ever so well removed, it can never be better for any of us to fall into sin than to be kept out of it! It if were otherwise, it would look as if sin were not that damning a thing that God's Word tells us it is—it would seem as though it were but a trifle and that there was no need for Calvary's Cross, or of all the wondrous arrangements of Everlasting Wisdom and Love for the saving of men from sin and its awful consequences! Let us cry to God, my Brothers and Sisters, that we may be kept from sin! May this be our prayer night and day, "Lord keep us even from vain thoughts, but, above all, keep us from any acts that would be dishonoring to Your holy name!" We do not want to sin in order that we may know what sin is like. We do not want to plunge into evil for the sake of being washed from it. We do not want to go into this horrible pit and this miry clay for the sake of being drawn out of it. Our earnest desire is that we may be kept from the grosser forms of sin till we are saved by Sovereign Grace and receive the new nature which is the portion of the children of God—and that after that, we may walk in all well-pleasing to the glory of God our Savior!

II. Now, secondly, let me remind you of SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH GOD KEEPS US FROM SINNING.

He does this, of course, in the grandest way *by the work of His Grace within our soul.* There is no protection against sin like the indwelling of the Holy Spirit! If the evil spirit goes out of the heart of man and it is swept and garnished—if the good Spirit does not come and dwell there, seven other spirits, yet more wicked than the first, will return to take possession. There is no way of keeping out the fire of sin except by having the fire of Grace blazing within the spirit. We must fight fire with fire! Let your soul be filled with all the fullness of God and then when the prince of this world comes to you, he shall not be able to overcome you. The Grace of God is the great antidote to sin.

But God also uses other means, even before their conversion, to keep some from the grosser sins and vices in which others indulge. Among these, there is, first, *early education*. There are some who, happily, have never known the sins which others have forever to regret. They have been like plants kept in the greenhouse—they have never been tried by the frosts of this vile world. Be very thankful for this if it is true concerning you, but do not regard it as a substitute for being born-again. Remember that you who are the most amiable, the most excellent, the most zealous, the most honorable must be born-again just as surely as the most abandoned, the most dissolute and the most profane. Regeneration is an absolute necessity before any soul can enter Heaven—and you must not be satisfied with anything short of that! Yet you may be grateful if, like Timothy, from a child you have known the Scriptures, or if, like Samuel, you have been brought up in the house of the Lord from your very early years. Be thankful that you have been kept from much sin into which others have fallen.

Christian association, too, is of the utmost value in helping to keep us from sin. There may be here a young man who has just come to London. After leaving that quiet country town where he was accustomed to attend the services at the little Meeting House, it may be that there is a strong temptation upon him to throw off all the restraints of his past life and to hide himself among the thick trees of this great forest of London and to indulge himself in sin from which he has been hitherto preserved. My dear Friend, if you desire everlasting ruin, this may be your fatal choice! But that you may not even wish to make such a choice, I strongly urge you to endeavor to form associations with Christian young men before you have been laid hold of by the active servants of Satan who are lying in wait for you. Come and join one of our Bible classes, or the Young Men's Christian Association, or find some Christian friends somewhere or other. Form associations and acquaintanceships which, if they do not actually bring you to Christ, may at least keep you from going far astray from the path which your godly parents have always desired you to tread. May the Lord grant that instead of your deciding for Satan, now that you are left to yourself, a sense of responsibility may so press upon you that you may decide, through the Holy Spirit's power, for the Lord Jesus Christ! If, this very night, you, as a newcomer into this great city, should surrender yourself to the Savior, what an eternal blessing it would be to you! The Lord grant that it may be so, and He shall have all

the praise! Still, if you are not at once converted, Christian association will be very helpful in keeping you from outward sin.

And you, my Brothers and Sisters who have Grace in your hearts, will often find that association with warm-hearted Christians is one of the very best ways of keeping you from evil. Some of our Church members have gone to live in the country where they have been only able to worship with a cold and indifferent congregation where the minister has not been more than half awake—and I have observed very serious declension in their spiritual life. When I have met them afterwards, and have ventured to speak to them about it, they have told me that it seemed like going from a hothouse into an ice well—and they confessed that they did not feel as earnest as once they did. O Christians, do prize any association with God's people that is possible! If any of you are in positions where you can enjoy Christian fellowship and you have the opportunity of earning ten times as much money in another position where you must give up that fellowship, do not do it! It is always a loss to Christians to lose the communion of saints. No amount of worldly prosperity can ever make up for the loss they will sustain by leaving an earnest Gospel ministry and an affectionate people. Thank God that He makes use of other Believers to help you in the road to Heaven—and often to restrain you from sin!

The Lord, too, is pleased very frequently *to make use of our position in society* to keep us out of evil. I mean this—some men have always been poor, although they have tried again and again to rise above the level of their poverty. Once or twice they have almost succeeded, yet, not from lack of ambition nor lack of industry, but as though God's Providence were at cross-purposes with them, they have always had to come back to that same sparse diet and tiny cottage! My dear Friends, the Lord knew that you could not bear to be rich. Had He permitted you to possess more than you now have, you might have become proud and worldly. It was better for you to live near to God in poverty than to be a backslider and be rich. I believe that many of the reverses which God's people suffer in trade are preventives from sin—when the Lord sees them beginning to launch out and to speculate—and perhaps to become associated with some rich man who has no Grace in his heart, the Lord says, "My servant is going on very dangerous ground. I must stop him before he is lost." And He soon does it. The man's substance takes to itself wings and flies away—and thus he is rescued from the threatening danger.

Some are preserved from sin by *physical infirmities.* "Well," said one who was lame, "I believe I would never have run in the way of God's commandments if it had not been for my lame leg." "Ah," said another, "and I sometimes think that I would never have seen Christ if I had not been blind." Just because their infirmities incapacitated them for enjoyment of the world, they were made to look for higher enjoyments and to seek that *spiritual* health which is everlasting. Blessed are the lame and the blind who enter into Heaven—and blessed are they who have but one eye, yet who enter there, while some who have two eyes are cast into Hell!

Others, doubtless, have been kept from sin by *severe sicknesses.* These come to us, I believe, not by chance, but by Divine ordination. We say to one another, "I cannot think where I caught that disease." Or, "I cannot imagine why such-and-such a sickness should have come to me." Perhaps you were more out of danger on your bed than you would have been anywhere else just then. Had you been out of that bedroom, you might have been in a position of very serious trial which you could not have been able to endure. I can bear my witness that at least in some of my many sicknesses I have been able to see the reason for them as plainly as I can see that twice two are four. Even when we cannot see the reason, God knows that there is a reason for it and if we cannot see it, it may be all the deeper and may lie all the nearer to the very heart of our Christian life. Your sicknesses, pains, griefs, depression of spirits and all sorts of trials are often sent to you to prevent you from sinning. They tether you, like the horse that was in a meadow with a clog on him, and a friend said to the owner, "I wonder that you clog such a fine horse as that. It seems such a pity." "Well," replied the owner, "I would rather clog him than lose him. And if I did not clog him, I would lose him. He has a habit of jumping hedges and ditches—and we cannot keep him unless we clog him." So, my Brother, my Sister, you have a clog because the Lord would rather clog you than lose you! He would sooner make you suffer here than permit you to suffer forever in Hell.

Once again, God's people have very often been kept from sin by *remarkable Providences.* And some, who are not yet the Lord's people, have been kept from certain forms of sins by very remarkable interpositions of Divine Providence. You probably all remember the story of the Quaker who, one night, felt an irresistible impulse to rise from his bed and ride to a neighboring town. When he got there, he stopped at a house where he saw a light in an upper room. He knocked, and knocked, and knocked again and, at last a man came to the door to ask what he wanted at that time of night. The Quaker replied, "Perhaps, Friend, you can tell me, for the Lord has sent me to you, but I do not know why He has done so." "Come upstairs," said the man, "and I think I can tell you." There he had fixed a rope with which he was about to put an end to his life, but God had sent His servant to him just in time to prevent the contemplated crime. Such striking Providences as that may not happen to all or any of us, for we may not require them. But they do happen to some people to prevent them from sinning against God. It may be also that the Providences which do not appear striking to us, do appear striking to those holy angels who minister to God's people and who bear them up in their hands lest they should dash their feet against a stone—and who constantly adore the wisdom and goodness of God in interposing to keep His servants from going aside into sin. The wheels of Providence, which are full of eyes, have those eyes continually fixed upon us—and those wheels are always revolving on our behalf to God's Glory.

No doubt many have been kept from sin by *a message to their conscience*, either through a minister, or through a tract, or through a text which they read in the Bible, or a kind remark from a friend. There

are members of this Church who, in the Lord's gracious Providence, owe their salvation to a word spoken to them in the street. There is especially one who was tapped on the shoulder just as he was going into a theater, and who was entreated—by one who did not know him personally, but who had mistaken him for somebody else—not to go into such a place as that, but to come with him that Thursday night and listen to the preaching of the Word of God. It was remarkable that such a mistake as that should have been made, but it was a blessed mistake for him and he rejoices this night that he finds himself in God's House, numbered among the Lord's people!

III. This brings me to the last point which is that IT WOULD BE A VERY BLESSED THING IF CHRISTIAN PEOPLE WERE MORE EARNEST TO PREVENT SIN.

This matter was put very plainly under the Old Testament command, "You shall not hate your brother in your heart: you shall in anywise rebuke your neighbor and not suffer sin upon him." Yet, under the Christian dispensation, I am afraid that we are very negligent in our endeavors to prevent sin. Some of us, it may be, think a great deal too much of our dignity. No doubt we are very respectable people, though everybody does not know it and does not treat us with the respect we feel is due to us. Perhaps we suspect others of not being all they ought to be and, therefore, our attitude towards them is not what it used to be. Then they begin to have harsh thoughts concerning us—and in that way Satan has reason to rejoice because Christian people are weaned from each other—and very grievous sin is caused by the roots of bitterness that are thus planted in the soil of the church! Now, my Brother, suppose that somebody did treat you very disrespectfully? Instead of your saying, "I will be avenged on him," suppose that you say to yourself, "If he were to treat me as I really deserve to be treated, God knows that it is very little respect I should receive from him. The man has slandered me this time, but if he knew what my faults really are, he could hit me in a much more tender part"? It is sometimes said that when a boy is wrongfully flogged, "If he does not deserve it now, he probably has deserved it at some other time when he has not had it, or he will deserve it in the future." So, if a rebuke should come to me wrongfully, I will lay it by in case I need it at another time! A Christian sometimes says, "If you tread on a worm, it will turn." Yes, I know it will, but I hope you do not consider a worm an example for a Christian—especially when you have the Lord Jesus Christ to be your Exemplar! If you tread on a worm, it will turn because of the pain you have needlessly caused it. But if you are trodden on by another person—and you are a Christian—you will forgive him and try to do him good. "Do my lord of Canterbury an ill turn," it was once said, "and he will be your friend as long as he lives." Happy are they who kill their enemies by heaping coals of fire upon their heads! Do so, my Brothers and Sisters, whenever it is possible, and do not sin by standing up for that foolish dignity of yours! Be willing to be a doormat, if it is necessary, as well as a doorkeeper in the House of the Lord and, in that way, you

will be all the more honored, for "he that humbles himself shall be exalted."

It may be that in certain company we may hear talk that is not what it ought to be. And there may be some wit or merriment connected with that talk. But if so, we must not laugh at it, because though we might laugh at the wit, others might suppose that we were enjoying the evil that was mingled with it. It is well for a Christian to put his foot down firmly in such a case as that and to say very emphatically, "As far as your mirth is proper and there is nothing in it that is defiling, I am willing to join with you, for I, also, am a man, and am of a cheerful disposition. But you are going too far, now, and I must enter my protest, for I cannot, by my silence, give my consent to such talk as that." You ought to do that, my Brothers and Sisters, and you would often find that there would be some who would thank you for doing it. Have you ever heard how Mr. Wesley once stopped a man from swearing? He was riding on the top of a coach and there was an officer in the army there who kept swearing, so Mr. Wesley, at last, very gently said to him, "My dear Sir, I want you to do me a great favor." "What is that, Sir?" asked the officer. "Why," he said, "if you should hear me using profane language during this journey, I wish you would kindly tell me of it." "I see," said the officer, "what you mean, and I appreciate your kindness." You might, perhaps, if you did that, receive a stormy reply and make the swearing person worse. Still, you would have done your duty by rebuking the sin gently and affectionately.

How often we might prevent sin if we could come in just when some are on the very verge of doing wrong. Perhaps you say that you have a pastor to do this work, but I have often told you that in such a Church as this, you must all be pastors. With 4,200 members in one Church, what can even two pastors do? What can all the elders and deacons do? The only hope for the Church is that God will watch over you all and that you will all watch over one another. You who are elderly, you who have long been kept faithful, you who have the respect of your fellow members—you, perhaps, know of inconsistencies springing up. If so, do not go and talk about them, especially to those outside the Church. "It is an ill bird that fouls its own nest," so, instead of talking to others, go and speak to the offending one! You may thus, perhaps, be the means of saving a soul from death and hiding a multitude of sins. May God grant you wisdom, Divine Grace, discernment and affection to deal rightly with such cases! Let it be the resolve of every Christian man and woman to imitate Abigail's wise way of turning David from his evil purpose! You Christian women, do not be backward in this matter, but use to this end that winning way you have. I expect Abigail pleaded far better with David for Nabal than any man could have done, for she was a woman of understanding and her beaming countenance caught the eyes of the hasty and angry warrior. And he paused awhile to listen to her wise words—and so she won what she set out to gain. I pray that you may all use the powers which God has given you, not to lead others into sin, nor to confirm them in it, but to hold back, as far as you can, all who are about to commit any act of transgression.

May God add His blessing to this message, for the Redeemer's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Colossians 3 and 4:1-4.

Verses 1, 2. *If you then are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.* This is the best proof that we are really "risen with Christ"—that we set our affection on things above!

3-15. *For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in Glory. Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things' sake the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience: in which you also walked some time, when you lived in them. But now you also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not to another, seeing that you have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him: where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is All, and in all. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, heart of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another. If any man has a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do you. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you are called in one body; and be you thankful.* You notice that the Apostle again and again speaks of what we have put off and what we have put on, or of what we are to put off and to put on—"You have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man." "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, heart of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering. . .And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." Let the blessed girdle of love bind upon you all these choice adornments of a true Christian's character!

16, 17. *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with Grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.* Now the Apostle, guided by the Holy Spirit, gives injunctions concerning various family and domestic relationships.

18. *Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.* It is seemly according to nature. And it is still more "fit in the Lord."

19. *Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.* Never say a bitter word against them and especially never dishonor them in the

household, before children or servants, as some have done, but do all that you can to manifest love and tenderness toward them.

20. *Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord.* Nowadays, there are some children who seem to be the head of the family and the parents obey them in all things. This is very foolish and wrong! And when their children grow up and become their plague and curse, they will bitterly lament their folly in putting things out of joint and not keeping the house as God would have it kept, the children in their place, and the father in his.

21. *Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.* Some fathers do. They expect more of children than they will ever get—and more than they ought to expect. And they lay heavy burdens upon them which are grievous to be borne and for little faults there are severe chastisements. This also is wrong.

22-24. *Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: and whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for you serve the Lord Christ.* If you do all your work in that spirit, how noble it becomes and how cheerfully you will get through it! You may have a master who is unworthy of your service, yet, if you "do it heartily, as to the Lord," you will have rest of heart even in serving those who are froward and perverse—and in due time the Lord will reward your service.

25. *But he that does wrong shall receive for the wrong which he has done: and there is no respect of persons.*

Colossians 4:1. *Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal.* I sometimes think that the good men who chopped the Bible up into chapters—for it is not in chapters in the original—must have hoped that we would not read this message to the masters, as he had put it in another chapter. But I never like to read about the servants without also reading about the masters. There is six for one, and half-a-dozen for the other and, as is usual, in the Scriptures there are balanced duties. If there is an exhortation to the children, there is generally one to the parents close by. And if there is a word to wives, there is one for husbands, too. So let us read that verse, "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal."

1-4. *Knowing that you also have a Master in Heaven. Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.*

—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.

JUSTICE VINDICATED AND RIGHTEOUSNESS EXEMPLIFIED
NO. 3038

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 2, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
EARLY IN THE YEAR 1865.

"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 who believes in Jesus."
Romans 3:24-26.

THE death of our Lord Jesus Christ answered many valuable purposes. It manifested the manifold Wisdom of God. To angels in Heaven and to saints on earth, God never appeared so infinitely wise as in the ordaining of the plan of salvation by the substitution of His Son for guilty sinners. That death also revealed God's amazing love. It proclaimed to astonished worlds how "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The Atonement of Christ answered the purpose, moreover, of purifying His people. That He might sanctify the people by His own blood, He suffered outside the camp. He loved His Church and gave Himself for it, we know, "that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." The Cross has also been the great battering-ram for breaking down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile. It is by Christ's blood that we are made one. "Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Caste is abolished and invidious distinctions are set aside. There is no longer in Christ Jesus barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, circumcised or uncircumcised, but Christ is All-in-All. That same atoning Sacrifice also broke down the wall which separated both Jew and Gentile from God—"that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the Cross, having slain the enmity thereby." The alienation prevailed till the reconciliation was effected by the precious blood of Jesus. We remain enemies in our minds by wicked works until we see the great love with which He loved us, and then that love melts our heart and makes us friends of God.

Time would fail me did I attempt to enter into anything like an enumeration of the blessed purposes which the blood of Christ serves before God and among men. Try, if you can, to calculate the inestimable

value of the air you breathe, how every plant feeds upon it, or upon some portion of it—how every creature, whether on the loftiest mountains, or in the deepest mines, must have a portion of it or else he can no longer exist. Think of the force with which it operates upon the world in wind and tempest. Need I do more than suggest to you the infinite number of ways in which the air becomes valuable, not merely as an accessory to our comfort, but as a necessity of our life? Yet, how infinitely more precious is the blood of Jesus Christ which in every way and in every place becomes efficacious to the everlasting salvation of all Believers! That water which sustains the life of leviathan, and of an infinite multitude of fishes, is your drink and mine. It makes glad the meadows, it fertilizes every field and gives to the farmer his harvest, but while it does this, it has other uses which we cannot stop here to discuss. See how it bears today upon its bosom the commerce of the world and becomes the highway of nations? When you shall have recalled all the excellencies of the water with which God has girdled the globe, you shall then have but opened a parable thoroughly inadequate to represent the immeasurable benefits which come to us through Christ—and the innumerable forms which those benefits assume! We know that it has an operation in the highest Heaven—certainly it has saved us from the deepest Hell.

Do you see that Cross on which Jesus died? What is it more than a simple piece of transverse wood? I see it in vision. I see it growing till its top reaches the most excellent glory, lifting up the elect to the very Throne of the Most High! I see its base sinking deep as our helpless miseries could plunge us in hopeless ruin, going down till it reaches even the depths of the vengeance of God. I see its arms spread till all whom God has chosen are sheltered beneath them and all mankind receive some favors which never would have come to them if it had not been that there the Savior of sinners offered the one availing Sacrifice for sin. As when the servant of Elijah saw a little cloud, the size of a man's hand, and the Prophet marked in that the sign of abundance of rain—so, when I see the Cross of Calvary, it is as a little cloud, but faith beholds it spread all over Heaven and then drop down in mighty showers of mercy to fructify the earth and bless the children of men! If you would count the drops that fall from that cloud, you must grasp "infinity" in your comprehension!

According to our text it appears that one main purpose of the Sacrifice of Christ was the manifestation of the righteousness of God. The Apostle twice over assures us that this was the case, "Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation . . .to declare His righteousness." And as if this were not enough, "to declare, *I say,* at this time His righteousness." What a grand thought! *The death of Jesus Christ is a resplendent manifestation of Divine Righteousness!* When we have mused upon that, we will proceed to notice that Divine Righteousness—*the moral government of the Almighty—is, by the death of Christ, cleared of two difficulties to which reference is made.* Then we shall close by noting *the lessons which this great Doctrine teaches.*

I have nothing new to say this evening—I would be ashamed of myself if I had. This is the old Doctrine, this is the soul-saving Truth of God. It is blessedly simple and we thank God that it is and that, therefore, the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein. It is plain to him that understands and if the Lord gives us understanding in this thing, we certainly have here the beginning—and we shall soon have in it the end of wisdom!

I. Jesus' DEATH, THEN, MANIFESTED DIVINE JUSTICE IN THE VERY HIGHEST DEGREE.

The expulsion of our first parents from the Garden of Eden manifested the Justice of God, but not fully. They were only expelled from Paradise, but their lives were spared. In strict justice they would have died. "In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die." Though that curse was not confined to natural death, it certainly included it. Had Justice there been fully vindicated, the human race would have been utterly destroyed. The expulsion of the sinner does not so fully set forth God's Righteousness as does the Expiation of the Savior.

The Justice of God was exhibited in dreadful forms when the deluge came and swept the race of man from the earth. Yet why was yonder ark freighted with the chosen eight? Were they not sinners? If Justice is come out in its full strength, why does it permit so many as eight to escape? The number may be few, but the principle is infringed. In strict, severe justice, apart from the Atonement, not even Noah could have escaped, and certainly not his unrighteous son Ham. The eight, as they are floating yonder, indicate the exercise of some other prerogative than that of absolute and naked justice.

Then comes the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. See them, with the other cities of the plain, licked up by tongues of fire! Behold the light smoke as it ascends and clouds the heavens! But here was only Divine Justice upon one atrocious sin—a sin which will forever bear the name of the place in which it came to its worst height. It was not the declaration of God's Justice against sin as sin, so much as against sin in a certain form when the virus of evil had been most banefully developed!

Hark to the shriek that goes up from the midst of the Red Sea, when the waters that stood upright as a heap, suddenly descend and lock in their death-wooing arms the multitudes of Egyptian chivalry! Do you not see here the Justice of God? You do, but you do not see it so completely, because a multitude of sinners, in front, have escaped by this very destruction! I grant you that, here, a most blessed type of our Lord Jesus Christ is conspicuous, but there is not a complete declaration of Divine Justice, for had Divine Justice slaughtered all sinners on that occasion, Israel would have been drowned as well as Egypt! There rather the pride of Pharaoh was subdued than the sin of Egypt. That judgment fell only upon the chief of Egypt, the chief of all her strength was smitten there—but judgment must come upon the little as well as upon the great when it comes from the hand of the Most High in its absolute force!

Of all the other judgments which we find mentioned in Holy Scripture, it is enough to say that they were manifestations of Divine Justice, but

they were not such manifestations of it as we have in Christ. If I might use such a metaphor, Divine Vengeance slept and all those judgments were but its startings in its sleep. God had not yet laid bare His terrible right arm—judgment was then His strange work. He did not put both His hands to the tremendous work of punishment as He did afterwards, when His only-begotten Son stood before Him—the Just in the place of the unjust, and the Guiltless with the guilt of man upon His shoulders!

The death of Christ did more clearly set forth the righteousness of God than all these put together. In some respects, even Hell itself cannot so exhaust the vindication of Infinite Justice. Do you object to this last assertion? You may well do so till I explain my meaning. It needs a whole eternity to set forth, in Hell, all the Justice of God in the punishment of sin. To manifest to those who suffer, being impenitent, all the vengeance of incensed Deity demands an ageless age of years, countless and endless. Behold the Lamb of God! In Christ you have set forth at once all the fullness of the vengeance of God against the sins of men. See the cup of trembling drained to its utmost dregs. See the baptism accomplished. He sank beneath the swelling waves of vindictive wrath, but, lo, He rises again! He has finished the endurance and paid the debt that none could reckon. There is more of the vindication of Justice on the Cross than can be seen at any one time, or at any one point, in the lowest depths of Hell!

The death of Christ gloriously set forth Divine Justice *because it taught manifestly this Truth of God, that sin can never go without punishment.* It is a law of God's moral universe that sin must be punished. He has made that as necessary as the law of gravitation. The law of gravitation He may suspend—the law of justice, never. He will by no means spare the guilty. "The soul that sins, it shall die." "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them." As the Lord had appointed the salvation of His people, even this, the dearest desire of His soul, does not lead Him to tamper with His inviolable Law. No, a Substitute shall be provided, who shall to the utmost farthing pay whatever His people owe. Upon His head the fire-cloud shall discharge itself, and into His bosom shall be emptied out the coals of fire. No pardon without punishment! If the question is asked, "Why not?" It is enough to say that as long as God rules the universe, He rules it in wisdom, and His Wisdom knows that it would be unsafe if sin were at any time permitted to be blotted out apart from satisfaction received. Christ, therefore, must Himself give a satisfaction for sin, that this rule may be declared and written upon the forefront of the skies—God will not pardon sin by overlooking it—there must be redemption before there can be remission!

This was also shown very clearly in what the Savior had to endure. A part of the penalty of sin is *shame.* The wicked will rise "to shame and everlasting contempt." Rebellion against God is the most contemptible thing that angels ever heard of. The devil will be recognized, at last, as the worst of fools and become the object of intense mockery. But see our Savior! When He takes the sinner's place, "He is despised and rejected of men." His own disciples, as it were, hid their faces from Him! "He was despised and we esteemed Him not." He is the song of the drunk!

Reproach has broken His heart. They that sit in the gate speak against Him. They spit in His face! They bow the knee and hail Him with mock homage. They put Him to the death of a slave—they give Him the pre-eminent place of shame as center of the three crucified ones. Never was shame more shameful than in the experience of our Lord. Here God seemed to declare, once and for all, how shameful in His sight sin was. When sin lay but by imputation upon His own dear Son, His Son must be an object of scorn to the universe!

Transcendent was His *sorrow* as well as His shame. We cannot comprehend His meaning when He said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." Your sympathies can never interpret those pangs of heart which forced the blood to stream from every pore.

His physical sufferings alone are enough to make us faint if we would but think of them aright. As for His soul's sufferings, which were the soul of His sufferings, here is enough to melt our hearts away in grief that we should ever have caused Him thus to die. When the Lord thus emptied out all His quivers, and shot every arrow into the heart of His dear Son—when all His waves and His billows went over Him—when deep called unto deep and there was the noise of God's waterspouts, and Christ was made to sink in deep mire where there was no standing—then God declared most loudly what an intolerable evil sin is, how supremely just He is and how jealous of His Justice.

In the Savior's sufferings, shame and sorrow were deepened, both of them, *by Divine desertion.* "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" has the grief of ages in it! Here you have tremendous pangs distilled and given to Christ in quintessence. "*Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani?*" is a more desperate cry than ever came from lost souls. Every word of it was emphatic, every syllable needs to be pronounced with the awful force of one who is in the pangs of death and in the pangs of Hell, for the Savior could truly say, "The sorrows of death compassed Me, and the pains of Hell got hold upon Me. I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord: O Lord, I beseech You, deliver My soul." No answer came, for God had forsaken Him! His enemies persecuted and took Him, and there was none to deliver Him. Herein, in the leaving of His own Son, His only-begotten Son, His ever-obedient Son, God showed His intense Righteousness and hatred of sin!

Nor was Christ spared the last pinch—one would have thought that He might have been spared that—*He died.* Here shame, sorrow and desertion reached the culminating point—the Savior dies. The holy soul is parted from the pure and blessed body. He suffers the very pangs of death. He yields up the ghost. Though Immortal, He dies! Brightness of the Father's Glory, He slumbers in the tomb! See Him, Believer, as the disciples take Him down, drawing out the nails, one by one, so tenderly! See Him as they lay Him in the sheet which the holy women had prepared, and wrap Him up in the spices which Nicodemus in his love, and Joseph of Arimathaea in his bounty, had brought! See the Savior, as they put Him in the tomb and go away sorrowing, for the stone is laid and the seal is set upon Him! See Him, I say! See Him, whom angels

worship, "over all God, blessed forever," sleeping thus a captive in the grave! Does not Jehovah here reveal how He hates sin in that He spared not His own Son? The Christ must die when sin and expiation come into contact, even though that contact is but by imputation!

To one more point I must call your attention. *The excellency of the Person who suffered all this is the great platform upon which God displays His Righteousness.* He who suffered this was the Just One—of spotless nature—a King. "The King of the Jews." He was the Messiah, the Shiloh whom God had foreordained to be the Mediator of the Covenant. No, more than that—He was the Son of the Highest, being begotten of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary! Mounting higher still, He was, Himself, "very God of very God." It is a great mystery, one which, however, we receive with reverence.

The hand that was stretched out to the nail is the very hand that wields the scepter of universal empire! The heart that was pierced is the very heart which will beat on throughout eternity in love to His people! Yet more, the very Being who thus became capable of suffering, was He who built the heavens and scattered the stars like dust along the sky! Who bespoke the light and said, "Light be," and sent forth the Spirit to brood over chaos, and brought order out of its confusion! "Without Him was not anything made that was made." He is the express image of His Father's Glory and Person—"in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." I merely talk—this theme demands an angel's tongue to sing! Sing of Him, spirits before the Throne of God, in your rapturous song—sing of Him in wonder that He should ever leave your happy choirs and forsake the Throne of His eternal Glory to become a man! Sing of Him when He stripped Himself of His azure mantle and did hang it on the sky—and took away His golden rings and hung them up like stars—and laid aside the vestments of His glorious reign and came to dwell in humble garments of clay! Oh, mysterious love! He came to suffer, bleed and die! Oh, mystery of Righteousness, that such an One as this should have to bleed, should have to smart, even to the uttermost, and be obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross! Never, then, did Righteousness receive such vindication as when God, the mighty Maker, having assumed flesh, in that flesh died for man, the creature's sin!

II. THIS GREAT MANIFESTATION OF DIVINE RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE PERSON OF CHRIST, as I understand the text, INTELLIGIBLY CLEARS GOD'S MORAL GOVERNMENT OF TWO GREAT DIFFICULTIES.

When Christ became a Propitiation, He declared God's Righteousness for the remission of sin. We are pardoned through the forbearance of God. For thousands of years men lived and sinned, and yet were justified—rebelled, and yet were forgiven—wandered, yet were restored. I say, for thousands of years poor fallible men claimed complete righteousness and entered into the rewards which belong exclusively to those who are justified before God. There they go, streaming up to Heaven, a long bright line of patriarchs, Prophets, warriors for the holy cause, kings, priests and saintly men and women who believed in God—and this was imputed to them for righteousness. Now here we are in a difficulty. A just God is saving all these sinners and taking them to Heaven without any sort of

vindication of His Justice! But Christ comes in and declares the Righteousness of God, "for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God," and all the difficulties of the antediluvian, Patriarchal, and Mosaic times are cleared up at once.

Another difficulty, with which you and I are far more concerned, is *how God can be just, and yet the Justifier.* The Apostle says that this was cleared up, "To declare, I say, at this time, His righteousness; that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believes in Jesus." This is the great problem which the world has been trying to solve. I know of no religion except Unitarianism—which is not a religion, but a philosophy—which ever pretends to do without a sacrifice. It is remarkable that no religion can be popular except that which deals with a sacrifice for sin. And where this is left out in any man's ministry, you very soon find there are more spiders than hearers, and very soon the place which might have been crowded under an Evangelical ministry, grows empty. It is a happy circumstance that it is so, but it is a very significant one. If a man were to open a shop for the sale of bread and were to sell nothing but stones, it is certain that he would have but few customers. The baker's shop is the last that is shut up in the parish. When all other trades die out, his will live, for men must have bread. And so if every other good thing should pass away, the Gospel, because it meets the needs of common humanity, is quite certain to survive them all. Dr. Patten, the other Sabbath morning, said to me after service, "I am often asked why so many people come to the Tabernacle and, my dear Friend," he said, "I cannot give any answer except this one, that you try to preach that which the soul needs, the essential and vital point of how men are saved and justified before God through Jesus Christ. And so," he said, "if you keep to that old theme, there is no fear but what there will be enough hungry souls to come and feed upon that bread." And so I think it is. This I know, if a man would have a subject that will never grow stale and never wear out, let him preach Christ Crucified! You need not go to philosophies, nor turn over the books in your libraries to find some novelty—the old story is more novel than the new! There is nothing so new as Christ! We may say of Him, "You have the dew of Your youth," for Christ Jesus and His Sacrifice exactly meet the common needs of our humanity!

Well, there is a Sacrifice provided and that Sacrifice, dear Friends, I say, answers the question which God has put into every man's mind—"How can I be saved, and yet God be just?" Man has the conviction, though he may not express it, that God is just. Every sinner knows that sin must be punished! He may trifle with that knowledge, but he cannot destroy it and he never can get any peace of mind, when his conscience is really awakened, till he learns this great Truth—God punished Christ instead of you! Christ has so honored the Law of God that, without God being unjust, or being thought to be so, He can forgive you! There has been such a satisfaction offered to God's violated purity that He can be discovered to be infinitely pure—no, severely just and yet, at the same time, infinitely gracious and merciful! O Soul, have you ever caught a

glimpse of this matter? My heart remembers when I first understood that. Though those words, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth," were the channel of my comfort, yet the ground of it was this—I did see that Christ suffered for me, that Christ stood as a Substitute for Believers and that precious Doctrine of Substitution was the window of light to my dark soul!

Hear, you Sinners, hear this! God demands of you two things—first, that you should keep His Law. You cannot do this, for you have already broken it! If you never sinned again, you have put yourselves out of court. On Sinai's mountain there is no safety for you. Even Moses said, "I do exceedingly fear and quake," when Sinai was altogether on a smoke. But God demands more than this. He demands *punishment* for the sins that are past, as well as a perfect obedience for the years to come. Can you bear this? Can you endure the flames of Hell and the terrors of His vengeance? Your heart quails at the thought! Well, as Christ has come into the world, He has provided for both. He knows your need. Christ has kept the Law of God for you and Christ has suffered the penalty of that Law, too. You have two answers to the Most High—and when conscience says, "You must be punished, for you are guilty," you can say, "No, not I! Christ was punished for my sins. God will never punish two for one offense—first the Substitute, and then the sinner for whom He was a Substitute." And when conscience says, "Ah, but you cannot bring in a perfect righteousness," you can answer, "Yes, I can, for Christ has worked out and brought in a perfect Righteousness. And He gives this to me, according to His own name and title, 'JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU,' The Lord Our Righteousness."

Oh, that we might have Grace, dear Friends, to understand that all that God wants of us is found in Christ! You think there is something for you to *do* in order to save yourself, but Christ *has* saved all who will be saved—saved them already, virtually! And you shall be saved actually when, by humble faith, you receive the salvation which Christ has worked out. To add to Christ anything of your own would be to tack on your own filthy rags to His gold and silver-threaded garments! To bring your filthy lucre to eke out the golden payment which He has laid down at God's Throne. Do not do this, Sinner! God is content with Christ—be you content with Him and as you see how God is just, see also how you may be happy and at peace!

III. And now I conclude by drawing TWO PRACTICAL LESSONS.

First, *let us see what an evil thing sin is and how God hates it.* Christian, do you hate it too? Loathe it! Never endure it. If I had to pass the place where some dear friend of mine was murdered, I should dread the very spot. But if there lived on earth the man who had stabbed my dearest friend in the heart, I think I could never bear him affection, but I should feel moved to stir the officers of justice to pursue him. Now, *your sins have murdered your Savior.* Revenge here is holy. In other places it must be very doubtful, but here it is sacred. Seize your sins! Where are they? Seize yourselves and you have them. If you feel any anger against the murderer of Christ, turn to your mirror and see his face. There stands the man who slew his Friend. There stands he who killed his

Friend who died to save him! Yes, in the very act and suffering of murder that Friend gave Himself up to bleed and die for the good of His murderers! Shall I spare the sins, then, that nailed my Savior to the tree? O Christian, how you ought to hate the very thought of sin! Sometimes we are very severe upon the sins of others—how much more severe ought we to be upon our own! Truly, a man's foes are they of his own household! The very thought of sin, the word of sin, the very garments spotted with the flesh should be hated by the Christian. The Lord give us to feel more and more of this! We shall only get it, however, by living more where the groans of Calvary can meet our ears and the sight of the Savior's wounds can melt our hearts!

Then, *let us see our sad condition if we are not delivered from sin.* If Christ became the Object of His Father's wrath when sin was only imputed to Him, how angry must God be, everyday, with the wicked whose own sins lie upon them! There can be no more dreadful thought to a sinner than this—if we will look at it in that light—that God spared not His own Son! Surely, if the Judge smites His own Son so severely, He will not spare you, His enemy! Ah, you who have no Savior and who have never looked to Christ to take away your sins, what will you do when you have to stand before the bar of God? Christ needed to be Omnipotent to endure the stroke of His Father's sword—what will you do when God's dreadful voice cries, "Awake, O sword, against My foe; against the man that despised My Son and trampled on His blood"? The wrath of the Lamb is the worst thing a sinner can ever feel. "The wrath of the Lamb!" Think of that! When love turns to anger, it is cruel as the grave. To despise Incarnate Love is to entail upon yourself infinite misery! They who perish without the knowledge of Christ, perish happily compared with you! It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for you if you have despised Christ!

My Hearers, I have tried as best I can to preach Christ to you and to lift Him up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. But some of you will not look at Him. I fear you will never and that you will die in your sins. It was but the other day that I heard of one of your number who, after listening to this voice, suddenly went into eternity in a moment! And the same is happening to very many. You will not be able to say, at the last, that you never heard of Christ, or that I covered Him up amidst a multitude of gaudy periods and high-sounding words! I have set forth Christ Jesus in all the naked beauty of His mysterious Sacrifice. Look to Him, Souls! If I have never been able to move your heart before, may God move it now! Look to Jesus! Is salvation such a thing to be trifled with, that you can live without it? Are the joys of being reconciled to God such trifles that you will not have them? If you had to die like dogs, it would be worthwhile to prove the happiness of being reconciled to God in this life. But, oh, remember the world to come! You shall soon pass through the gates of the grave—the death-sweat will settle on your brows—the night of death shall seal your eyes. What will you do, in those few solemn moments when the last sands are trickling from the hourglass, without a Savior?

Say not that these are things not to be talked of because they are too distant! Men and women, they will come to you. Tomorrow, before next Sabbath bells shall toll, you may be hurried to the land where the sound of the church-going bell is never heard. May God lead you to lay hold of Christ, now, for if not, there remains for you nothing but the fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation! The trumpet sounds, the dead awake, Jesus sits upon the Great White Throne, the heavens are opened, the angels come to gather God's harvest and it is gathered into the garner. But now they come to reap the vintage—and with their sickles they cut down cluster after cluster of the wild vines of sin. Oh, if you are there, you must be gathered with the rest, cast into the winepress of the wrath of God and, oh, how tremendous will that be, when He who once tread the winepress for His people, shall come to tread the winepress of His wrath for the last time! How dreadful when, to use the prophetic words of the Revelation, the blood flows forth even unto the horses' bridles! Oh, tremendous vengeance of an incensed God, whose mercy has been despised and whose Grace has been put away!

I am not in the habit of often using such strong words. I rather love to plead the love of Jesus Christ to souls, but strong words must sometimes be used, or slumbering souls will never awake. Why will you perish? Do you choose your own destruction? Why do you choose it? Come, let a Brother lead you back! Here, in these seats, cover your eyes, and let the silent confession go up to Heaven. Look to Jesus Crucified! Fly to those dear wounds of His. A Substitute for sinners! There He hangs, and bleeds, and dies—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One!
There is life at this moment for you"—

if you believe in Him. God give you the Grace to believe, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 3:19-31; 4:1-21.

Romans 3:19, 20. *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. Therefore by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the Law is the knowledge of sin.* The Law can convict and condemn, but it can never *justify* the guilty. Its special work is to prove that they are not justified in sinning and to stop their mouths from uttering any excuse for their sin.

21-24. *But now 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.* Now there comes in a new principle—the principle of Grace which accomplishes what the Law never could accomplish—that is, the free justification of all the guilty ones who

believe in Jesus! And this justification is a righteous one, seeing that it is based upon "the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

25-27. *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? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the Law of faith.* Faith's empty hand receives the free gift of Grace—that very fact excludes all boasting!

28-31. *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Law. Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He yet also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the Law through faith? God forbid: yes, we establish the Law.*

Romans 4:1-8. *What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he had something to boast about, but not before God. For what says the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that works is the reward not reckoned of Grace, but of debt. But to him that works not, but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describes the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputes righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.* There is a special blessedness, therefore, which comes to those who, by faith, are under the dispensation of Grace. It came to Abraham and it came to David—yet both Abraham and David were circumcised men belonging to a special race. So the question naturally arises.

9-12. *Comes this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? For we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? When he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they were not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: and the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.* The historical argument is a very forcible one. The blessing was not given to Abraham as a circumcised man, but as a *believing* man. And hence it also comes to all of us who believe. What a mercy it is that there is, in this sense, no distinction between Jew and Gentile! I hate that plan of reading the Scriptures in which we are told, when we lay hold of a gracious promise, "Oh, that is for the Jews." "Then I also am a Jew, for it is given to me!" Every promise of God's Word belongs to all those who have the faith to grasp it. We who have faith are all in the Covenant and are thus the children of faithful Abraham—so be

not afraid, you who are the true seed, to take every blessing that belongs to your father Abraham and to all the seed!

13, 14. *For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of no effect.* But that would also make void circumcision and the whole of the ancient Covenant, seeing that the blessing was given to a man whom God had chosen *before* his circumcision, and before the Ceremonial Law had even been made known.

15-17. *Because the Law works wrath: for where no Law is, there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by Grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the Law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (as it is written, I have made you a father of many nations).* Not a father of one select race of people, only, but a father of all who, in any land, and speaking any language, are believers in the glorious Jehovah, who is the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob!

17. *Before Him whom he believed, even God, who quickens the dead, and calls those things which are not as though they were.* Abraham was a believer in the God of Resurrection, expecting to see Isaac raised up from the dead if he did actually offer him as a sacrifice to God. He was a believer in things that were not yet apparent to him, looking forward to them and expecting to see them in due time—believing in them because he believed in God, who "calls those things which are not as though they were."

18-21. *Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall your seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able also to perform.*

—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 KING'S SHARP ARROWS
NO. 3039

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 9, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 16, 1870.

"Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies;
whereby the people fall under You."
Psalm 45:5.

WHEN our Lord Jesus Christ is represented as a King, we delight to think of Him as the Prince of Peace whose dominion shall put an end to all war and make it unnecessary for the nations of the earth to learn the arts of war any longer. Meanwhile, however, in this present state, evil is in the world, sin is all around us and thus sin is the curse of mankind. Christ, therefore, for our good, is a fighting King, combating evil and contending against sin in every shape and form and, in that aspect, we regard Him as standing in His glorious war chariot, riding through the world in the power of His Gospel, smiting right and left with the great sword of the Spirit and, at the same time, shooting His sharp arrows of Gospel Truth to the very ends of the earth! The Truth of God is the weapon that Christ uses. The weapons of His warfare are not carnal any more than are ours. The Truth of God is His sword and the Truth of God is His arrow!

There are some Truths which Jesus Christ proclaims in the Gospel and which He bids us also proclaim, which are like sharp arrows—wounding, piercing, killing—and of these I am about to speak, hoping and trusting that those arrows may, in all their sharpness, pierce all hearts that have not felt them yet! And that where they go, they may kill sin and that He may then come in to heal who has wounded them and to give life to those whom He has slain.

First, we shall ask and answer the question, *what are those Truths which are like sharp arrows?* Secondly, *why are they arrows?* And thirdly, *how come they stick fast in human hearts?*

I. First, then, WHAT ARE THOSE TRUTHS WHICH ARE SHARP AS ARROWS IN THE HEARTS OF MEN?

There are many of them, but I shall only mention such as are most usually felt when men are convinced of sin. One arrow that is always sharp is this—*the spirituality and holiness of the Law of God.* Many men read the Law of the Ten Commandments, or hear it read in their churches on the Sabbath, but they do not know that that Law means a great deal more than the mere words seem to convey. For instance, it is written, "You shall not commit adultery," but Christ tells us that even though no act of unchastity is committed, the very *thought* of it is condemned and he who indulges an unclean look has already broken the

command. The Law of God not only deals with the overt acts, but also with *desires*—and even with those *imaginations* which scarcely amount to desires, in which a man pictures the sin and feels a pleasure in the picture, though he has not actually committed the sin. Now, when a man comes to understand in his heart, as well as to hear with his ears that God looks thus at his thoughts, imaginations, desires and words as well as at his actions, then he stands in awe and amazement of the Law and says, "I cannot keep this Law of God, for I am already condemned by it—and being condemned, what way of escape is there for me? How can I get my sins forgiven? By what means can I be reconciled to God?"

This Truth of God is, indeed, a sharp arrow, and well do I remember when first it pierced my heart and conscience. I felt that I could not stand the test of such a Law for a single moment and that if called to stand before God's bar to be tried on such grounds, I would not require a trial, but must plead guilty at once, or stand there in silence to hear His righteous sentence of condemnation—

"How long beneath the Law I lay
In bondage and distress!
I toiled the precepts to obey,
But toiled without success.
Then, to abstain from outward sin,
Was more than I could do.
Now, if I feel its power within,
I feel I hate it too."

Another of the Truths connected with Christ's Gospel that is like a sharp arrow is this—*the utter impossibility of self-justification.* This is one of the Truths of the Gospel that we must never fail to proclaim—"By the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight." Having offended against God, you cannot expiate the past by any actions of yours. If you should henceforth keep the Law without a single breach or slip, the fact remains that the sentence of condemnation has already gone forth against you! It is often said that this life is a life of probation, but that is not true. We have passed our probation! We have been proved guilty and we are already condemned! And we shall abide under that sentence of condemnation unless we have help outside of ourselves to rescue us from it. Lost, lost, lost—utterly lost is the entire human race apart from the Divine and supreme power which has been put forth in the Person of Jesus Christ! Well do I remember when I first learned that no works of mine—no repentance, no prayers, and no tears could deliver me from the horrible pit into which I was cast through sin! Then was I pierced, indeed, as with a barbed shaft that went right through my soul to the killing of all my proud hopes and boasts! May such an arrow from the King now pierce to the heart anyone here who still cherishes any hope of self-justification!

A third shaft from the King's bow is this—*the certainty of the judgment.* If there is any one Truth that Christ proclaimed more often than another, it seems to me to be this—that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust. And that the actions of this life will be reviewed in another life, and that rewards and punishments will be meted out by the Great Judge who cannot err. Kind and gracious as the

mighty Prophet of Nazareth was, who has described in more graphic words than He did, the separation of the sheep from the goats—and the blessing of those on the right hand and the cursing of those on the left? What words could there be more terrible than His when He spoke of the worm that dies not and of the fire that never shall be quenched? O Sinner, your sin is immortal! And there is only One who can kill it and put it away—even Christ Jesus! You shall live again, Sir! It shall not be the end of you when you are carried to your grave and green grass grows above you. You shall live again and your thoughts, words and actions shall also live! Let them now live in your conscience. Let the recollection of them alarm you even before they arise and accuse you before Him who shall sit on the Great White Throne at the last tremendous Judgment Day! I know this—let a man be thoroughly convinced that he has sinned against God, that he cannot deliver himself from his sin and that as surely as he lives, there is a Day of Judgment awaiting him—he has an arrow sticking fast in his heart which he will be compelled to say is sharp as long as he is one of the King's enemies!

Another sharp arrow is *the sense of the need of an entire renewal of our nature if we are not to be condemned at that Judgment—*

"Not all the outward forms on earth,
Nor rites that God has given,
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,
Can raise a soul to Heaven!
The Sovereign will of God alone
Creates us heirs of Grace—
Born in the image of His Son,
A new peculiar race."

Christ's words are clear and positive, "You must be born-again." Some perhaps ask, "But Master, may we not reform and amend?" Yes, you may as far as you can, but that will not suffice. "But, Master, may we not observe certain ceremonies which You have ordained, may we not attend to Your precepts and so modify our present nature, and make ourselves fit for Heaven?" Jesus says to them, as He said to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born from above," (for so stands the original), "he cannot see the Kingdom of God." The Holy Spirit must come upon you and create in you new hearts and right spirits. There must be as total a change in you as though you actually became new creatures! Otherwise from Hell you can never escape and into Heaven you can never enter—and this is true not only of the debauched, the dissolute and the depraved, but also of the most moral, amiable and honorable of the whole human race! "You must be born-again," or you cannot enter into Heaven. I remember how this sharp arrow stuck in my heart and how I wandered to and fro, hoping that I might yet be born-again—and sighing and crying in my soul because I lacked the one thing necessary—which I could not give to myself, but for which I must look up to that great God whom I had offended and who, I feared, would never deign to grant so great a gift to so unworthy a rebel! May that sharp arrow pierce other hearts just now!

Another arrow from the bow of King Jesus is *the Sovereignty of God.* God has the right to bestow His mercy where He wills, or to withhold it if

He so pleases. His Grace is in no sense the discharge of a debt which He owes to us. If He had determined to destroy the whole race of men, we must admit that they had deserved such a doom. As He has chosen to save some, it is His Grace that has done it, so let Him be forever adored for it! The Apostle Paul, writing under Inspiration, quotes God's words to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," and adds, "So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy." What humbling words are these! They make the sinner lie all broken and helpless at the feet of the God whom he has offended. They tell him that he cannot save himself, and that now his only hope lies absolutely in the Sovereign will of that God who can destroy him in a moment if He so wills! Men do not like this sharp arrow and will do anything to get rid of it. They will try to deny the truth of it if they can, but let the Lord once drive this arrow right home through the heart and conscience and I do not know any shaft out of the Divine quiver that is more killing to human pride and more deadly to self-righteousness than this eternal Truth of God which has already brought many to Christ and will bring many more, God blessing it—

"Praise the God of all creation,
Praise the Father's boundless love!
Praise the Lamb, our expiation,
Priest and King enthroned above!
Praise the Fountain of salvation,
Him by whom our spirits live—
Undivided adoration
To the one Jehovah give."

Further, the Lord Jesus Christ often drives the arrow of conviction home in this form—*the aggravation of the sin of men when they sin against light and against love.* It is no little evil to break God's Law at all, but to do it knowingly is far worse than to do it ignorantly. To do it after many admonitions to the contrary, to continue to offend God after being frequently rebuked, to refuse all the invitations of His mercy, to resist the strivings of His Spirit, to be resolved to be lost, to be resolute upon damnation—this is the very worst form of sin! There are some of you in whose hearts this arrow might well find a place, for you were brought up by godly parents, you were dandled upon the knees of piety, you heard the name of Jesus among the first sounds that saluted your infant ears. You were carried to the House of God before you were old enough to walk there—and your mother's tears have fallen upon your infant brow as she has wept out her prayers to God that the soul of her child might be precious in His sight.

Some of you remember when the Word used to prick your conscience as you heard it preached—you would go home and shut your bedroom door and kneel down and pray—and there was a time when, for weeks or months together, you could not sin as you used to, but felt obliged to give up one evil and another. Yet you resisted the conviction that was then upon you. You struggled against it, you overcame it and you went back into sin. You have never had so severe a contest with Grace since then—still, you have had some struggles and by dint of awful

perseverance—oh, that we had half the perseverance to be saved that some have to be lost! By dint, I say, of awful perseverance, you have managed to remain a servant of Satan until now! Nor can we bring you to accept the Gospel of Christ. If you remain as you are, the Lord Jesus tells you, as He told the people of Capernaum and Bethsaida of old, that it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah at the Day of Judgment than for you! It would have been better for you if you had never been born. It would have been better for you, Sir, if, when you were yet a babe, unconscious of right and wrong, a millstone had been hung about your neck and you had been cast into the depths of the sea! O man, I pray that this sharp arrow may strike you, now, and wound you and that God may bless it to you! If you and I should be lost after having such mothers and fathers as we had. If you and I should perish after such Christian training as we have had—when we meet each other in the lowest depths of Hell, our miserable salutation would surely be something of this kind, "What fools we were, with so much light to prefer the darkness, with so much love from God to resolve to hate Him! Knowing so well as we did our duty, what arrant fools we were to have neglected it! Knowing that sin was folly, how could we choose it? And knowing that holiness was happiness, for we saw it reflected in the faces of our dearest relatives and friends, how was it that we did not seek it for ourselves?" How we shall wring our hands in unutterable anguish if this should ever be our portion! The Lord prevent it, by His Grace!

The last sharp arrow that I shall mention is one which Christ Himself has often shot, it is this—*that condemnation for sin is a matter of this present time.* Dear Hearers, if you have never heard this Truth of God before, hear it now and tremble at it! You have not to wait until you rise from the dead to receive your condemnation—"He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." And as "there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," so we may solemnly say, "There is, therefore, now a most weighty condemnation upon you who are not in Christ Jesus, who are walking not after the Spirit, but after the flesh." Your sentence is already passed, like that of the poor wretch who is now lying in the condemned cell, tomorrow to suffer the extreme penalty of the law! Such is your lot—"condemned already."

All these Truths of God are the sharp arrows from the bow of King Jesus!

II. Now, secondly, let us inquire, WHY ARE THEY CALLED ARROWS?

First, they are called arrows *because they are far-reaching.* Some people who have never heard the Gospel have, nevertheless, unexpectedly found one or other of these arrows rankling in their hearts. We have known men who have been at their ordinary work when one of these arrows has suddenly struck them. Where the voice of the minister could not go, there the arrow of Christ could find its mark! Never give up hope for the world, even in its darkest days. The world was once in a very midnight and there was a monk, named Luther, on his knees, going up the so-called staircase of Pilate at Rome—and repeating a prayer on every

step in order to try to win his way to Heaven. And there came to him, while on those very stairs, an arrow from the King that pierced him right to his heart! The arrow bore this inscription, "The just shall live by faith"—a sentence which had previously been discovered by Luther in a Bible in the monastery at Erfurt. He was attempting to justify himself by works like that of climbing the so-called holy stairs. But he found that it was of no use and, through faith in Jesus, he became the great leader of the Reformers of his day! Perhaps at this very moment, while we are assembled here worshipping God, there may be men, similarly deluded, in places where an idolatrous system has usurped the name and place of Christianity, yet the Gospel may reach them even amidst the mummeries of the "mass"! Yes, and at the ale-bench, and in still worse places, if God so wills it, the arrow from the Prince's bow may find its target and reach the human heart! Pray, my Brothers and Sisters, that the King may be profuse with His sharp arrows, so that many may fall under His power!

They are called arrows, again, *because they are penetrating.* These Truths of God enter a man's heart whether he likes them or not. There are some of these arrows that are aimed at a man, but he seems to be clad in steel and they cannot gain an entrance for a time. But, by-and-by, they pierce him to the heart and cut him to the very quick. We have known some sinners to be very angry when this has been the case with them. That is of very little consequence so long as they do but get wounded by the arrows of King Jesus! Because these Truths wound people, penetrating their hearts, they are rightly called arrows.

They are also called arrows *because if they once get in, they rankle, and you cannot get them out.* Often have I heard something like this said by those who have come here to make a profession of their faith in Christ, "I was utterly godless and never went to any place of worship. But one evening I stole in here and listened to a sermon. I was angry to the last degree at what I heard—I could have cursed the preacher to his face! Yet, I do not know how it was, I soon found myself in this place again, wanting to know more about this religion that I detested all the time." I have often heard a man say, "I could not help thinking of it, Sir. It haunted my dreams. It stayed with me at my work. I loathed it, yet there it was always near me! Certain questions arose within me that I could not answer and difficulties came up which I could not solve. So I was obliged to let this strange new influence which had got hold of me, still rankle within my heart." I have sometimes likened an unconverted man to a wild giraffe in an African forest—and Christ's Gospel, like a mighty lion, leaps upon him from the thicket, fastens its powerful fangs in his flesh and begins to tear away his very life. He strives and struggles, dashes here and there, and tries to rid himself of the awful load that he bears upon his back, but all his efforts are in vain. The poor giraffe in the grip of the lion is distracted—and the man under conviction of sin cannot imagine what is to become of him. He thinks that he is lost and that he must feel the full force of Divine Wrath against sin—yet this is the way of Mercy—it is thus that men are saved! At last the man falls down and then He who seemed to be his enemy stoops down and nobly gives back the life that appeared to have gone from him. Or, rather, gives him an

infinitely nobler life and so the forgiven sinner lives forever! Oh, that the power of the Gospel may thus be exerted upon some wild, untamable spirit that may be here just now!

The Gospel message is especially called an arrow *because it kills.* What does it kill? It kills many things. Gospel preaching, when applied by the Holy Spirit, kills carnal ease in men. A man, when he first hears the Gospel, may perhaps say, "What is the need to bother oneself about that? It will all come right, I have no doubt." Ah, but let one of these Truths that I have mentioned—that Truth of God, for instance, about the Judgment to come—get into his heart and rankle there—the man will not talk any longer about not bothering himself! He must care. "Why," he says, "tomorrow I may be before God's Judgment Throne and I am unprepared to meet Him! My brother died only last week and my sister was taken away only a fortnight ago—and I may be called away at any moment. I cannot bear the thought of being in Hell forever! I must begin to think. I must begin to care about my soul." Carnal ease is one of the first things that is killed by the arrows of Christ!

I will tell you another thing that is killed by these sharp arrows, and that is the foolish skepticism which some people think we ought to nurse and cuddle up in our places of worship. I do not believe that the skepticism of this age has so much to do with people's heads as with their hearts. If they were not wicked, they would not doubt, but because they will not be holy, they will not believe. To answer many of their questions would be as foolish as to do what a boy did, according to a fable which I read in an old book the other day. A boy, in a scavenger's cart, was so badly disposed that he said he would throw dirt in the face of the moon. And another boy, who, I suppose, was a great deal better, but certainly not any wiser, fetched a basin of water and a piece of sponge to wash the moon's face. When I read that story, I thought of those who are always finding out some reason to doubt the authenticity of the Bible, or who throw dirt in the face of the Gospel in some other way. And then there is some well-meaning but foolish Divine who leaves off preaching the Truth of God and runs with his sponge and his basin of water to wash the face of the blessed Gospel which is as clean as the sun or the moon and needs none of his washing, for it is not defiled with the dirt that any fool may choose to fling at it! I believe that at the bottom of your hearts, you do not really doubt, for you know that God will bring you before His Judgment bar to give an account of your actions! And when the King's sharp arrows pierce your hearts, all your whimsies die, your idle fancies flee away and your cry is, "Do I not believe? Indeed I do! Oh, that I could but doubt in order to get a little rest to my troubled spirit, or, rather, Blessed Spirit, come and teach me if there is not something to be believed by which a lost and condemned spirit may find peace with God!"

The arrows of Christ, wherever they come, always kill self-righteousness. There was never a shaft shot from Christ's bow that was not fatal to all trust in our own goodness! Christ abhors that abomination and kills it wherever He finds it. Hardness of heart, lack of

feeling—this is also slain wherever Christ's sharp arrows come. So also is procrastination, that great ruiner of the souls of men. Oh, that some sharp arrow might fly from Christ's bow into the heart of any sinner here who is saying, "There is time enough yet!" Instead of talking like that, he would say, "I want to be forgiven tonight! I cannot bear this terrible burden of guilt any longer. If there were no future, my present agony is so great that I long for immediate deliverance from it." Jesus, You blessed Divine Archer, shoot forth Your arrows now into men's hearts, that all these ills that they have—unbelief, hardness of heart, love of sin and delay, may fall down slain at Your glorious feet. And then come and save the sinners, by Your Grace, and Your head shall wear the crown forever and ever!

How gladly would I, if I could, say anything that might encourage any of you to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, but I know that my feeble voice is not sufficient to help you. It is the almighty Spirit who alone can do this—and I earnestly pray that He may. My grief is not so much concerning you who are seeking the Savior, as concerning you who are not seeking Him. You may think that it is a trifling matter to preach the Gospel, or to listen to preaching. But the hour comes—and every moment brings it nearer—when you will know that the Truths of which I have been speaking are the only real things this side of Heaven and Hell! When you lie dying and are brought face to face with the mysteries of the next world, you will count all your money, your amusements and all else to be but foolery. Oh, do not trifle any longer with your eternal interests! If any of you must play the fool, do it with your money, or your estates, or your bodies, but do not do it with your immortal souls, for these, if once lost, can never be recovered! Once let the Divine sentence go forth, "Depart, you cursed," and it can never be reversed and changed into a benediction! Once let the iron bar that shuts up lost spirits in Hell be driven home by the hand of Infinite Justice, and there is no hand in Heaven, or earth, or Hell, that can ever slide that iron bar back! Once done, 'tis done forever! So, Sirs, I beseech you, escape to the Cross while you may! Look to Him who died upon it! Trust yourselves wholly to Him. Forsake your sins, walk in His ways and live as His followers should—for then, but not till then will you be safe!

III. And now, to conclude, having examined the King's sharp arrows and seen why they are called by that name, let us inquire, HOW DO THEY GET INTO MEN'S HEARTS?

Many are the times that I have handled these arrows of the King. And many are the times that from this, my watch-tower, I have shot them from my bow. And the Lord knows with what intense desire I have longed that they might enter the hearts of those at whom I have aimed them! I could, with my finger—but I shall not—indicate some of the targets at which I have aimed. I will mention no names—there is no need for me to do that—you know very well to whom these personal messages have been addressed. I suppose I cannot have been a good shot, for, with many of you, I have not yet found the joint in your harness through which I could reach your heart. Oh, that I might speedily be able to do so!

But, according to my text, the arrows which are there spoken of and which are shot by the King, do get right into the hearts of His enemies—and I suppose this is for two reasons—first, *because the Lord Jesus Christ always takes good aim.* We cannot do this except as He puts His hands on our hands, for then the aim will be His rather than ours, like the shots of certain eminent people in great public occasions who have the sighting done for them by experts. It is only when the Lord Jesus Christ does this for us that the arrow of the Truth of God goes home to the heart and conscience of the hearer! Christ's aim is always true. If the Truth of God should come home to any of you, believe that it was meant for you! Do not be vexed, or think that there has been a mistake. It was meant for you and although it may pain you, bless God for the pain! It will be better for you thus to be pained and afterwards be fitted to enter into Heaven, than to be left to get a seared and hardened conscience—and to be cast into Hell.

The other reason why these arrows of the King get into the hearts of his enemies is that together with the good aim, *there is always almighty strength at the back of the bow.* It is said that the bow of William the Conqueror was so strong that no man in England, except himself, could bend it. And the great bow of King Jesus is such as none of us can bend! It has the power of the Holy Spirit in it—it is the Holy Spirit, Himself, who gives force and power to the Word so that it pierces through all the sinner's armor, the most vital part of his being and smites him even in the heart. Bearing this last thought in mind, I say to you who love the Lord, do you not see how dependent we are upon the Holy Spirit? There lie the arrows, but they will kill nobody till the Holy Spirit gets them into the hearts of sinners! There is much precious Truth in this blessed Book, but there it will lie till the Holy Spirit takes it and shoots it right into the hearts of men. So, what is our duty as Christian men and women? Why, dear Brothers and Sisters, let us never grieve the Holy Spirit! You know that we can do it by neglecting to honor Him, by falling out among ourselves, by cherishing unlovely dispositions, by being unholy. As church members, we can easily drive the Holy Spirit away from us, but, instead of grieving Him, let us honor Him and let us entreat Him to work with us.

Brothers and Sisters, pray for us. I believe I am the constant subject of the prayers of the different members of this Church—to whom I feel the deepest gratitude. But I also beg you to pray for all the ministers of Christ and for one another, and for all work that is being done for Christ. Remember the Sunday school teachers. Think of those good men who, all week, are doing the hard work of City Missionaries—and those good women who are working as Bible women—pray for all such laborers and for all who are doing anything for Christ—ask that the Holy Spirit may be with them to make their labors a means of blessing to the people. Whenever you seek to do anything for Christ—as you begin and as you go on, and when you conclude—let it all be done in real dependence upon the Holy Spirit! Blessed be God, the Holy Spirit is not far away from us, nor is He hard to find, for He dwells within the true Church of Christ.

We are not to think of Him as if He were some mysterious Being, very far distant from us and not easily to be brought to us, to whom we need to cry as Baal's priests cried to their idol god, "O Baal, hear us!" The Holy Spirit is always at work in the Church and it is a wonder that He does so much while the Church often does so little. Oh, if we were but all awake, all alive, all full of zeal, all full of love, all full of self-sacrifice, then, depending upon Him, we might expect to see the King's sharp arrows flying from His bow to the right and to the left, behind and in the front, while tens of thousands would fall down before Him! And London, and Great Britain, and the world at large would behold the King riding in triumph in His glorious chariot of salvation!

The Lord send it! The Lord send it! I know your hearts say, "Amen!" But you must work for it and watch for it and pray for it—and then it will come! And unto Christ shall be the Glory forever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 45.

To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, (or, upon the lilies), for the sons of Korah, Maschil, A Song of Loves. We may look upon the 45th Psalm as being a sort of compendium of the Song of Solomon. It is written, too, upon the same subject. And that is *not* the marriage of Solomon with Pharaoh's daughter—only the strangest and most whimsical fancy could ever have found Pharaoh's daughter either in this Psalm or in the Book of the Canticles! It is a description of Christ and His Church! A song of love between that pair forever affianced and soon to sit down together at the marriage supper in Glory!

Verse 1. *My heart is inditing a good matter.* Or, as the margin has it, "My heart boils or bubbles up with good matter." It is said of Origen, one of the ancient fathers of the Church, that whenever he preached, he preached with great earnestness and fervor—but that when he spoke of Christ, he seemed to be all on fire. So, whenever our hearts speak of the good matter which concerns Christ, our souls should be all on fire—we should be boiling over with love to Him!

1. *I speak of the things which I have made touching the King.* A man can never speak so well of the things which he has learned, or heard, as of the things which he has made, that is, the things which he has *experienced*. Indeed, this is your life-work and mine, Beloved, to tell others the things which we have made our own touching the King!

1. *My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.* A ready writer writes what he has thought of beforehand, what he has well meditated upon and digested. So the Psalmist declares that this rapturous song is as certainly true as the *verba scripta* of a thoughtful accomplished penman.

2. *You are fairer than the children of men.* The Hebrew word here is doubled, as much as to say, "You are doubly fair. You are fair, fair. Twice fairer than the children of men." Both in outward appearance—although His visage was so sadly marred while He was here—and in personal Character, our Lord Jesus Christ is "fairer than the children of men."

2. *Grace is poured into Your lips.* Grace has, in the most copious manner, been poured upon Christ and now there pours from His lips a very cataract of Grace—floods of love, tenderness and holy eloquence stream from His lips.

2, 3. *Therefore God has blessed You forever. Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One, with Your glory and Your majesty.* Put Your sword where it will be ready for use. Come forth and let us see You appear in Your strength, O most Mighty! For this is one of the names of Christ—"I have laid help upon One That Is Mighty—I have exalted One Chosen Out of the people."

4, 5. *And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and Your right hand shall teach You terrible things. Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; whereby the people fall under You.* You may see, on some of the ancient slabs, representations of Oriental monarchs riding in their chariots, perhaps engaged in hunting, or pursuing their enemies with their bow and arrow in their hands and their sword upon their thigh. So is our Savior thus graphically described. His Word is His sword, and the testimony of His ministers He makes to be like sharp arrows sticking in the hearts of His enemies. May it be so this day and every day. May Christ thus ride prosperously!

6. *Your Throne, O God, is forever and ever: the scepter of Your Kingdom is a right scepter.* This could not have been said of Solomon, for he was never called God. It refers to none other than Christ the King, whose Throne is forever and ever!

7-9. *You love righteousness, and hate wickedness: therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows. All Your garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made You glad. Kings' daughters were among Your honorable women.* Your maids of honor, for all those who truly wait on Christ become at once the King's daughters. It is more noble to serve God than to sit as king upon a throne. The day shall come when all the honor of earthly kings' daughters will have passed away, but the glory of those who are in Christ's court as honorable women shall abide forever.

9. *At Your right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.* In the best and purest gold. Every member of the Church of Christ may well say, with Dr. Watts—

"Strangely, my Soul, are you arrayed
By the great Sacred Three!"

10, 11. *Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear; forget also your own people, and your father's house; so shall the King greatly desire your beauty: for He is your Lord; and worship you Him.* Though the Church has been brought up in the world, she is to be separated from it. The more distinction there can be between Christians and worldlings, the better will it be for both. Christ greatly admires the beauty of His Church when she is separated from the world—and it is nothing but an adulterous alliance when the Church becomes united to the State. We never can expect any great and permanent blessing to any church which thus degrades and dishonors itself. If a church cannot stand without the

support of the civil power, let it fall! But happy is that Church which relies alone upon the King, Himself, and is content with the dowry which He gives her.

12. *And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat your favor.* The day is coming when the Church of Christ shall be honored by all men. The merchant princes, who now esteem her as a thing of naught, shall come with their tribute to her—and those who once despised her shall entreat her favor.

13, 14. *The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of worked gold. She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto You.* Happy was John the Baptist to be "the friend of the Bridegroom" to Christ, and happy are the hearts of those who are the bridesmaids to His Church—"the virgins her companions that follow her"—you, whose pure hearts are set upon the Lord alone, and who follow wherever He leads. You, too, "shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework" with His Church.

15, 16. *With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the King's palace. Instead of Your fathers shall be Your children, whom You may make princes in all the earth.* There is such a thing as an Apostolic succession, though not the fiction which usually goes by that name. The Lord is constantly raising up fresh disciples, fresh preachers and fresh teachers whom He makes to be princes in His earthly courts, and who shall be princes in His heavenly courts forever and ever.

17. *I will make Your name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise You forever and ever—*

"Jesus shall reign wherever the sun
Does its successive journeys run.
His Kingdom stretches from shore to shore
Till moons shall wax and wane no more."

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

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NO. 3040

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 16, 1907.

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

"But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinks upon me."
Psalm 40:17.

THERE is no crime and there is no credit in being poor. Everything depends upon the occasion of the poverty. Some men are poor and are greatly to be pitied, for their poverty has come upon them without any fault of their own. God has been pleased to lay this burden upon them and, therefore, they may expect to experience Divine help and ought to be tenderly considered by their Brothers and Sisters in Christ. Occasionally poverty has been the result of integrity or religion—and here the poor man is to be admired and honored. At the same time, it will be observed by all who watch with an impartial eye that very much of the poverty about us is the direct result of idleness, intemperance, improvidence and sin. There would probably not be one-tenth of the poverty there now is upon the face of the earth if the drinking shops were less frequented, if debauchery were less common, if idleness were banished and extravagance abandoned. Lovers of pleasure, (alas, that such a word should be so degraded), are great impoverishers of themselves. It is clear that there is not, of necessity, either vice or virtue in being poor and a man's poverty cannot be judged of by itself—its causes and circumstances must be taken into consideration.

The poverty, however, to which the text relates is a poverty which I desire to cultivate in my own heart! And it is one upon which our Divine Lord has pronounced a blessing. When He sat down upon the mountain and poured forth His famous series of beatitudes, He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." The poor in pocket may be blessed, or may not be blessed, as the case may be, but the *poor in spirit* are always blessed and we have Christ's authority for so saying! Theirs is a poverty which is better than wealth! In fact, it is a poverty which indicates the possession of the truest of all riches.

It was mainly in this sense that David said, "I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinks upon me." Certainly, in any other sense, there are vast multitudes who are "poor and needy," but who neither think upon God, nor rejoice that God thinks upon them. Those who are *spiritually* "poor and needy"—the sacred beggars at Mercy's gate, the elect mendicants of Heaven—these are the people who may say, with humble confidence, as David did, "Yet the Lord thinks upon me."

Two things are noteworthy in the text. First, here, is *a frank acknowledgment*—"I am poor and needy." But, secondly, here is *a comfortable confidence*—"yet the Lord thinks upon me."

I. First, here is A FRANK ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

Some men do not object to confess that they are poor in worldly goods. In fact, they are rather fond of pleading poverty when there is a collection coming, or a subscription list in dangerous proximity. Men have even gloried in history in the name of, "The Beggars." And, "silver and gold have I none," has been exalted into a boast! But *spiritually*, it is little less than a miracle to bring men to feel, first, and then to confess their poverty, for naked, and poor, and miserable as we are by nature, we are all apt enough to say, "I am rich and increased with goods." We cannot dig and to beg we are ashamed. If we did not inherit a penny of virtue from father Adam, we certainly inherited plenty of pride! Poor and proud we all are. We will not, if we can help it, take our seat in the lowest room, though that is our proper place. Grace alone can bring us to see ourselves in the glass of truth. To have nothing is natural to us, but to *confess* that we have nothing is more than we will come to until the Holy Spirit has worked self-abasement in us. The emptiers must come up upon us for, though naturally as empty as Hagar's bottle, yet we boast ourselves to be as full as a fountain! The Spirit of God must take from us our goodly Babylonian garment, or we shall never consent to be dressed in the fair white linen of the righteousness of saints. What Paul flung away as dross and dung, we poor rag-collectors prize and hoard up as long as ever we can!

"I am poor and needy," is a confession which only He who is the Truth of God can teach us to offer. If you are saying it, my Brother, you need not be afraid that you are under a desponding delusion. But, true as it is, and plain to every Grace-taught child of God, yet only Grace will make a man confess the obnoxious fact. It is not in public that we can or should confess our soul-poverty as we do in the chamber when we bow our knees secretly before God. But many of us, in secret, have been compelled, with many tears and sighs, to feel as well as to say, "I am poor and needy." We have searched through and through, looked from the top to the bottom of our humanity and we could not find a single piece of good money in the house, so greatly reduced were we. We had not a shekel of merit, nor a penny of hope in ourselves! And we were constrained to fall flat on our face before God and confess our inability to meet His claims. And we found no comfort till, by faith, we learned to present our Lord Jesus as the Surety for His servants for good. We could not pay even the poorest composition and, therefore, cast ourselves upon the forbearance of God.

The Psalmist is doubly humble, for first he says *he is poor,* and then adds that *he is needy*—and there is a difference between these two things.

He acknowledges that *he is poor,* and you and I, if taught of God, will say the same. We may well be poor, *for we came of a poor father.* Our father Adam had at first a great estate, but he soon lost it. He violated

the trust on which he held his property and he was cast out of the inheritance and turned adrift into the world to earn his bread as a day-laborer by tilling the ground from which he was taken. His eldest son was a vagabond. The first-born of our race was a convict on parole. If any suppose that we have inherited some good thing by natural descent, they go very contrary to what David tells us when he declares, "Behold, I was shaped in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me." Our first parents were utter bankrupts. They left us nothing but a heritage of old debts and a propensity to accumulate yet more personal obligations. Well may we be poor who come into this world heirs of wrath with a decayed estate and tainted blood!

Moreover, *since the time when we came into the world, we have followed a very miserable trade.* I recollect when I was a spinner and weaver of the poorest sort. I dreamed that I would be able, by my own spinning, to make a garment to cover myself with. This was the trade of father Adam and mother Eve when they first lost their innocence—they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons. It is a very laborious business and has worn out the lives of many with bitter bondage. But its worst feature is that the Lord has declared concerning all who followed this self-righteous craft, "their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works." Even those who have best attired themselves and have, for awhile gloried in their fair apparel, have had to feel the Truth of the Lord's words by Isaiah, "I will take away the changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles…and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils… and instead of a girdle there shall be a rent; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth." Vain is it to spend our labor on that which profits not, yet to this business are we early put apprentice and we work at it with mighty pains!

We are miserably poor, *for we have become bankrupt even in our wretched trade.* Some of us had, once, a comfortable competence laid by in the Bank of Self-Righteousness, and we meant to draw it out when we came to die—and thought we should even have a little spending money for our old age out of the interest which was paid us in the coin of Self-Conceit. But the Bank failed long ago and now we have not so much as a farthing of our own merits left us, no, nor a chance of ever having any! And, what is worse, we are deeply in debt and we have "nothing to pay." Instead of having anything like a balance on our account, we are insolvent debtors to the Justice of God, without a single farthing of assets! And unless we are freely forgiven, we must be cast into prison and lie there forever. Job described us well when he said, "for want and famine they are solitary; fleeing into the wilderness in former time desolate and waste. They have no covering in the cold…and embrace the rock for want of a shelter."

See, then, what poverty-stricken creatures we are—of a poor stock, following a starving trade and made bankrupts even in that!

What is still worse, *poor human nature has no power left to retrieve itself.* As long as a man has a stout pair of arms, he is not without a hope

of rising from the dunghill. We once thought that we were equal to any task, but now Paul's description suits us well—"without strength." Our Lord's words, too, are deeply true, "Without Me you can do nothing." Unable so much as to *think* a good thought, or to lift our hearts heavenward of ourselves—this is poverty, indeed! We are wrecked and the whole vessel has gone to pieces. We have destroyed ourselves. Ah, my fellow man, may God make you feel this! Many know nothing about it and would be very angry if we were to say that this is their condition—and yet this is the condition of every man born into the world until the Spirit of God brings him into communion with Christ and endows him with the riches of the Covenant of Grace!

"I am poor," this is my confession! Is it yours? Is it a confession extorted from you by a clear perception that it is really so? I will recommend you, if it is so, to take to a trade which is the best trade in the world to live by—not for the body, but for the soul—and that is the profession of a beggar, certainly a suitable one for you and me! I took to it long ago and began to beg for mercy from God. I have been constrained to continue begging every day of the same kind Benefactor and I hope to die begging! Many of the saints have grown rich upon this holy mendicancy—they have indeed spoken of being daily loaded with benefits! The noblest of the peers of Heaven were here below daily pensioners upon God's love—they were fed, and clothed, and housed by the charity of the Lord—and they delighted to have it so. How clear is it from all this that none of us can have anything of which to glory! Boasting is excluded, for, let the beggar get what he may, he is but a beggar still—and the child of God, notwithstanding the bounty of his Heavenly Father, is still in himself a penniless vagrant!

The Psalmist also said, "I am *needy*." There are poor people who are not needy. Diogenes was very poor, but he was not needy. He had made up his mind that he would not need anything, so he lived in a tub. He had but one drinking vessel and when he saw a boy drinking out of his hand, he broke his vessel, for he said he would not possess anything superfluous. He was poor enough, but he was not needy, for when Alexander said, "What can I do for you?" he answered, "Stand out of my sunshine." So it is clear that a man may be very poor and yet he may not be burdened with need. But David was conscious of extreme need—and in this many of us can join him.

Brothers and Sisters, we confess that we need ten thousand things, in fact, *we need everything.* By nature, the sinner needs healing, for he is sick unto death. He needs washing, for he is foul with sin. He needs clothing, for he is naked before God. He needs preserving after he is saved, he needs the Bread of Heaven, he needs the water out of the Rock. He is all needs and nothing but needs. Not one thing that his soul needs can he, of himself, supply. He needs to be kept from even the most common sins. He needs to be instructed as to even the first elements of the faith. He needs to be taught to walk in the ways of God's most plain commandments. Our needs are so great that they comprise the whole

range of Covenant supplies and all the fullness treasured up in Christ Jesus.

We are needy *in every condition.* We are soldiers and we need that Grace should find us both shield and sword. We are pilgrims and we need that love should give us both a staff and a Guide. We are sailing over the sea of life and we need that the wind of the Spirit shall fill our sails and that Christ shall be our Pilot. There is no figure under which the Christian life can be represented in which our need is not a very conspicuous part of the image! In all aspects we are poor and needy.

We are needy *in every exercise.* If we are called to preach, we have to cry, "Lord, open You my lips." If we pray, we are needy at the Mercy Seat, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought. If we go out into the world to wrestle with temptation, we need supernatural help lest we fall before the enemy! If we are alone in meditation, we need the Holy Spirit to quicken our devotion. We are needy in suffering and laboring, in watching and in fighting. Every spiritual engagement does but discover another phase of our need!

And, Brothers and Sisters, we are needy *at all times.* We never wake up in the morning but we need strength for the day—and we never go to bed at night without needing Grace to cover the sins of the past. We are needy at all periods of life. When we begin with Christ, in our young days, we need to be kept from the follies and passions which are so strong in giddy youth. In middle age our needs are still greater, lest the cares of this world should eat as does a canker. And in old age we are still needy and need Preserving Grace to bear us onward to the end. So needy are we that even in lying down to die, we need our last bed to be made for us by Mercy and our last hour to be cheered by Grace. So needy are we that if Jesus had not prepared a mansion for us in eternity, we would have no place to dwell! We are as full of needs as the sea is full of water! We cannot stay at home and say, "I have much goods laid up for many years," for the wolf is at the door and we must go out a-begging again! Our clamorous necessities follow us every moment and dog our heels in every place. We must take the two adjectives and keep them close together in our confession—"I am poor and needy."

II. The second part of the subject is much more cheering. It is A COMFORTABLE CONFIDENCE—"yet the Lord thinks upon me."

A poor man is always pleased to remember that he has a rich relative, especially if that rich relative is very thoughtful towards him, finds out his distress and cheerfully and abundantly relieves his needs!

Observe that *the Christian does not find comfort in himself.* "I am poor and needy." That is the top and bottom of my case. I have searched myself through and through and have found in my flesh no good thing. Notwithstanding the Grace which the Believer possesses and the hope which he cherishes, he still sees a sentence of death written upon the creature and he cries, "I am poor and needy." His joy is found in Another! He looks away from self to the consolations which the eternal purpose has prepared for him.

Note well *who it is that gives the comfort—"The Lord* thinks upon me." By the term, "the Lord," we are accustomed to understand the glorious Trinity. "The Lord thinks upon me," *i.e.*, Jehovah, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. O beloved Believer in Christ, if you have rested in Jesus, then *the Father* thinks upon you! Your person was in His thoughts—

"Long before the sun's refulgent ray
Primeval shades of darkness drove."

He regarded you with thoughts of boundless love before He had fashioned the world, or wrapped it up in swaddling bands of ocean and of clouds. Eternal thoughts of love went forth of old towards all the chosen—and these have never changed. Not for a single instant has the Father ever ceased to love His people! As our Lord said to His disciples, "The Father Himself loves you." Never has He grown cold in His affections towards you, O poor and needy one! He has seen you in His Son. He has loved you in the Beloved. He has seen you—

"Not as you stood in Adam's fall,
When sin and ruin covered all,
But as you'll stand another day,
Brighter than sun's meridian ray."

He saw you in the glass of His eternal purpose, saw you as united to His dear Son and, therefore, looked upon you with eyes of complacency. He thought upon you and He still thinks upon you. When the Father thinks of His children, He thinks of you. When the great Judge of All thinks of the justified ones, He thinks of you. O Christian, can you grasp the thought? The Eternal Father thinks of *you!* You are so inconsiderable that if the mind of God were not Infinite, it would not be possible that He should remember your existence! Yet *He thinks upon you!* How precious ought His thoughts be to you! The sum of them is great, let your gratitude for them be great, too!

Forget not that *the great Son of God,* to whom you owe your hope, also thinks of you. It was for you that He entered into suretyship engagements before the earth was. It was for you, O heir of Heaven, that He took upon Himself a mortal body and was born of the virgin! It was for you that He lived those 30 years of immaculate purity that He might weave for you a robe of spotless righteousness! For you poured down His bloody sweat in the garden! He thought of you, He prayed for you in Gethsemane. For you were the flagellations in Pilate's Hall, the mockeries before Herod and the blasphemous accusations at the judgment seat of Caiaphas! For you the nails, the spear, the vinegar and the, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani?"* Jesus thought of you and died for you with as direct an aim for your salvation as though there had not been another soul to be redeemed by His blood! And now, though He reigns exalted high, and you are "poor and needy," yet He still thinks upon you! The Glory of His present condition does not distract His thoughts from His Beloved. He is lovingly thoughtful of you. When He stands up to intercede, your name glitters on His priestly breastplate with the names of the rest of the chosen. He thinks of you when He prepares mansions for those whom His Father has blessed. He looks forward to the time when He shall

gather together in one all things in Heaven and in earth that are in Him—and He counts you among them. Christian, will not this Truth of God comfort you—that the Son of God is constantly thinking upon you?

We must not forgot the love of *the Spirit,* to whom we are so wondrously indebted. He cannot do otherwise than think upon us, for He dwells in us and shall be with us. As He dwells in us, He cannot be unmindful of us. It is His office to be the Comforter, to help our infirmities, to make intercession for us according to the will of God. So let us take the three thoughts and bind them together. "I am poor and needy, but I have a part in the thoughts of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." What fuller cause for comfort could we conceive?

We have answered the question *"who?"* Let us now turn to *"what?"* "The Lord *thinks upon me.*" He does not say, "The Lord will uphold me, provide for me, defend me." The declaration that He "thinks upon me" is quite enough. "Your Heavenly Father knows that you have need of these things," says our Lord, as if it was quite clear that for our Heavenly Father to know, is for Him to act. We poor short-sighted and short-armed creatures often know the needs of others and would help if we could, but we are quite unable—it is never so with God—His thoughts always ripen into deeds. Perhaps, O tried Believer, you have been thinking a great deal about yourself of late—about your many trials—so that you lie awake nights, mourning over your heavy cares! "Alas," you think, "I have no one to advise me and sympathize with me." Let this text come to you as a whisper and you paraphrase it into a soliloquy, "I am poor and needy, this is true, and I cannot plan a method for supplying my needs, but a mightier mind than mine is thinking of me—the Infinite Jehovah thinks of me! He sees my circumstances, He knows the bitterness of my heart, He knows me altogether and His consideration of me is wise, tender and gracious. His thoughts are wisdom itself! When *I* think, it is a poor, little, weak, empty head that is thinking! But when *God* thinks, the gigantic mind which framed the universe is thinking of me!"

Have you ever attained to the idea of what the thoughts of God must be? That pure Spirit who cannot make mistakes, who is too wise to err, too good to be unkind, thinks upon us! He does not act without deliberation, does not come to our help in inconsiderate haste, does not do as we do with a poor man when we throw him a penny to be rid of him, but He thoughtfully deals with us. "Blessed is he that considers the poor," says the Psalmist. Those who take up the case of the poor, weigh it and remember it, are blessed! That is what the Lord does for us—"yet the Lord thinks upon me." He considers my case, judges when, and how, and after what sort it will be most fitting to grant me relief. "The Lord thinks upon me." Beloved, the shadow of this thought seems to me like the wells of Elim, full of refreshment, with the seventy palm trees yielding their ripe fruit! You may sit down here and drink to your full—and then go on your way rejoicing! However poor and needy you may be, the Lord thinks at the present moment upon you.

We have spoken upon who and what—now we will answer the inquiry, *How do we know that the Lord thinks upon us?* "Oh," say the ungodly,

"how do you know?" They are very apt to put posing questions to us. We talk of what we know experimentally and again they cry, "How do you know?" I will tell you how we know that God thinks upon us. We knew it, first of all, when we had a view of the Redeemer by faith, when we saw the Lord Jesus Christ hanging upon a tree for us, and made a curse for us. We saw that He so exactly suited and fitted our case that we were clear that the Lord must have thought and well considered it. If a man were to send you a sum of money tomorrow, exactly the amount you owe, you would be sure that someone had been thinking of you. And when we see the Savior, we are compelled to cry out, "O Lord, You have given me the very Savior I needed! This is the hope which my despairing soul required and this the anchorage which my tempest-tossed boat was seeking!" The Lord must have thought upon us, or He would not have provided so suitable a salvation for us.

We learn anew that the Lord thinks upon us when we go up to the House of God. I have heard many of you say, "We listen to the preacher and he seems to know what we have been saying on the road. The Word comes so home to our case that surely God has been hearing our very thoughts and putting into the mind of the preacher a word in season for us." Does not this show how the preacher's Master has been thinking of you? Then sit down and open the Bible, and you will frequently feel the words to be as much adapted to your case as if the Lord had written them for you alone! If, instead of the Bible having been penned many hundreds of years ago, it were actually written piecemeal to suit the circumstances of the Lord's people as they occur, it could not have been written more to the point! Our eyes have filled with tears when we have read such words as these, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."—"Fear not, you worm Jacob, and you men of Israel; I will help you, says the Lord."—"He shall deliver you in six troubles; yes, in seven there shall no evil touch you."—"Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed." And such like which we could quote by the hundreds! We feel that the Lord must have thought about us, or He would not have sent us such promises.

Best of all, when we sit quietly at the feet of Jesus, in the power of the Spirit of God, in solemn silence of the mind, then we know that the Lord thinks upon us, for thoughts come bubbling up, one after another, delightful thoughts, such as only the Holy Spirit could inspire. Then the things of Christ are sweetly taken by the Spirit and laid home to our hearts. We become calm and still, though before we were distracted. A sweet savor fills our heart like ointment poured forth—it diffuses its fragrance through every secret corner of our spirit. Sometimes our soul has seemed as though it were a peal of bells and every power and passion has been set a-ringing with holy joy because the Lord was there! Our whole nature has been as a harp well-tuned, and the Spirit has laid His fingers among the strings and filled our entire manhood with music. When we have been the subjects of these marvelous influences and gracious operations, if any had said to us that the Lord did not think of us, we would have told them that they lied, even to their face, for the

Lord had not only thought of us, but spoken to us and enabled us, by His Grace, to receive His thoughts and to speak again to Him!

The Lord not think of us? Why, we have proof upon proof that He does! He has very remarkably thought upon us in Providence. Should some of us relate the memorable interpositions of Providence on our behalf, they would not be believed—but they are facts for all that. William Huntington wrote a book called, "The Bank of Faith," which contains in it a great many very strange things, no doubt. But I believe hundreds and thousands of God's tried people could write "Banks of Faith" too, if it came to that, for God has often appeared for His saints in such a way that if the mercy sent had been stamped with the seal of God, visible to their eyes, they could not have been more sure of its coming from Him than they were when they received it! Yes, answered prayers, applied promises, sweet communing and blessed deliverances in Providence all go to make us feel safe in saying, "yet the Lord thinks upon me."

We will close our meditation upon this text when we have remarked that *those who are not poor and needy may well envy in their hearts those who are.* You who have abounding riches, who feel yourselves to be wealthy in goodness. You who feel as if you could afford to look down upon most people in the world. You who are so respectable, decorous and deserving, I beseech you to note well that the text does not say a word about you! You are not poor, and you are not needy, and you do not think upon the Lord—and the Lord does not think upon you. Why should He? "The whole have no need of a physician." Christ did not come to call you. He said He came to call not the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Shall I tell you that it is your worst calamity that you have such an elevated idea of your own goodness? Whereas you say, "We see," you are blindest of all! And whereas you boast that you are righteous, there is in that self-righteousness of yours the very worst form of sin, for there is no sin that can be greater than that of setting up your own works in competition with the righteousness of Christ! I bear you witness that you have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, for you, being ignorant of the righteousness of Christ, go about to establish your own righteousness—and your efforts will end in terrible disappointment!

I pray you to cast away all reliance upon your own works. Tear up, once and for all, all that you have been spinning for these many years—your tears, your prayers, your church attendance, your chapel attendance, your confirmation, your baptism, your sacraments—have done with the whole rotten mass as a ground of confidence! It is all quicksand which will swallow you up if you rest upon it. The only rock upon which you must build, whoever you may be, is the rock of the finished work of Jesus! Come, now, and rest upon God's appointed Savior, the Son of God, even though you may not have felt your own poverty and need. If you mourn that you do not mourn as you should, you are one of the poor and needy, and are bidden to turn your eyes to the Lamb of God and live!

I would to God that all of us were poor and needy in ourselves and that we were rich in faith in Christ Jesus! Oh, that we had done both

with sin and with self-righteousness, that we had laid both those traitors with their heads on the block for execution! Come, you penniless sinners, come and receive the bounty of Heaven! Come, you who mourn your need of penitence, come and receive repentance and every other heavenly gift from Him who is the sinner's Friend, exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins! But you must come empty-handed and sue, as the lawyers say, *in forma pauperis,* for in no other form will the Lord give ear to you! "He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty."—

"'Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large!
While we can call one mite our own,
We have no full discharge.
But let our debts be what they may,
However great or small—
As soon as we have nothing to pay,
Our Lord forgives us all!"

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 40.

If our hearts are in trouble, as his was who wrote this Psalm, may we be able to act as wisely and as well as he did, and so obtain a like deliverance!

Verses 1, 2. *I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.* God does nothing by halves. If He brings people up out of their sorrow, or their sin, He takes care that their feet shall not slip back again into the mire. David says, "He set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." What a blessing that last little sentence contains! God does not set our feet upon a rock, that we may afterwards slip off and finally fall, but He establishes our goings, He makes our footing firm, so that we do not ever perish!

3. *And He has put a new song in my mouth.* Such a song as I never sang before, for I had never been in such trouble before and, therefore, had never experienced such a deliverance as the Lord has now granted to me. "He has put a new song in my mouth." With that sweet songstress, Ann Letitia Waring, I can say—

"My heart is resting, O my God,
I will give thanks and sing.
My heart is at the secret source
Of every precious thing.
And 'a new song' is in my mouth,
To long-loved music set—
Glory to You for all the Grace
I have not tasted yet."

3, 4. *Even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD. Blessed is that man that makes the LORD his trust, and respects not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.* You know that this

Book of Psalms has many benedictions in it. It begins with a blessing upon "the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful." But here it has a blessing for the Believer—"Blessed is that man that makes Jehovah his trust." As for the proud and the false, may God preserve us from ever paying any regard to them for, if not, they will lead us into some such mischief as that into which they have themselves fallen.

5. *Many, O LORD my God, are Your wonderful works which You have done.* "Your works in creation, in Providence and in Redemption."

5. *And Your thoughts which are to us-ward.* God is always thinking of His people, and His thoughts are wise, and kind, and practical, for when He thinks of doing anything for us, He speedily performs it.

5. *They cannot be reckoned up in order unto You: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.* Think of that! You cannot count God's thoughts of you. If He were only to think of us once, in tender mercy, that one thought would run on throughout eternity, for He does not retract either a thought that He thinks or a word that He utters! Instead thereof, one gracious thought is followed by another, swiftly as the beams of light flash from the sun, so that it is impossible for us to number them. Thus thinking and writing concerning God's work, the Psalmist is carried away, as it were, into a vision in which he sees Christ and speaks in the name of Christ.

6. *Sacrifice and offering You did not desire.* The blood of all the bullocks, and rams, and lambs offered in sacrifice had possessed no real efficacy in putting away sin. They had no virtue except as types, symbols and prophecies of the one great Sacrifice that was to come!

6. *My ears have You opened.* Probably alluding to the ceremony of boring to the doorpost the ears of those who determined to remain as slaves to their masters when they might have gone free. So Christ was ready to be the Servant of His Father, and the Savior of sinners. He voluntarily undertook to bear all that this would involve.

6-8. *Burnt offering and sin offering have You not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your Law is within My heart.* He was the Perfect One, coming to do God's will for us and offering Himself as the truest Sacrifice that could ever be presented to God. So we may rightly picture our great Lord and Master uttering these words when He came to die.

9, 10. *I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained My lips. O LORD, You know. I have not hid Your righteousness within My heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation: I have not concealed Your loving kindness and Your truth from the great congregation.* With what indefatigable earnestness, with what indomitable courage, with what sacred faithfulness, with what holy tears did Christ preach the Truth of God while He was upon earth! He was always the Prince of Preachers, so, when He was dying, He could plead this fact with His Father.

11, 12. *Withhold not You Your tender mercies from Me, O LORD: let Your loving kindness and Your truth continually preserve Me. For*

innumerable evils have compassed Me about. Was it not so with Christ? The evils of sinners seemed to compass Him about and, like wild beasts, to hunt Him to the death! And the saints of God, in their measure, may often use similar language to that which the Psalmist here prophetically used concerning Christ.

12. *My iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head: therefore my heart fails me.* We could not apply this language to the Savior except as we spoke of the sins of ourselves and others which were laid upon Him, but we may apply this language, and ought to apply it to ourselves when we are sorely beset by sin. Have not even you, who are the dear children of God, sometimes felt as if you could not look up and dared not look up? You were so desponding, so downcast that there seemed no help for you, even in God. Your sins, your cruel sins, your fierce tormentors were and, therefore, your heart failed you.

13-15. *Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me. Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil. Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame that say unto me, Aha, aha.* So will it surely be, for the enemies of God's people are God's enemies—and Satan and all his host who seek to destroy the souls of the Lord's chosen shall be driven backward and covered with eternal shame!

16. *Let all those that seek You rejoice and be glad in You: let such as love Your salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified.* Are you content to bear your present trial, dear Friend, so that God may be magnified? Are you willing to be reduced by infirmities and weaknesses to a condition of absolute nothingness, so long as God is exalted? If you are, then you will be saying continually, "Let God be magnified in my weakness, let His majestic love be seen amid all my sorrows."

17. *But I am poor and needy.* A double expression for a poverty that is doubly felt—perhaps poor in temporals—certainly poor in spirituals! Poor and full of needs, yet with nothing to supply those needs. "I am poor and needy."

17. *Yet.* That is a blessed, "yet."

17. *The Lord thinks upon me.* That is enough for me! If He thinks of me, His thoughts are so kind, generous, wise and practical that He will help me!

17. *You are my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.*

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

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

THE SPARROW AND THE SWALLOW
NO. 3041

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 23, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 30, 1870.

"Yes, the sparrow has found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Your altars, O LORD of Hosts, my King, and my God."
Psalm 84:3.

WHEN David was far away from the services of the Tabernacle, he envied the birds that had built their nests near the sacred shrine. And Christians, in like manner, when they are debarred from the holy associations of Christian fellowship and united worship, always sigh over the lost privilege of meeting with their Brothers and Sisters in Christ. With even greater emphasis we may say that when a Christian loses the realization of the Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the "Minister of the sanctuary and of the true Tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man," then it is, above all other seasons, that he sighs and cries for a renewal of communion with Christ. We would envy any, however poor and insignificant they may be, who can maintain unbroken fellowship with their Lord. And when it falls to our lot, through our own sin or neglect, or in the inscrutable wisdom of Divine Sovereignty, to be, for awhile, spiritually in the dark, seeking our Savior and not finding Him, we would willingly take the place of the godly captive pining in the persecutors' dungeon, or of the dying yet enraptured saint, if we could but once again enjoy the Presence of our Master! This was David's state of heart when he languished for the ancient Tabernacle services or, more probably, when he longed for that communion with his Lord which, perhaps, had been suspended together with his attendance upon the public worship of God's House. It was then, as I believe, that he was inspired to pen this "Pearl of the Psalms," including the verse upon which I am going to try to speak, praying that the Holy Spirit may enable me to utter words which shall be to the profit of both hearers and readers.

It seems that the birds which came to David's mind when he wrote this Psalm had found two things—*houses for themselves* and *nests for their young.* And these two things Christians find in Christ and also, in a certain sense, in the assemblies of His servants for public worship in His name.

I. First, I want to remind you that CHRISTIANS FIND IN CHRIST AND, IN A CERTAIN SENSE, IN THE ASSEMBLIES OF THE FAITHFUL, HOUSES FOR THEMSELVES.

Turn to the text and read—"Yes, the sparrow has found a house." And upon that our first question shall be, *What were those creatures that there found a house?*

Well, they were only sparrows, yet they found a house near the altars of God and, therefore, David envied them. Now, *sparrows are very insignificant things.* "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings?" said Christ to His disciples. And you and I, dear Friends, when we really know ourselves as we are in God's sight, are led to feel that because of our sin, we are even more insignificant than sparrows—and to realize that our being blotted out of the universe would be rather a gain to it than a loss! What unworthy creatures we see ourselves to be when once God pours upon us the bright light of His Word! Then we think that any mercy is too great and any blessing is far too good for us to receive. Yet, as the sparrows were permitted to find their house under the eaves of God's ancient Tabernacle, we, insignificant and worthless as we are, may come and build under the shelter of God's great House of Mercy. There we may find a safe refuge from every danger, a perfect security for all time, and even for all eternity. O you who think yourselves despised and forgotten, remember that the sparrow has found a house on God's altar! Come, then, and see if there is not also space there for you! Jesus said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." And the Apostle Paul, writing under Inspiration, says, "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in His Presence." Therefore, poor despised one, though you feel yourself to be a nobody, come and welcome to the Savior, come to Him with cheerful confidence, for He will not, He *cannot* reject you!

The sparrows were not only very insignificant, they were also *very needy.* They needed a house, they needed a place of shelter—and they found it at God's altar. How needy, also, are we! Though we are insignificant, our needs are anything but insignificant. How much we need! Who can tell what we do not need? Were it not for God's super abounding mercy, we would all be in Hell. Were it not for His unspeakable goodness, we would, this day, have no hope of Grace, no prospect of pardon, no assurance of a holy, happy hereafter in Heaven. Our needs are countless—every moment brings a fresh one—and all the supplies of the past and the present are not sufficient to meet the voracious demands that will come upon us in the future. The sparrow, needy creature that she was, having nothing to bring to God's House, found there a house freely given to her and, you needy souls, the infinite

supply of Divine Mercy in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, is freely given to you! You need not bring anything with you when you come to Christ, only come and trust Him, and all your needs shall be supplied. Whatever your souls can need to bear them safely through the troubles of earth—and bring them to the bliss of Heaven—you shall have it freely given to you if you do but come flying with the wings of faith to find a house and a home in Jesus Christ. At the great altar where Christ was offered as the one Sacrifice for sin forever, the most needy soul that ever lived on the face of the earth will find a hearty welcome!

These sparrows were *uninvited guests,* yet they found a house and took possession of it. And they were never blamed for doing so. But in this verse David seems to *commend* them—he certainly envied them. But, my dear Hearers, you who have never come to the Lord Jesus Christ are not uninvited guests. The Gospel invitation rings through this building every Sabbath day—

"Come and welcome,
Come to Jesus, Sinner, come!"

We not only invite you, but we earnestly press you, in Christ's name, to come and put your trust in His great Sacrifice, assuring you that if you do, you shall find an everlasting and blessed home for your souls. So, as the sparrows came to God's House without an invitation, will not you come to Christ with one? They were bold enough to find a house when no man bade them do so. Therefore will not you be bold enough, trembler though you are, to take what Divine Mercy freely proffers to you? Do you not remember how Agur commends the spider as being "exceedingly wise" because she "takes hold with her hands and is in kings' palaces"? No one ever asked the spider to come into the palace. She was a loathsome creature, quite out of place in a palace, and her web would mar the beauty of the place, yet the spider knew by instinct that a storm was coming on and so sought shelter in the king's palace. There was Solomon's fine house of the forest of Lebanon, and the spider said within herself, "Why should not I, spider though I am, abide here?" So she crept about till she found a window open and in she slipped and made herself at home by taking hold with her hands, first of one wall and then of another, till she found herself at ease! There came along one who said, "Let that spider and her web be removed. What business has she to be here?" But Solomon thought otherwise, so the spider is immortalized in this Book of Proverbs, because of her wisdom in taking hold with her hands even on the walls of a royal palace!

O Soul, perhaps you are consciously to yourself as loathsome as that spider was, and the King's great House of Mercy seems too fair a place for you to enter! You ask, unbelievingly, "Shall I ever be made a saint? Shall I ever be cleansed from sin? Shall I ever be taken up to dwell with the great King in Heaven?" Talk not so, but rather see whether you

cannot find an entrance into the King's palace! And if you can find it, go in! Surely there is a window open for you where it is written by the King, Himself, as I reminded you just now, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Then there is another window where the King has hung up the invitation, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Does not that invite you? Come in, poor spider-sinner! Take hold of the walls of Christ's great House of Love and Mercy, and I can assure you that my royal Master will not be angry with you! But when He sees you there, He will immortalize you in His "Book of Life." You shall have a name and a place there and He will think you wise, not intrusive, in daring to believe Him and to come into His palace, spider-sinner as you are! He delights to have great things thought of Him—and if you will but think great things of His love and mercy, I will guarantee you that you will never think thoughts that shall outstrip the reality, for what He has said is true, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

Let us learn, then, from the sparrow finding her house near to God's altar, that although we are inconsiderable and insignificant, although we are full of needs and although we may even deem ourselves to be uninvited, yet we are at liberty to come to the Savior and find in Him our eternal dwelling place!

Next, *what does the text tell us that these sparrows did?* We should learn something from that.

The text says, "Yes, the sparrow has found a house." Then, first of all, *she looked for it.* The sparrow needed a house and she searched to see where she could find it. One great reason why many do not find salvation is because they do not look for it. Many of them do not even know that they need it or, if they know it as a matter of doctrine, they do not believe it so as to look for it and appropriate it as their own. I feel persuaded that no man ever did sincerely seek salvation, through Jesus Christ, without finding it. I do not believe that among all the lost, there is one who will be able to tell the Lord that he honestly and earnestly sought His mercy, yet did not obtain it. If you have not found Christ, my dear Hearer, it is because you have not sought Him, for He said, "He that seeks, finds, and to him that knocks it shall be opened." I grant you that the blessing may be delayed for awhile—you may be some time in finding peace, perhaps through your ignorance, or through some cherished sin that you have not given up—but if you truly come to the Throne of Grace and cry in real earnest for mercy, as surely as God is in Christ Jesus, He will stretch out His silver scepter toward you and you shall touch it and find Grace in His sight! Be encouraged, O you Seekers, to persevere in your search for salvation! Ask that the aid of the Holy Spirit may be given to you that you may wisely and rightly seek the way of faith and may speedily find it!

Further, "the sparrow found a house"—then *there was a house for her, or she could not have found it.* A traveler in Palestine writes in his journal that as he was wandering among the ruins on the site of the Temple at Jerusalem, he noticed a little bird—known in the Hebrew as *tzippor,* or sparrow—fly out of a crevice between two great stones where the mortar or cement had been removed—and he thought at once of these words, "The sparrow has found a house." That is just what David meant. The sparrow no doubt found a little vacant place, just what she wanted, and in she went and there was her "house" ready-made for her! And let me say to you, O Seeker, that if you would find rest in Christ, there is rest prepared for you in Him! He who has prepared your heart to seek Him has prepared that which you would gladly find. It is not for you to make a salvation for yourself—your salvation is finished and you have but to find it. It is not for you to make an Atonement for yourself—the one Atonement for sin was made, once and for all, on Calvary! It is not for you to make a righteousness for yourself—the righteousness that Christ Jesus worked out for you is perfect and you may not add thereto any supposed righteousness of your own. If you are an honest seeker after Christ, for you there is already prepared by those dear hands that once were pierced for you, the salvation that shall lift you up from the depths of sin to the heights of Glory! As Bunyan said—"Does not your mouth water as you hear this? Do you not say, 'Is all this really prepared for me?' Then why do I not have it?" Ah, why not, why not indeed? In my Master's name, I assure you that "all things are ready" for all who will seek Him, for every soul that will trust Him. If you seek Him not. If you will not believe, there is no mercy for you! But if you seek heartily and trustfully, you shall assuredly find it, for it was prepared for you long ago by Him who has gone to Heaven to prepare Glory, having already prepared Grace for you!

"Yes, the sparrow has found a house." That also means that when she had discovered it, *she appropriated it.* There was the little place, so snug and cozy, just on the warm side of the Tabernacle where the South wind would blow and she would be shielded from the cold—and in went the little bird. She had found it and she took care to make it her own by personal appropriation. Now, we may find Christ, in a sense, so as to know much about Him, to read about Him, to hear about Him and even to understand much about Him, yet not truly find Him. The root of the matter is to get Christ for yourself! In this respect, you must be selfish and you can thus be selfish without being sinful. You must personally lay hold of Christ if you would be saved!

One who desired to teach a little girl this lesson, tried to do it when the child was waiting upon him while he was ill. "Please pour out my medicine, Jane," said the sick man. And when it was poured out, he said to her. "Now, Jane, take that medicine for me." "O Sir!" she said. "I would

willingly do it, if it were the right thing to do, but the medicine would not do you any good if I took it." "You're right," he said, "and as I must personally take the medicine before it can do me good, my child, you must personally believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, or else another person's faith will do you no good." The idea of anything like sponsorship in religion—one person vowing and promising certain things for another—is utterly without any foundation in the Word of God! Religion is wholly and only a *personal* thing—you must repent for yourself, believe for yourself and lay hold on Christ for yourself! It would have been no benefit to that little bird if all other sparrows had found houses for themselves if she, herself, had been driven about, shelterless, in the storm. Oh, no—she must have a house for herself, "and the swallow a nest for herself," where she might lay her young.

You and I, dear Friends, will be wise if we do as this sparrow did, for she found a house for herself because she looked for it. She found it because it was already there for her and she found it by appropriating it so that it became her very own. Thus may we appropriate the Lord Jesus Christ—by an act of faith—and so make Him our very own!

I have, at various times, learned some lessons concerning living by faith. A friend frequently drives me through the streets of London and, one day, when all the cabs and wagons seemed to leave us no room to move, I said to him, more than once, "I am afraid we shall have an accident." When I had said that to him, perhaps for the third time, he put the reins into my hand and said, "Here, if you cannot trust me, drive yourself." Suppose God should say to us when we fear that we are getting into difficulties, "If you cannot trust Me, arrange for yourselves"? What a position we would be in then! If He left the reins in our hands for a single hour, we would be like the one who sought to drive the chariot of the sun and set the world a-blaze! When we leave all in the hands of God—and we must leave all there whether we are willing or not—then we can sing that sweet little song which Luther said that the sparrows always sing—

"Mortal, cease from care and sorrow,
God provides for the morrow."

May we all be able to sing that little song and to sing it to ourselves, too!

We will further prolong this simile by noticing *what the sparrow found.*

"Yes, the sparrow has found a house." The word is a very simple one, but there is much meaning in it. And when we find, in the Lord Jesus Christ, a house for our souls, *we find safety in Him,* even as the sparrow found safety in her "house." When the stormy wind blew all around her, the sparrow felt safe in her house hard by the altar in God's ancient Tabernacle. And when the storm of conscience beats upon us, we feel safe in our hiding place in the altar where Jesus suffered for us! And when the last dreadful storm of Divine Judgment shall come, we shall be safe beneath the shelter of the Atonement that He offered upon Calvary. He that believes in Jesus is safe forever! When the earth and all its works

are burned up and the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, no hurt shall come to the man to whom Jesus is "a hiding place from the wind and a shelter from the tempest."

Next to safety, *we find rest in Christ.* The soul that is out of Christ knows not what true rest is, but, "we who have believed do enter into rest."—

"'Tis done! The great transaction's done!
I am my Lord's, and He is mine!"

My salvation is finished, my sins are pardoned, my security is established by the promise and oath of God, Himself, ratified by the blood of the Everlasting Covenant. If this is your happy condition, you can enjoy the blissful sleep of the Beloved of the Lord, "and the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Just as the little sparrow felt perfectly at rest when she had entered her "house" in the Tabernacle, so do we, come what may, enjoy complete, absolute, unbroken rest when we have truly believed in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You: because he trusts in You!"

Further, a house is *a place of abode.* The sparrow lived in her house in the Tabernacle—and he who finds the Lord Jesus Christ, finds in Him a *spiritual* abode—he lives in Christ. He has heard his Master's blessed command, "Abide in Me," and he desires to dwell there, hard by the pierced heart of Jesus. My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you have not a mere temporary lodging place, out of which you may someday be driven back into the cold world where you used to live. That would be a poor prospect for us—but we need not anticipate such a sad future, for we can say with Moses, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations." And He always will be, blessed be His holy name!

Once more, a house is, or ought to be, *a place of delight.* When a man reaches his home, he is at his ease and can unwind himself. If he is not happy at home, where can he be happy? The little sparrow, when it reaches its home, is perfectly content. Its day's work is over, its day's needs are supplied, and it chirps its evening song of joy. So when we make our abode in Christ our soul is filled with delight! We have a bliss that is not only full to the brim, but it even overflows. Truly happy are those who are Christ's servants, thrice happy are they who are looking alone to His Cross for their salvation!

But the point upon which David seemed to lay the greatest emphasis was that *the sparrow's house was near to God's earthly dwelling place* and oh, when we abide in Christ, how near we are to God! You remember how Christ prayed to His Father concerning His disciples, "That they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You…I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one." No nearness imaginable

can be greater than Christ's nearness to His Father! Yet, as we are in Christ, we are, in His Person, as near even as He is!

I can only spare a minute or so for the secondary meaning which may be found in our text. *In a certain sense, Christians, like the sparrow, find a house in the assemblies of the saints.*

When the sparrow went to her house in the Tabernacle, she never needed to be driven there, but she went there of her own accord. And I trust that when we came up to our solemn assemblies, we need nothing to compel us to come, but that our own delightful remembrances of fellowship with God, in seasons past, make us long for the renewal of such seasons again and again! I hate to see people going to any place of worship as if they were being marched off to jail. But I rejoice to see them come up to the House of God with alacrity and holy joy, and with fleet footsteps as if they were delighted to think that the time had come when they could once more unite with their Brothers and Sisters in worship before the Throne of the Most High God. If you, like the sparrow, have found a house in God's House, you will go there with joy! And when you are there, you will be happy to be there. And when the service is over, you will wish that it had to begin again and you will long for the time when you will reach that city of God—

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

There are many poor people here who scarcely ever have any peace except when they are sitting in this House of Prayer and who find here the richest enjoyments they ever know. I know some of God's afflicted children who have but little sacred mirth except when the holy hymn goes up in glorious peals to Heaven and they can join in it—

"Then they forget their pains a while,
And in the pleasure lose the smart."

Cultivate more and more your love for the assemblies of the saints! We have no reverence for bricks and mortar, stones and wood, glass and iron—we do not believe in the sanctity of any one place above others—but we have a reverence for the living Temple of God, built up of living men and living women whose hearts are sanctified by the Holy Spirit! And we can say of their assemblies—

"I have been there, and still will go,
'Tis like a little Heaven below"—

and we can also say—

"There my best friends, my kindred dwell,
There God my Savior reigns."

The sparrow has found a house and we too have found a house, where God's people meet, and of that house we sing—

"Here do I find a settled rest,
While others go and come,
No more a stranger or a guest,
But like a child at home."

II. After a man is himself saved, his first anxiety, if he is a father, will be concerning his children. The next clause of the text will be helpful to such parents—"The swallow (has found) a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Your altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King, and my God." Every Christian should think that what is good for himself is good for his children! He who does not labor and pray for the salvation of his own offspring has good reason to doubt whether he knows the Grace of God, himself. Believing parents cry, with Thomas Hastings—

"God of mercy, hear our prayer
For the children You have given!
Let them all Your blessings share,
Grace on earth, and bliss in Heaven."

Children should early be brought to the House of God! To keep to the figure of the text, THE ASSEMBLIES OF THE SAINTS SHOULD BE A NEST FOR OUR LITTLE ONES.

First, *because they are safe there.* At any rate, you need not fear that they will be hurt when they are where God is being worshipped in spirit and in truth. In the Sunday school, under the loving tuition of godly people, they will be safe. We never feel any need to ask whether they will be in a place of danger when we take them with us where Christ is preached and His Gospel is simply, earnestly and faithfully proclaimed. Bring, then, your children with you to the House of God, for it is a place where you may expect that your little ones, as well as yourselves, will be blessed.

The "swallow" is expressed, in the Hebrew, by a word which signifies liberty. It is the bird of freedom. It is not to be caged. Even a whole continent does not give room enough for its rapid, untiring flight over hill and dale, mountain and plain, so it crosses the ocean and flies to other lands far away. The swallow is the bird of liberty, yet David writes of one that found her nest where she might lay her young at God's altar—and if you want your children to be truly free, train them in the fear of God and the love of His Truth. The spirit of liberty will always be maintained in this land as long as we have the open Bible, the family altar and the training up of our children in the way that they should go. But take these things away and Popery will again enchain our country and bring back the curse from which our fathers set free our land even at the cost of their own lives!

Further, *the nest is a place of delight to the little birds* and so ought the House of God to be to children. And so it would be if preachers would always seek to make their language simple and would illustrate what they have to say so that the children can comprehend it. It is a bad sign concerning any man's ministry when the children do not understand him! I always look upon it as being one of the highest compliments I ever receive when I see some little boy's or girl's bright eyes, that are all too apt to wander here and there, fixed upon me while they seem to be

drinking in what I have to say. There is a great lack in the preachers of the present day in this respect—we need to have the Master's words to Peter, "Feed My lambs," as well as the command, "Feed My sheep," more and more impressed upon our hearts! May you, Beloved, find a place of prayer for your children where it shall be their delight to go with you and to join intelligently in the worship of God.

When you take them there—as I have already hinted to you, *they are in the way that the blessing is often given.* I do not say that they will all be saved through coming to God's House, but if they are there with you, He who called you by His Grace, may also call them. And that ever-blessed Spirit who led you to find the Savior may also lead them to Him. Bring them to Bethesda, "the house of mercy," and pray to Christ to say to them, as He said to the impotent man, "Will you be made whole?...Rise...and walk." At any rate, do not let your children miss the blessing through neglecting to use the means which the Lord has blessed to you and to many others, both old and young.

Your children, if you take them with you to God's House, will be like the swallows in this respect, *they will be pretty sure to return to the nest even if they leave it for awhile.* Though the swallows may fly over the deep blue sea to the lands that are far away, yet when the next season comes, they find their way back again to the old nest and home. So, though some of our sons and daughters may grow up and leave the House of God for awhile, they cannot altogether forget it. The recollection of their father's prayers and of their mother's tears will follow them wherever they roam. Refrain your eyes from weeping, dear mothers! Your sons and daughters shall come back again! Possibly, when you sleep beneath the clods of the valley, they will recollect what they heard when, as children, you took them with you to the House of God. Words that have been forgotten for 50 years may yet ring in their souls and lead to their eternal salvation! At any rate, as the swallows found a nest for their young at God's altar, mind that you Christian parents make the House of God your children's house. Associate them, as far as you can, with all that is going on there so that they shall feel at home when they go with you to the place where you worship the Lord and serve Him.

But after all it is not the main thing to merely bring our children to the House of God—oh, *that we could bring them to Christ!* That is where we long to lay our young, for only there shall they be truly safe, happy and blessed! Christian parents, can you rest content as long as your children are unconverted? I am ashamed of you if you can! Do you say that you hope they will be converted in future years? I hope so, too, but are you not concerned that they are out of Christ *now*? Perhaps you remind me of what I said just now, that your instruction may be blessed to their salvation long after you have been called Home. Yes, I recollect that I said that and I do not wish to withdraw what I said—yet I would like to ask whether you are willing to run the fearful risk of your children dying

unsaved? The objective of parents, preachers and teachers should be that children should be saved while they are children! That while they are yet young their names should be enrolled in the army of the Church militant!

How can we lay our children before Christ, as the swallow laid her young before God's altar? I answer, first, *by prayer.* The Lord will hear our prayers for our children as He heard our fathers' prayers for us. *Example* will also help toward the end we have in view—godly example at home. And *personal precept* will also help. We must talk to our children, one by one, alone, about their souls. I am afraid that some of you parents do not do this. But if you do not see your children grow up to do what is right, you will have to blame yourselves because you never personally pleaded with them to flee from the wrath to come. I know that the words of my father with me, alone, when he prayed for me and bade me pray for myself—not to use any form of prayer, but to pray just as I felt and to ask from God what I felt that I really needed—left an impression upon my mind that will never be erased. I have heard of an idiot who was one day scouring a brass plate to get the name out. But the more he scoured, the more clearly it shone! And when the devil tries to erase the impressions made upon my mind and heart by my mother's tears and my father's prayers, he is as much like an idiot as he possibly could be, for, let him scour as he may, those impressions will never be removed, but will continue to shine yet more brightly!

Do, dear Christian parents, resolve that if your children perish, it shall not be through any fault of yours. But why should they perish? Why should I suppose that such a thing is possible? "The promise is *unto you, and to your children,* and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Did not Paul and Silas say to the jailer at Philippi, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and *you shall be saved, and your house*"? Do not be content with being saved yourselves! Say, "No, my Master, I cannot be put off with half Your promise—it is, 'and your house,' and I would gladly have it all, and see my children—and if I live long enough, their children, too, all encompassed in the arms of Your love and all of them saved." Brothers and Sisters, if you are like the sparrow, and have found a house, now be like the swallow and find not only a nest for yourself, but a place where you may lay your young, even God's altar upon which Christ offered His great atoning Sacrifice.

I wonder what other birds are represented here. Alas! Alas! I fear that I am addressing some who will not heed what I have been saying. They are not like the sparrow and the swallow. Perhaps they are like the eagle that was far too ambitious to think of building her nest anywhere near God's altar—too fond of soaring and struggling, too fond of high and lofty things. But there will come a time when the pride of man shall be laid low. Beware, beware, you who are like the eagle! Possibly there is one

here who is like the vulture—far too foul to think of building in God's House! He is fond of everything that is unclean—wicked amusements and sinful pleasures, which are sadly miscalled, "pleasures." Ah, the time will come when sin will be as bitter to you as now it is sweet! Yes, and far more so, for it "will eat as does a canker." When you come to the dregs of the cup of sinful pleasure, you shall find that there is Hell in them and that forever! Or, perhaps there is one here who is like the cormorant who will not build on God's House because he is far too greedy after the world, seeking to gather gold and to amass property. Ah, Sir! Have you never heard of the rich fool whose soul was required of him the very night on which he boasted of his wealth? Play not you the fool, but be willing to leave all those things and come and seek enduring riches!

If you do not care for your own souls, it must seem to you an idle task for me to talk to you about your children, yet I will venture to say to any unconverted person here that it will increase his misery intolerably to see his children lost through his own example! If you must perish—if you are resolved to perish—why need you drag your child down with you? If you must drink, why need that boy of yours be taught the base habit into which you have fallen? If you will swear, do not let your child hear you. I would not have you swear at all, but if you will do so, why should your child learn from you to curse and blaspheme God? O Sirs, you will find it dreadful enough to perish, yourselves, but to bring down one, two, three—I know not how many children you have—to bring them down, one after the other to that same place of awful and eternal misery—what a terrible increase to your own wretchedness! You could not look at your dear child's face and then do him harm. I know that you would not touch him so as to break a bone, or do his body any injury. No, you pat his curly head, and say, "God bless you!" Yes, but why do you then do injury to his soul by your evil example? Why do you take your boy where you know he will learn no good and much harm? How dare you take him to places where the amusement is defiled and defiling, lascivious, unclean? No, if you really mean it when you say, "God bless my boy!" then live so that *you* will bless him by your example! May you be saved yourself, and then may you be a true parent to your children for immortality as well as for time! May these words abide with you and God bless them, so that we and our children may meet in Heaven, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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

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

THE PARABLE OF THE ARK
NO. 3042

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 30, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 17, 1856.

"And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life."
Genesis 7:15.

CHRIST always taught by parables. Hence the popularity and the power of His teaching. The masses never were and perhaps, never will be, able to receive instruction in any other way than by parabolic illustrations. He who would be a successful minister must open his mouth in parables. He who would win the hearts of the multitude must closely imitate his Master and preach in parables which all men can understand. I believe there are few living men who are able to devise a parable. Those who do possess this rare ability are very scarce, indeed. Nor do I profess to belong to the honorable confraternity. I have sometimes endeavored to fashion a parable and though I found it easy, at times, to manufacture a figure, yet a parable I can by no means make. I am happy to say it is not required of me to do so, for God's Word, if it is rightly used, is suggestive of a thousand parables! And I have no reason to fear that I shall be short of subjects for preaching when I am able to find such parables as I do in God's Word.

I shall preach to you this evening a parable. It shall be the parable of the ark. While I do so, you must understand that the ark was a real thing—that it was really made to float upon the waters and carry in it Noah and his family and "two and two of all flesh." This is a fact, not a myth. But I shall take this real fact and use it as a parable. Making the ark represent salvation, I shall preach to all who are within sound of my voice the parable of the ark. The ark, which saved from the floods of water, is a beautiful picture of Jesus Christ as the means of salvation, by whom multitudes of all flesh are preserved and saved from perishing in the floods of eternal Perdition!

I. First, then, in working out this parable I shall remark that THERE IS BUT ONE MEANS OF SALVATION.

The ark of gopher wood in the one case, and the Person of Christ in the other case, sets forth the one only means that was ever planned or provided by God. The whole world was drowned except those happy ones who were found in the ark. The mightiest beast and the tiniest insect, the stately elephant and the loathsome reptile, the fleet horse and the creeping snail, the graceful antelope and the ugly toad—every living

substance that was upon the face of the ground was involved in one common doom—save those only who were preserved alive in the ark! The noblest animals, endowed with the finest instincts, were all drowned, despite their powers of swimming (if they were not fish), save those only who were sheltered in the ark. The strongest-winged fowls that ever cut the air were all wearied in their flight and fell into the water, save those only that were housed in the ark. The proudest tenants of the forests—those that ranged fearlessly in the broad light of day or those that prowled stealthily under the cover of night. The strongest, the mightiest—all were swallowed up in the vast abyss, save those only that were commanded of God to hide themselves within the shelter of the ark.

Even so, in the application of my parable, there is only one way of salvation for all men living under Heaven. There is only one name whereby they can be saved. Would you be saved, rich man? There is no way but that whereby the poverty-stricken pauper is also to be saved! Would you be delivered, man of intelligence? You shall be saved in the same way as the most ignorant! "There is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. There were not two arks, but one ark—so there are not two Saviors, but one Savior. There was no other means of salvation except the ark—so there is no plan of deliverance except by Jesus Christ the Savior of sinners! In vain you climb the lofty top of Sinai—fifteen cubits upwards shall the waters prevail! In vain you climb to the highest pinnacles of your self-conceit and your worldly merit—you shall be drowned—drowned beyond the hope of salvation for, "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Would those in my congregation be saved? They must all be saved by one way! Do they object to Christ as the plan of salvation? Then they must be damned, for there is no other hope for them! Do they think this too hard? Do they think the revealed plan of salvation too humbling? Then they must sink, even as the sons of Adam sank beneath the mighty flood and all flesh was utterly consumed by the overwhelming billows. There is but one way! Enter into the ark! Take refuge in Christ, for only thus can you be saved! But, "how shall you escape if you neglect so great a salvation?" By what means shall you secure your souls, or your bodies? What plans can you devise for your security? Your refuges shall prove to be refuges of lies! The wind, the rain, the hail and the tempest shall destroy them. There is one Savior, and there is only one.

II. Proceeding with my parable, I must direct your attention to THE SIZE OF THIS ARK, for this may be comforting to you.

If you read the 15th verse of the 6th Chapter, you will find that the ark was of immense size. "The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits." It is an old objection of infidels that there was not room enough in it for all kinds of creatures that lived on the face of the earth, but we know, on Divine authority, that if there had not been room enough in it for all the different kinds of creatures which were then alive, they would have been

drowned. Yet of every kind some were safely housed so that room enough was found for them all. This is not very logical, perhaps you will say, but it is conclusive enough for us if we believe in Revelation. Yet there really is no reason for anyone to make the objection and we have no room to entertain it, since the most eminent calculators have proved to demonstration that the vessel called the ark was of immense size and was able, not merely to hold all the creatures, but all the provender they would require for the year during which it floated on the water!

I use this idea, without stopping to expound it further, to trace its analogy as a beautiful picture of the plan of salvation. Oh, what a capacious plan! The ark was a great ark, which held all kinds of creatures—and our Christ is a Great Refuge who saves all kinds of sinners! The ark was an immense vessel—in it floated a multitude of animals which were saved. Christ's salvation is an immense salvation and in it there shall be delivered a multitude which no man can number! The narrow-minded bigot limits salvation to his own contracted notions and he still says, "There shall none be saved except they walk arm-in-arm with me." Poor little miserable soul! He cuts his coat according to his own fashion and declares that if men do not all cut their coats in the same way, they cannot be saved. But the Bible preaches a great salvation! It says there is a multitude that no man can number who shall stand before the Throne of God. Here is assembled a multitude of sinners, but if you all feel your need of a Savior, there is room enough for you in Heaven! Here is a multitude of hearers, but if every one of you should come to Christ, with real penitence in your hearts and true belief in Him, you would find that there was room enough for you all! That saying is still true, "And yet there is room." There is not room enough for a Pharisee, for a man who does not feel himself a sinner, or for a hypocrite. No, nor for a formalist, but there is room enough for every convicted sinner under God's Heaven! Our Redeemer is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. He is able to save all of you! If the Father, who has sent Him, draws you, and you come unto Him, doubt not that there is room for you! Do not think, Beloved, because we preach election, that we preach the election of a few! I find that this is a common mistake. Someone will say to me, "I don't like your Calvinism, Sir, because it says that there are a few elected and that nobody else will be saved."

No, Sir, but it does *not* say any such thing! It says they are a multitude that no man can number who have been elected! And who knows but what you are one of them? Calvinism gives you ten thousand times more reason for hope than the Arminian preacher who stands up and says, "There is room for everybody, but I do not think there is any special Grace to make them come. If they won't come, they won't come, and that is the end of it. It is their own fault and God will not make them come." The Word of God says they cannot come, yet the Arminian says they can. The poor sinner feels that he cannot, yet the Arminian declares

positively that he could if he wanted to. And though the poor sinner feels sometimes that he would if he could, and groans over his inability, this blind guide tells him it is all nonsense! Whereas, it is, in truth, God's own work. You must feel it and you may plead against yourself on account of it, but you *shall come* for all that. He will not plead against you, but He will put strength in you. There is more hope for you in the pure Gospel of the blessed God than there is in those fancies and fictions of men which are nowadays preached everywhere, except in a few places where God has reserved unto Himself a people who have not bowed their knee to the Baal of the age!

III. In the third place, note that THE ARK WAS A SAFE REFUGE.

Noah was commanded to make an ark of gopher wood and, lest there should be any leakage in it, he was commanded to "pitch it within and without with pitch." The ark had no harbor to go to and we never read that Noah called up Shem, Ham and Japheth to work at the pumps, nor yet that they had any, for there was not a leak in her. No doubt there were storms during that year, but we do not hear that the ship was ever in danger of being wrecked. The rocks, it is true, were too low down to touch her bottom, for, "fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail, and the mountains were covered." Rising 27 feet above the loftiest mountains, she had no quicksands to fear—they were too deep below her keel. But of course she was exposed to the winds. Sometimes the hurricane might have rattled against her and driven her along. Doubtless, at another time, the hail beat on her top, and the lightning scarred the brow of night, but the ark sailed on, not one was cast out from her, nor were her sailors wearied with constant pumping to keep out the water, or frequent repairs to keep her secure. Though the world was inundated and ruined, that one ark sailed triumphantly above the waters! The ark was safe and all who were in her were safe, too.

Now, Sinner, the Christ I preach to you is such a refuge as that. His Gospel has no flaw in it. As the ark never sank, and the elements never prevailed against it, so Christ never failed. He cannot fail. All the principalities and powers are subject to Him. Those who are in Christ are sheltered from every storm. They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hands. Remember that God gave the pattern and Noah perfected the work of the ark before a single fountain of the great deep was broken up, or one drop of the desolating storm fell from the vengeful clouds. And it is not less true that our glorious Lord was set up in the counsels of eternity, a perfect Christ before the clouds of vindictive wrath began to brew on account of man's iniquity! And His mighty work of mediation was finished before your poor soul was invited to take shelter in Him. Oh, I think as the angels looked out of the windows of Heaven upon the swelling tide and saw how securely the ark rode upon its surface, they never doubted that all who were inside were as safe as the ark itself—and is there any reason to doubt that those who are in Christ are as safe as Christ? "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion which cannot be removed, but abides forever." They that

trust in the Lord are blessed! They are like trees planted by rivers of water—their leaf shall not wither and whatever they do shall prosper. If you once come to Jesus and trust in Him, there is no fear of your sinking! There will be storms, tempests will beat around you—these you will be sure to have—but you will be too high up ever to strike on the rocks. If you are once on board the Good Ship of Salvation, you will be lifted up too high above the floods to be swallowed in the quicksands. With cheerful heart I can "commend you to God, and to the word of His Grace." Christ will preserve you!

Believers, could you give up to anybody the Doctrine of your Security in Christ? No, I know you could not. Touch one of my Brothers or Sisters in the Lord who attends this Chapel on that point and you will soon get your answer. I have sometimes heard disputes outside the chapel door, when some who do not believe that Truth of God, have been disputing it, and I have felt confident that I might leave its defense in your hands. There are mighty men of valor among you who are not ashamed to uphold the whole counsel of God, even as I am constantly anxious to declare it!

IV. Now I go to another part of the parable. The creatures in the ark, of course, needed light—but it is a singular thing that THERE WAS ONLY ONE WINDOW IN THE ARK.

In the 16th verse of the 6th Chapter we read, "A window shall you make for the ark." I have often wondered how all the creatures could see through one window, but I have not wondered what was meant by it, for I think it is easy to point the moral. There is only one window whereby Christians ever get their Light of God. All who come to Christ and receive salvation by Him are illuminated in one way. That one window of the ark may fitly represent to us *the ministry of the Holy Spirit.* There is only one Light which lightens every man who comes into the world, if he is lightened at all. Christ is the Light and it is the Holy Spirit of truth by whom Christ is revealed. Thus we discern sin, righteousness and judgment. No other conviction is of any real value. As we are brought under the teaching of the Spirit, we perceive our guilt and misery—and our redemption and refuge in Christ! There is only one window to the ark. "Why," says one, "there are some of us who see light through one minister and some through another." True, my Friend, but still, there is only one window. We ministers are only like panes of glass and you can obtain no light through us but by the operations of the same Spirit that works in us. And even then, the different panes of glass give different shades of light. There you have your fine polished preacher—he is a bit of stained glass, not very transparent, made to keep the light out rather than to let it in! There is another pane. He is a square-cut diamond. He seems an old-fashioned preacher, but he is a bit of good glass, and lets the light through. Another one is cut after a more refined style, but he is plain and simple, and the light shines through him. But there is only one light and only one window! He who reveals to us "the light of the

knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" is the Holy Spirit. We have only one Instructor if we preach the Truth of God. One Brother may be preaching this night in the Church of England, another may be holding forth the Word of God among the Independents and others among the Baptists, but they have only one Spirit if they are taught of God. There was only one window to the ark and though there were first, second, and third stories to the ark, all saw out of one window. And the little saint who is on the first story, gets light through the one window of the Spirit. And the saint who has been brought up to the second story, gets light through the same window. And he who has been promoted to the loftiest story has to get light through the same window, too! There is no other means of our seeing except through the one window made to the ark, the window of the Holy Spirit! Have we looked through that? Have we seen the clear blue sky above us? Or have we known that when our eye of faith was dim and we could see nothing at all, still our Master was at the helm and would preserve us through all our darkness and difficulties?

V. Now, if you will read the chapter (Gen 6) attentively, you will find it said, "ROOMS shall you make in the ark" (Gen 6:14).

When I read that, I thought it would serve for a point in the parable, seeing that it may teach my dear friends that they are not all to be put together—in the ark, rooms were made. Those who lived in one room did not stand or sit with those who lived in another—but they were all in the same ark. So I have sometimes thought—"There are our Wesleyan friends, some of them love the Lord. I have no doubt they are in the ark, though they do not occupy the same apartment as we do. There are our Baptist friends who love the Lord—we welcome them in our room. Then there are our Independent friends, those also love the Lord. They are in another room and our Presbyterian and Episcopalian Brothers and Sisters—in all these various sections are some who are called of God and brought into the ark—though they are in different rooms." But, Beloved, they are all in one ark. There are not two Gospels. As long as I can find a man who holds the same Gospel, it does not matter what order of church government he adopts if he is in Christ Jesus—it is of little consequence what room he is in so long as he is in the ark. If he belongs to those of whom it is written, "By Grace are you saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God," I will call him Brother.

We cannot all expect to be in one room. The elephants did not live with the tigers and the lions did not lie down with the sheep. There were different rooms for different classes of creatures—and it is a good thing there are different denominations, for I am sure some of us would not get on very comfortably with certain denominations. We would need more liberty than we could get in the Church of England. We would want more freedom than we could get with the Presbyterians. We would need more soundness of Doctrine than we could get with the Wesleyans, and we would want a little more brotherly love, perhaps, than we could get with some of the Strict Baptists. We could not entirely agree with them all.

And happy is he who can sometimes put his head into one room, and sometimes into another, and can say to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, "Grace be with you all, so long as you are but in the Ark."

VI. But though there were many rooms in the ark, I want you to notice that THERE WAS ONLY ONE DOOR.

It is said, "And the door of the ark shall you set in the side thereof." And there is only one door into the ark of our salvation, and that is Christ. There are not two Christs preached—one in one chapel and another in another. "If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that which you have received, let him be accursed." There is but one Gospel. We take in the righteous out of all sections, but we do not take in all sections! We pick out the godly from among them all, for we believe "there is a remnant according to the election of Grace" in the vilest of them. But still, there is only one door—and "he that enters not by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber."

There was only one door to the ark. Some animals, like the giraffe, whose heads are higher than those of other animals, might have to bow their necks to go in by the same entrance as the waddling ducks which naturally stoop, even as they enter a barn. And so the lofty ones of this world must bend *their stiff neck*s and bow their proud heads if they would enter into the Church by Christ. The swift horse and the slow-paced snail must enter by one door. So too the scribes and Pharisees must come in the same way as the publicans and harlots or be forever excluded. All the beasts God had chosen went in by the one door—and if any had stood outside and said, "We shall not enter in that way," they would have been standing outside till the flood overtook and destroyed them, for there was only one door. There is only one way of salvation and there is only one means of getting into it—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." But "he that believes not," whoever he may be, must "be damned." There is no hope of any other way of salvation! He that comes in by the door shall be saved—and Jesus says, "I am the door."

VII. Proceeding in the parable, you will notice that THIS ARK HAD SUNDRY STORIES IN IT. They were not all of one height—there were lower, second and third stories.

This is, to me, a figure of the different kinds of Christians who are carried to Heaven. There is my poor mourning Brother who lives in the bottom story. He is always singing—

"Lord, what a wretched land is this!"

He lives just near the keel, on the bare ribs of the ark. He is never very happy. At times a little light reaches him from the window, but generally he is so far from the light that he walks in darkness and sees very little, indeed. His state is that of constant groaning—he loves to go and hear "*the corruption preachers.*" He revels with delight in the deep experience of the tried family of God. He likes to hear it said, "We must, through much tribulation, enter into the Kingdom of God." If you paint the

Christian life as a very gloomy one, he will like your picture, for his is gloomy, indeed. He is always poring over texts such as this, "O, wretched man that I am!" He is down in the lower story of the ark. But never mind—he is in the ark, so we will not scold him, though he has little faith and very much doubt. "With lower, second, and third stories shall you make it." There is one of our Brothers who is up a little higher and he is saying, "I cannot exactly say that I am safe, yet I have a hope that my head will be kept above the billows, though it goes hard with me at times. Now and then, too, the Lord bestows 'some drops of Heaven' upon me. Sometimes, I am like the mountains of Zion, where 'the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore.'" He is in the second story, but he is no safer, though he is happier, than the man on the ground floor! All are safe so long as they are in the ark! Yet, for my part, I like the uppermost story best. I had rather live up there where I can sing, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise." I love the place where the saints are "teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."

I confess that I am obliged to go down to the lower story sometimes, but I like running up the ladder to the third deck, yet I am no more safe when I am in the top story than I am when I am in the bottom one. The same wave that would split the ship and drown me, were I in the lowest story, would drown me if I were in the highest. However high some of us and, however low others of us may be, the same vessel bears us all, for we are one crew in one boat—and there is no dividing us. Come, then, my poor desponding Hearer, is that your place, somewhere down at the bottom of the hold, along with the ballast? Are you always in trials and troubles? Ah, well, fear not, so long as you are in the ark! Do not be afraid. Christ is your strength and righteousness. The ark was, in each and every department, a secure shelter to all who were shut in!

"Ah," says one, "but I am down there, Sir, always at the bottom, and I am afraid the vessel will sink." Do not be so silly! Why should your heart beget such fears? I knew a man who went up the Monument and when he had got half way, he declared that it vibrated and was about to fall, and he would come down. But the Monument has not fallen. It is as safe as ever and if 50 like he, or fifty thousand, went up, the Monument would be just as firm! But some poor nervous Christians are afraid Christ will let them sink. A wave comes against the side of the ship, but it does not hurt the ship, it only drives the wedges in more tightly. The Master is at the helm—will not that assure your heart? It has floated over so many billows—will not that increase your confidence? It must, indeed, be a strong billow that will sink it! No, there never shall be such an one! And where, do you think, is the power that could destroy the souls who are sheltered in the Ark of our salvation? Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect, since Christ has died and God the Father has justified us? Happy assurance! We are all safe, so surely as we are in the Ark of the Covenant. The ark floated triumphantly on amidst all the dangers and when it finally rested on Mount Ararat and God spoke to

Noah, saying, "Go forth of the ark, you, and your wife, and your sons, and your sons' wives with you. Bring forth with you every living thing that is with you," the inventory was complete and all were safely landed. So, too, will Christ present the perfect number of all His people to the Father in The Last Day—not one shall perish!

VIII. This brings me to notice, in the last place, THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF ANIMALS THAT ENTERED INTO THE ARK. Listen to the statement—"Of every clean beast you shall take to you by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female."

This great ark was meant to save both clean and unclean beasts! In like manner, the great salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ is intended for sinners of all kinds, the clean and the unclean. There are some people in the world whom we may well reckon in the former class. They are in every way respectable. Their conduct in society is beyond reproach—exact in their commerce, they were never known to erase a figure in their account books—they would not defraud their neighbors, nor would they be so negligent of their fair fame as to do a disorderly action. Their character is so amiable that their mothers might regard them from childhood as almost without a fault. They have grown up to mature years without the hideous taint of immorality—their practice has been always akin to piety. Their zeal for the Law of God has been truly commendable so that Christ, Himself, might have looked on them and loved them, although He would have tenderly and pitifully admonished them as He said to the young man who came to Him, "One thing you lack." Yes, but the desolations of the flood are so universal that there is no escape except in the ark. The clean beasts must go into the ark to be saved—and there is not a soul among you so good, nor a character so clean—but you have need of Christ, whether you know your need or not! You may be ever so good and excellent but you will need a Savior. There is something about your character that is not clean. Your lives require purification which you can never find except in Christ.

But then the unclean beasts went in likewise. Here is the opposite class. Are there not some of you, (we know there are), whose education from early childhood has been vicious—certainly not virtuous? From your earliest recollections you have gone into the paths of open profanity. You have dived into the kennel and have steeped yourselves up to the very lips in the gall of bitterness. You have been drunks, swearers, Sabbath-breakers and injurious. You have indulged in all kinds of iniquities. You are just the sort of persons we should liken to unclean beasts. Yes—then the ark was built on purpose for you, too! The most moral man will stand no better when he comes before God than you will. He must be saved just as you are. You must both be saved by the one common salvation, or not at all. There is but one Savior for all who are saved—there is but one Redemption for everyone of you who really is redeemed. There is but one ark for the clean and the unclean!

"Ah," says someone, "I suppose, then, the unclean beasts come from the courts, the alleys and the filthy slums of the metropolis." Oh, no, not particularly so! We can find the unclean as plentifully in St. James's as in St. Giles's. There are some in what you call "the higher circles" who, from infancy, have reveled in vice. Soon did you learn to break the rule of your parents' authority. You laughed at your mother's tears, you sneered at your father's counsels—you drank up iniquity in your schooldays, as the greedy ox drinks up water. You made a boast of your wild riots. You tell of your wickedness, now, with an air of impertinent triumph. You brag of having sowed your wild oats. So infamous has been your career, in spite of good example and education, that I suppose, "Newgate" could hardly produce a class of unclean beasts more to be loathed than you are!

Well, now, to each class of sinners I preach. If you feel and deplore your uncleanness, there is mercy for you, unclean as you are. I beseech you, come into the Ark and you will never be turned out! If God shall compel you to come as He did those creatures, He will never, never drive you away. The ark was for the unclean as well as for the clean—for the swine as well as for the sheep—for the poisonous asp as well as for the harmless dove—for the carnivorous raven as well as for the turtle-dove. All creatures came in—some of every sort. You swinish sinner, one of Satan's hogs, come in and you shall be safe! And you lamb-like sinner, gentle and mild, come in, for there is no other Ark for you, and you will be drowned unless you come in by the same door into the great Ark of salvation!

Let us divide these creatures once more. *There were creeping things and there were flying things.* On the morning when the ark door was opened, you might have seen, in the sky, a pair of eagles, a pair of sparrows, a pair of vultures, a pair of ravens, a pair of hummingbirds, pairs of all kinds of birds that ever cut the azure, that ever floated on wing, or whispered their song to the evening gales. In they came. But if you had watched down on the earth, you would have seen come creeping along a pair of snails, a pair of snakes and a pair of worms. There ran along a pair of mice. There came a pair of lizards and in there flew a pair of locusts. There were pairs of creeping creatures as well as pairs of flying creatures. Do you see what I mean by that? There are some of you who can fly so high in knowledge that I should never be able to scan your great and extensive wisdom—and others of you so ignorant that you can hardly read your Bibles. Never mind! The eagle must come down to the door and the ant must go up to it. There is only one entrance for you all—and as God saved the birds that flew, so He saved the reptiles that crawled!

Are you a poor, ignorant, crawling creature that never was noticed—without intellect, without repute, without fame, without honor? Come along, crawling one! God will not exclude you! I have often wondered how the poor snail crawled in, but I daresay he started many a year before! And some of you have started for years and still you keep crawling on.

Ah, then, come along with you, poor snail! If I could just pick you up and help you on a yard or two, I would be glad to do it. It is strange how long you have been near to the Ark, but not yet in—how long you have been near the portals of the Church, but never joined it.

Remark again, *they all got in.* Do not fear if you are, in your own esteem, a crawling reptile—you may have the lowest possible opinion of yourself—still come! Nobody forbids you to come, however mean you are! Yes, and the meaner you are, the more willing do I feel to invite you, for Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance! What a strange assemblage was there that morning! But Noah was positively commanded to bring all sorts of creatures into the ark. He might have thought some too vile and worthless to preserve, yet his orders were to bring them in. When Peter was commanded to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, God showed him in a vision, "all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air," and said to him, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." "Not so, Lord," said Peter, "for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." And, lo, "the Voice spoke unto him again the second time, What God has cleansed, that call you not common." In Christ there are some out of every nation, kindred, tongue and people who shall be saved to the praise of God and the Lamb forever and ever!

Moreover, it was a mysterious impulse by which God moved the creatures to come. The sight must have been imposing—the elephants, the camels, the giraffes, the rhinoceroses and all the huge creatures walking in side by side (as it were) with the timorous hares, the tiny mice, the lizards, ferrets, squirrels, beetles, grasshoppers and all such insignificant-looking little creatures. So it has been in the Church of Christ and so it shall be to the end of her history—"As many as were ordained to eternal life believed," though their characters, by nurture, were as various as this globe has ever witnessed—rude as barbarism's foulest sink, or polished as Grecian culture ever knew!

Now, dear Hearer, I do not care about asking you who you are, or what you are—that has nothing to do with me. What I ask you is—*Are you in the Ark, or are you not?* You are saying, perhaps, "Sir, I do not care for you—why should you enquire about my condition?" But there will be a day when you will be like those who spoke to Noah and said, "Go along, old graybeard—build your ark on the dry land, like a fool, as you are—build your ark there on the hillside where the waters cannot come. As for us, we shall eat and drink and if, tomorrow we die, what will it matter, for we have eaten and drunk the merrier while we have had the opportunity." In vain did Noah warn them that the waters would surely come. He seemed to them as one to mock, and they laughed at him. Even so, when I preached to you, this morning, of the Resurrection, [Sermon #s66, 67, Volume 2—THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org] some of you may have mocked and thought that I was but pursuing a wild reverie of imagination. Ah, but how different was their tune when the rain fell and "the same day all the

fountains of the great deep were broken up"! They doubtless changed their notes when the clouds began to empty themselves in fury, when the very earth did crack, and its heart was dissolved and the mighty fluid gushed up to devour them all! Did they think Noah was a fool when the last man stood on the last mountaintop and cried in vain for help?

I saw, some time ago, a picture which I think time will never erase from my memory. It was a picture of a man who had been climbing up to the top of the last mountain and the floods were coming around him. He had his old father on his back. His wife was clasping him round his waist and he had one arm round her. She held one child at her breast and with her other hand she grasped another. In the picture one child was represented as just letting go, the wife dropping and the father clinging to a tree on the top of the hill. The branches were breaking and it was being torn up by the roots. Such a scene of agony I never saw depicted before—yet such a scene was likely enough to have been real when the waters entirely covered the earth. They had climbed up to the top of the last hill—and now they sank. False hopes gave place to fell despair—and so it will be with you, you careless ones, unless you take shelter in the Ark!

Do you ask me, "How can we do that?" You look anxious, some of you. Listen, then, while I finish, as I have often done before, with the simple statement which contains our authority to preach and your admonition to believe! Jesus said, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned."

[PUBLISHERS' NOTE—It has been necessary, from lack of space, to omit nearly two pages. But, even in its condensed form, it is a wonderful discourse to have been delivered by a preacher only 21 years of age!]

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

FILLING UP THE MEASURE OF INIQUITY
NO. 3043

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 6, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 8, 1871.

"The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."
Genesis 15:16.

THE Amorites had indulged in the most degrading sin. God had observed this, but He did not at once execute vengeance upon them. He had determined that, as a nation, they should be destroyed and rooted out from under Heaven and that their land should be given to the seed of Abraham. But He tells Abraham that his seed must wait for it, for as yet the Amorites had not filled up the measure of their iniquity. It would take more than 400 years, during which time God's patience would wait while the Amorites continued to heap sin upon sin, iniquity upon iniquity, until they reached a certain point—and then God would bear with them no longer. When the Lord uttered the words of our text, the Amorites had not come up to that fatal point and, therefore, He did not at once mete out their punishment to them, for the measure of iniquity was not yet full.

It is a well-known Truth of God that God has great long-suffering, but that there is a point beyond which even His long-suffering will not go. It has been so in the great judgments of God in the world. Before the days of Noah, men had revolted from God, but Noah was sent to them as a preacher of righteousness. And he did preach and the Spirit of God was with him. Yet, for all that, the antediluvian world turned not from its sin and when the 120 years had expired—but not till then—God opened the windows of Heaven and down came the deluge which destroyed the whole race with the exception of the eight souls who were preserved in the ark. Those old-world sinners had had 120 years for repentance, and 120 years of earnest, faithful warning from holy Noah—and not till all those year's had expired did God's patience come to an end and His judgments begin.

Remember also the case of the children of Israel in the wilderness. They were a rebellious people—constantly revolting, often murmuring—at one time setting up a golden calf in the place of the one living and true God—yet the Lord had long patience with them. His anger did sometimes wax hot against them, but Moses came in between them as a mediator and God postponed the punishment of His wayward people. But at last it seemed as *though He could bear with them no longer, so He swore in His* wrath, "They shall not enter into My rest"—and their carcasses fell in the

wilderness till the track of Israel through the desert could be marked by the graves of the unbelieving nation—and there were funerals every day. It was this sad fact that caused Moses so mournfully to sing, in the 90th Psalm, "You carry them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which grows up. In the morning it flourishes, and grows up; in the evening it is cut down, and withers. For we are consumed by Your anger, and by Your wrath are we troubled. You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your Countenance. For all our days are passed away in Your wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they are fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knows the power of Your anger? Even according to Your fear, so is Your wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Return, O Lord, how long? And let it repent You concerning Your servants. O satisfy us early with Your mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days wherein You have afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil." Not a man of all that generation, save only Joshua, the son of Nun, and Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, was permitted to enter the promised land!

You will also at once call to mind the history of the two nations of Israel and Judah in later years. They exceedingly provoked the Lord and their land was, therefore, invaded by their enemies—and many of the people and their rulers were carried into captivity. But God did not cast off His people, nor expatriate them from their highly-favored land till, by degrees, they had reached the climax of rebellion and idolatry. Then He delivered the chosen nations into the hands of their cruel adversaries. Israel was swept clean as a man's threshing floor when he has purged it. And as for the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, they ceased to dwell by the vine-covered hills of their own dear land, for they were carried away into captivity by the rivers of Babylon where they wept when they remembered Zion. God is indeed long-suffering, but there is an end, even to His long-suffering! The Jews in our Lord's day, and especially the scribes and Pharisees, were so obstinate and perverse that, at last, our Savior said to them, "Fill you up, then, the measure of your fathers." He had borne long with them and He still pleaded with them and wept over them—but at last, the nation as a nation, was given up to blindness and hardness of heart! The beautiful city of Jerusalem was destroyed and not one stone of the Temple was left upon another.

I might, if it were necessary, say that a similar experience has befallen all the great nations of the earth, for all of them have been greatly sinful. The crimes of the Assyrian king and people brought that mighty empire to an inglorious end. Babylon sank, not so much beneath the power of the Medes and Persians as beneath the sins of Belshazzar and his blasphemous princes and lords and ladies! And the Persian Empire, in its turn, passed not away because of Alexander's valor so much as because the Medes and Persians were corrupt in the sight of the Lord. So

was it with Greece—her idolatries and her filthinesses brought upon her the ruin which makes her at once the admiration of all lands for her artistic beauty and the detestation of all lands for her festering corruption and iniquity. As for the Roman Empire—who that reads the history of her rise and fall but knows that long before the city of Rome began to crumble and decay, her virtue had departed, her ancient valor had declined, licentiousness had reached an awful pitch—and then the Word of the Lord went forth that the iniquitous empire should be swept away? I might give modern instances of the working of the same Law, but I shall not. Certain is it that God has long patience with the various nations and tribes of men that keep on sinning against Him, but at last He utters that mysterious prophetic sentence (Isa 34:5), "My sword shall be bathed in Heaven." And then woe be unto the men or the nations whom He smites, "for it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompense for the controversy of Zion."

When we speak of this great Law of God as it operates on a large scale among nations, many will admit the truth of it, but they are not so willing to admit the truth of it so far as it concerns themselves. I intend, therefore, to confine myself in this discourse to the great principle of my text as it can be applied to individuals. There is a fullness of the iniquity of every *individual sinner* in these days, just as there was a fullness of the iniquity of the Amorites in ancient times. And I will try to prove to you, first, that *there is a time when the measure of a sinner's iniquity is not yet full.* Secondly, *that the measure of his iniquity is constantly being filled.* And, thirdly, *that the measure will soon be full.* And I want you all solemnly and seriously to consider the question—*What will happen then?*

I. First, then, THERE IS A TIME WHEN THE MEASURE OF A SINNER'S INIQUITY IS NOT YET FULL.

There is a measure for all iniquity and every iniquity is put into that measure. Flatter not yourself, Sinner, with the false and foolish notion that your sin is forgotten. You may possibly forget it, but God never forgets. You may keep no record of your transgressions, but God's recording angel does not fail to write in His Book of Remembrance, and to engrave them as "with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever," as Job said concerning the preservation of his own words. All those sins of yours—the sins of your youth and of your manhood—are registered in God's Book. You shut your eyes, and—like the ostrich that has buried his head in the sand and, therefore, thinks itself secure because it cannot see the danger that threatens it—you delude yourself with the notion that because you have forgotten your sins, they have ceased to be, but it is not so! Though you should seek to hide your sins in a cleft among the snow on the top of the Himalayas, Jehovah would speedily bring them down from those lofty heights! And though you should attempt to bury them in the depths of the Atlantic, God would bring them up from the lowest ocean bed! Sin is an everlasting thing—unless it is put away by God, Himself, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake—no grave

in the world can hide it. No earthly sepulcher can conceal it from the all-seeing eyes of Jehovah. If buried for a while, there will be a resurrection of sin as well as of sinners—and what a dread procession of sin, iniquity, unrighteousness and transgression shall slowly march before your newly-awakened eyes, O unrepentant and unforgiven sinner, when your iniquities shall rise up in judgment against you to condemn you!

Thus I have reminded you that there is a measure for all iniquity, but, happily, *that measure is not yet full.* That was a very remarkable vision that was seen by the Prophet Zechariah, "a woman that sits in the midst of the ephah." And the angel said, "This is wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the Ephah," so that evidently the measure had not been full. And it is still true that there is a time when a sinner's measure of iniquity is "not yet full." Let me, however, also remind you it is only God's infinite mercy that permits a sinner to continue to live after he has committed even one sin. There is no reason why, upon the basis of Infallible Justice, a man should be allowed to sin up to a certain point. A single sin is the transgression of the Law of God—it is high treason against "the King eternal, immortal, invisible," and deserves to be punished. However much or however little we may have sinned, "every transgression and disobedience" ought to receive "a just recompense of reward," as in the days of which Paul wrote to the Hebrews. Apart from the Atoning Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is not one sinner living in the whole world who could stand before God! It is not justice, but boundless compassion and infinite pity which put a measure to man's iniquity and allows him to live on until he has reached that point—for sin is worthy of death in every case, and in any degree—so says the Word of the Lord.

I must also remark that when we say that some sinners have not filled their measure of iniquity, *it must not be imagined that the same measure of sin is to be filled up by every sinner.* The measures differ, but when *any* man has filled his own measure, be it a large one or a small one, then will God come to him in His wrath and punish him in His hot displeasure. Some great offenders like Pharaoh and Judas fill up a huge measure of transgression—some others, cut off in their earlier days, spend a hot and hasty manhood in sin and go to their doom before they have committed any notorious offenses against mankind in general. The measures differ in size, but still in each case it gets filled sooner or later. And then, woe, woe, woe unto the man whose measure of iniquity is full! It is through God's long-suffering that we are able to tell you this solemn Truth. I have reminded you already that if it were not for His long-suffering patience, there would not be such a point for sinners to reach, but their first sin would the crushing, final, fatal blow from the hand of Divine Justice! It is God's long-suffering that gives men space for repentance, that presents to them, under the Gospel dispensation, the proclamations of mercy that plead with them to turn from their sins and to lay hold on Eternal Life.

Because of this, does anymore here wickedly say that as his particular measure is not yet full, he may still go on in sin? Ah, my Friend, you know not how small your measure may be, nor how soon it may be full! But suppose it is a great measure which is to be filled by you? Then the longer it is in getting filled, the heavier it will be when it is filled and the more terrible will be your eternal doom! Little comfort can any man ever derive from the fact that he is permitted to live long in sin, for he will have to endure forever the heavier punishment for the greater measure of guilt. Beware, beware, beware, you who would draw the wrong kind of consolation from the subject we are now considering, for there is no consolation in it for the willfully wicked—only sorrow, fear and trembling of heart! Here we sit or stand together in this House of Prayer—some of us saved by the Sovereign Grace of God and others, sitting side by side with us, only here because the measure of their iniquity is not yet full! Here is one who is 40 years of age, but his measure is not yet full—he shall live another year. Over there is one who is 60 years of age, but his measure of iniquity is not yet full—he shall yet see another decade of years. Yonder is one who is 70 and even his measure is not yet full, but it soon will be! Ah, and how short is the span of human life even when it is longest! And as I have already said, the heavier the sinner's measure that takes so long to get filled, the more overwhelming shall be the punishment that shall be meted out to such a sinner in the Great Day of account.

When I have such a solemn theme as this, my words cannot flow freely from my lips. I wish that I could speak out the inmost emotions of my heart without even using my tongue, for my words fail to convey to you what I feel in the deepest recesses of my being. O impenitent Sinner, it is so sad to think that you are only sitting here because the measure of your iniquity is not yet full! If there were half-a-dozen persons together in a room and one of them was only there because the hour fixed for his execution had not yet come, I think that you would not take any particular interest in the other five individuals, whoever they might be, but all your thoughts would center upon that one man of whom you would say to yourself, sadly and sorrowfully, "He has been judged according to the law of the land. The death-sentence has been pronounced upon him and he is only spared because the clock has not yet struck and the bell has not yet tolled for him to go out to execution." You unbelievers are, according to God's Word, "condemned already" because you have "not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." Christians, do you know that such condemned persons are here and have you no heart of compassion for them? Children of God, do you know that some of your own sons and daughters are in this terrible position and yet have you no tears to shed on their account? O Preacher, can you stand here and talk so coldly upon such a theme as this when words of flame would be all too cold to express the horror that should fill your soul in view of such an assembly as this? Oh, that we had more

tender hearts! For then should we more deeply pity those poor sinning souls whose iniquity is not yes full!

II. With a heavy heart I must turn to my second point, which is that IN THE CASE OF EVERY UNCONVERTED SINNER, THE MEASURE OF HIS INIQUITY IS CONSTANTLY BEING FILLED.

Every sin that he commits helps to fill up the measure of his iniquity and there is nothing that he can do without sin being mixed with it. Solomon says that "the plowing of the wicked is sin." That is to say even his common actions, in performing the ordinary avocations of his daily life, bring sin upon him! Solomon also said, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord," so that even when he pretends to do that which is right in the case of a Christian, he is still heaping up sin, filling up the measure of his iniquity!

There are some persons who fill up their measure very quickly—wanton, dissolute, depraved sinners, they seem as if they could not heap up iniquity fast enough! They are so greedy that with both hands they labor to fill up the measure. They run, as Peter says, *"to the excess* of *riot,"* with body and with the soul apparently determined to go post haste to Hell. And if anything can be found by which they can quicken their speed to destruction, they seek it out and seem to prize it. Is it not strange that it should be so? Yet, in London, and I suppose it is the same elsewhere, anyone who walks along the streets for a little while will soon see evidences of the fact that there are many persons to whom the usual methods of going to destruction seem to be all too slow. I trust that if there are any young men here who are thus rapidly filling up their measure of iniquity, they will stop and think. My Friend, your candle will burn fast enough without your lighting it at both ends! You will ruin yourself fast enough without needing to heap up sin upon sin by becoming a drunkard and a gambler as well as profane and unchaste! O man, why are you so diligent to be your own destroyer?—

"Sinner, oh why so thoughtless grown?
Why in such dreadful haste to die?
Daring to leap to worlds unknown,
Heedless against your God to fly."

Perhaps *among the sins that fill up a man's measure very quickly, one of the chief is persecution of God's people.* A man will bear many insults and even much injury to himself, but if you touch his children, then the color comes into his face and he is swift to avenge the wrong that has been done to them. So is it in the case of God's children and their Father! He said to Zion in Babylon, "He that touches you, touches the apple of My eye." If you want to be damned out of hand, become a persecutor of the saints, for that is the quickest way to Hell! When holy Wishart was chained to the stake, he pointed to the cardinal who was gloating over the spectacle and told him that God's wrath would shortly fall upon him—and so it came to pass, for God avenges His own elect—and sometimes does it very speedily. The sin of persecuting the Church of

God is one which, perhaps more than any other, helps to fill up the measure of a sinner's iniquity!

Another sin of a similar character is that of *attending Gospel ordinances and yet despising them.* The Lord will deal more leniently with those who are ignorant of the Gospel and have no opportunity of hearing it, than He will deal with you to whom the Gospel has long been familiar as a household word, yet in whom familiarity with it has only bred contempt. Christ has been knocking at the door of some of your hearts for many years. I can personally bear witness that the message of salvation has come to you in many forms and various ways. I have searched the Word of God with the view of finding the most impressive texts—and I have prayed to God to guide me to subjects which might savingly affect you. These topics have often affected my own heart while I have been preparing for the pulpit, yet, so far they have not affected your hearts—or at least not sufficiently to lead you to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Depend upon it, you sermon-hearers are bringing a curse upon yourselves by despising and refusing the blessing which has so long been made known to you in vain! God may well say, "I will not always send My servant to preach to those who judge themselves unworthy of Everlasting Life. Why should I cast my Gospel pearls before such swinish creatures? Why should I continue to call to those who will not heed My voice?" Well may He say, as He did of old, "Because I have called, and you refused; I have stretched out My hand and no man regarded; but you have set at naught all My counsel, and would none of My reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear comes." It is no small sin to have heard the Gospel and yet to have rejected it. You know how our Savior upbraided the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done because they repented not—"Woe unto you, Chorazin! Woe unto you, Bethsaida! For 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! But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Day of Judgment, than for you."

It is another great help in filling up the measure of iniquity *when a man has had serious personal affliction, yet it has not softened, but rather has hardened him.* You, my Friend, were laid low a little while ago. Was it a malignant fever, or some other dangerous disease that you had? Your relatives said, "He cannot recover," and you turned your face to the wall, in the bitterness of your spirit, for you feared that you would die, and you knew that you were unprepared to meet your God. You were glad enough if somebody would pray with you then! And, after a fashion, you shuffled into some sort of prayer of your own and you promised what you would do if the Lord would spare your forfeited life. But where are your good resolutions now? There are some of you who used to be Sabbath-breakers. And when you were likely to die, you said, "If God will but spare me, the shop shall be closed on His holy day." Yet you have opened it again though He spared you. You were a drunkard up to the time of

your great illness, but you said, "If God will spare my life, I will never touch the intoxicating cup again." God did spare your life, yet you are as conspicuous a slave of drink as ever you were! And you have proved yourself to be a liar in the sight of God! Young man, you got into a sad trouble once, but God, by a very special Providential deliverance, helped you out of it and you then said, "I will walk more guardedly for the future." Yet you have gone back to the same sin, as the dog turns to his own vomit, "and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire." But God will not waste His pains on you much longer. A farmer plows his field and if it brings forth no harvest, he may plow it again, but he will not always go on plowing a field that is as barren as a rock. [See Sermon #2977, Volume 52—PLOWING A ROCK—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] A gardener may come to a fig tree and if it bears no fruit, he may prune it and dig about it, and fertilize it, but he will not go on doing that year after year—he will at last say, "Cut it down; why cumbers it the ground?" And it must be so with you if you still remain impenitent after all God's dealings with you! By refusing to heed God's warning message which came to you in the chamber of affliction. By forgetting the gentle pressure of God's hand of mercy which raised you up to health and strength again, you are helping to fill up the measure of your iniquity!

And let me further say that—and I know that my words will go home to some here—*when a man has been subject to convictions*—whether those convictions may be set down to an alarmed conscience, or to what I may call the secondary operations of God's Holy Spirit, I will not say—but, when a man has been the subject of convictions *and has stifled them, it greatly adds to the measure of his guilt.* The other night a young man was in the street and a temptation was set before him—and he knew it to be a temptation. He stood still a while and thought within himself, "I know that this is a wrong thing for me to do. It would break my mother's heart if she knew that I committed this sin. And as for my father, I could never dare to look him in the face again if he knew that I had done this and, besides, I am an attendant at a place of worship and know that this is an evil thing—and that it might be my eternal ruin." Now, after that young man had weighed the matter, if he had deliberately chosen to commit that sin, there would have been ten times the guilt in it than there might have been in the case of another who was overtaken unawares by sudden temptation and had no time to consider what was the right thing for him to do. In proportion to the violence that a man has to do to himself in order to commit a certain transgression, the measure of his guilt may be estimated.

I believe there are people here who, on many occasions, have sat and trembled at the Word of the Lord—and have been softened in spirit till they have wept in silence—and sometimes openly. And they have whispered to themselves, "We will really seek the great change. We will cry to God for help that we may repent of sin and believe in Jesus, as the preacher urges us." But on those steps outside they have met with some

worldly companion and, while talking with him, all their good resolutions have melted away and the sinner who seemed to be impressed remains a sinner still! The one who appeared to be awakened a month ago is now a drunkard and the conscience that was thought to be getting tender six months ago, is fast becoming as hard as the nether millstone! These are dreadful facts, but they all go to show that a man may be—even in the House of Prayer, and under the means of Grace—continually filling up the measure of his iniquity. These are terrible Truths of God for me to have to preach, but it is necessary for them to be told. May you all feel the force of them and may God thus drive you to seek shelter in His Son who died upon the Cross of Calvary, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

III. My third point is that THE MEASURE OF INIQUITY WILL ONE DAY BE FULL.

It will take time to fill it, but it will be filled in due time and, at the rate at which some men go in sinning, they will soon fill up the measure of their transgression. The tares are green and God will not have them cut down yet, for He lets even the tares ripen. He allows even the poisonous fruit of evil to hang on the tree till it grows mellow and then it drops with its own weight. But the tares will ripen and the evil fruit will become mellow—and then will their end come. And it will take time for you sinners to ripen in sin, but you *will* ripen, and then you will be shaken from the tree and this life shall know you no more.

I want you unconverted ones to *think for a minute or two how nearly full your measure probably is even now.* Begin with your early childhood and think over your many acts of willful disobedience and sin. I cannot trace your whole life, but let me remind you of your early manhood. Is there nothing for you to be ashamed of and nothing for you to repent of there? I am sure that there are some here who cannot think of that period of life without blushing for very shame. Then think of the later days of your riper manhood. O Sirs, what heaps of sin are there! The measure of your iniquity must be nearly full. Do not forget, too, that we are usually very bad judges of our real state in the sight of God. The probability is that the measure of our iniquity is a great deal more full than we think it is. I hope none of you were ever bankrupts, but if you ever were insolvent I expect that when you actually came to look into your books, you found that you were much more deeply in debt than you ever thought that you were! It is a common thing for men who are in an unsound state in their business to fancy that their position is better than a rigid examination proves it to be. And I believe it is so in spiritual things with many of you. Take care, take care! You suppose that only the bottom of the measure is full as yet, but the recording angel sees that your iniquity is nearly up to the top! It is a very mournful reflection, dear Friends, that there may be some here—and that there probably are some here—who have only to commit one more sin to fill up the measure of their iniquity! One more lie and the measure is full! One more lascivious

song and it is full. One more act of theft, one more drunken bout and it is full! I have known some people come here—and perhaps some such are now here—who have had *delirium tremens*! It is a wonder that they were not cast into Hell then—a marvel of mercy that they were spared a little longer! But, the next time that happens to you, Sir, it may be a delirium that will never have an end! The next time you put that poison cup to your lips and dare to drink till you are drunk, you will drink yourself into eternal damnation! O beware*, beware,* BEWARE! It is not merely a man who speaks thus to you—there is a warning Voice from Heaven which is speaking to some people here through my lips. Stop, Sir, for if you take only one step more you will be plunged in eternal ruin! Do you ask what concern it is of mine whether you are lost or saved? It is as much my concern as it would be if I could save your temporal life if I saw you in danger! Much more would I desire to point out to you the danger of your immortal soul that you may, by God's Infinite Grace, be saved from spiritual and everlasting ruin!

All this while there is one very sad but most true reflection that I must mention to you. It is this—*while the unconverted are always putting more sin into the measure, it is not in their power to take out anything that is already in the measure.* I can fill the ephah of my transgression, but I cannot empty it, and I cannot even diminish it. Somebody says to me, "Suppose, Sir, that I never sin again?" Well, what then? Even if you get no further into debt, that will not pay off the old score. "Then, Sir, what shall we do? Shall we stand here and weep over our sins—will not our tears wash them away?" No, though you shed a Niagara of penitential tears, there is no power in them to blot out a single sin! "But what if we perform many good works?" No, though you could fill an Atlantic with your good works, you would not have washed out the crimson stain of even *one* of your innumerable transgressions! No, you cannot take one sin out of the measure, though you can keep on putting in sin upon sin upon sin—and so the measure is being filled and it will soon be full.

IV. So I close by asking you—what then?

I was reading in the New Testament, the other night, and there were half-a-dozen words that impressed me with peculiar force. I think they are, on the whole, as dreadful as any words that were ever spoken. I may venture to say that even the Scripture, itself, contains no more terrible words than these which I am about to quote to you, yet they were spoken by the Lord Jesus, Himself—the loving, tender, gentle Jesus, who called the little children to Him. They are recorded in the 8th Chapter of John' Gospel, the 21st verse. And then, as though one thunder-clap must follow another, they are repeated in the 24th verse. These are the words—

"You shall die in your sins."

Hear them again—"If you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins." I heard of a man who died in a ditch, but that is nothing compared with dying in the ditch of your sins! I heard of one who fell down dead in the street, but what is that compared with dying in sin? Some die starved, but that is nothing to dying in sin! Near my house, the other

day, there was one who sat down to eat and some coals from a fire flew out and caught her clothes on fire—the people around her tore her clothes from her back, but she was so badly burnt that she died—but the flames of sin are worse than coals of the fire. *"You shall die in your sins."* I have no choice as to how or where I shall die except in this one respect—that I may never die in sin, with iniquity like the fabled poison shirt killing its unhappy wearer. He tried to tear it off and even tore away his flesh, but the poison burnt into his bones—but it is worse than that to die in sin! Man, you must die in your sins if you continue to live in them! You cannot escape from the consequence of sin if you keep following in the pursuit of sin. Work and you shall have your wages—and "the wages of sin is death." Sow and you shall reap your harvest—and if you sow to the flesh, you must and shall of the flesh reap corruption! I pray God that none of you may ever know, in your own persons, the full meaning of those awful words of the Savior, *"You shall die in your sins."* If you believe not—

"YOU SHALL DIE IN YOUR SINS."

But I cannot send you away like this, although yonder clock has struck the usual hour for closing the service. Thank God that no clock has struck to forbid me to proclaim the tidings of mercy as long as men are yet in this world. I told you that you could not take any sin out of that measure and most truly did I speak, but let me whisper in your ears that *there is One, the ever-blessed Son of God, who can empty it!* He can take the measure of your sin, just as it is, and not merely take out a little, but He can take it all and put it on His own shoulders and carry it right away, and hurl it into his own sepulcher where it shall be buried so deep that even the eyes of God, Himself, shall never see it again! "Oh, would to God," says one, "that He would do that with my sins!" Sir, He will do it with your sins, now, at this moment, if you believe on Him. "Believe on Him?" says one, "I believe that He is the Son of God and the Savior of men." Go further then, and trust Him as your own Savior. Give up your sins! Give up your self-reliance and cast yourself into those dear arms that were outstretched on the Cross that great sinners might be folded in them and find eternal shelter there—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One.
There is life at this moment for you,"

if you will but look to Him! May God's gracious Spirit enable you to look away from self to His great substitutionary Sacrifice, to the full Atonement He made, to the utmost ransom that He paid! Close in with Christ and the measure of your iniquity shall be emptied!

But remember that if Christ is not received, there is no other hope of salvation. And what is more, after this night there may not even be another proclamation of the way of salvation for some of you. I do not know when I am more pained—when I have to go to visit young men who are dying, perhaps of consumption and without hope. It is dreadful work to try to set forth the Gospel to them. I sometimes feel as if I must proclaim the Law, though they are so sick and weak. And, sometimes,

the mother stands beside the bed and weeps, and says, "Ah, I have prayed for him many times, but, oh, that I knew that he was saved!" Then she says to me, on the stairs, "I could give him up, Sir, though I love the dear boy—I could give him up without a sigh, but, oh, it breaks my heart to think that he is dying without a Savior!" Yes, and every Christian ought to feel the same, in his measure, about every sinner! It is a trying thing to me, when I am walking in the street, to see an accident. I feel as if my heart were in my mouth at once. If I were in a railway accident and saw somebody killed, I do not think I would be able to hold up my head for days. But, oh, to know that some of you are losing your souls and that you are every day getting nearer and nearer to your eternal doom! "Turn you, turn you, for why will you die?"

I often wonder why some of you come to hear me as you do. It puzzles me, for I see no reason why you should do so. I offer you no amusement. I tell you no comical stories, but I seek to break your hearts with the hammer of the Word of God! You come and you go, yet you get no blessing as far as I can see. Are you content to always have it so? If you are, I am not content! I am at least responsible for faithfully warning you and honestly preaching to you the great Gospel message, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Every time I stand in this pulpit, there is somebody here who never comes again—he cannot come again, for he dies before the next Lord's-Day. So large is the congregation here that I may almost say, speaking according to the laws of probability, that it is almost certain that some one of us will have gone the way of all flesh before this week is gone. Who will it be? May God take the ripe and spare the green! May He take those who are ready and spare those who are not ready! But, better still, may He lead us all to trust in the Savior and then we shall all be ready whenever the summons comes! May He do so, for His name's sake! Amen.

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

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

SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATIONS
NO. 3044

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 13, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON A THURSDAY EVENING IN THE YEAR 1865.

"Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."
Isaiah 4:13.

For many centuries the Holy Land has been covered with thorns and briers. Travelers tell us it is so exceedingly barren that except upon the dreary desert of Sahara, you cannot find a more absolute sterility than in many parts of Judea and Israel. But the land will not remain forever thus unproductive. Even now, in spots where it can be cultivated, it flows with milk and honey, and the day is coming when the chosen people shall return to their own land which God has given to them and to their fathers by a Covenant of Salt—and when again they shall begin to irrigate the hills and to plant the valleys, to cultivate the vineyards and to scatter the seed broadcast into the well-plowed furrows! The Holy Land will again blossom—"Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree." When this is done, the whole world will ring with the fame thereof. They will say, "Is this the Zion whom no man sought after? Is this the land which was called desolate? Is this the city whose name was FORSAKEN?" Then shall Mount Zion again be "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth." And then shall the whole land flow with fertility—"and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

But the *spiritual* meaning of our text, to which we draw more immediate attention tonight, is this—God, by His Grace, is able to work moral and spiritual transformations. Men, comparable to thorns and briers, are, by the Sovereign Grace of God, changed and renewed so that they may then be compared to fir trees and to myrtles. This wonderful transformation is to the glory of God and is to Him "an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." Let us talk a little with one another, first, *concerning these transformations.* Secondly, *concerning how they are worked.* And, thirdly, let us *contemplate their happy result*—they "shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

I. Let us talk CONCERNING THESE TRANSFORMATIONS.

It appears, from our text, that there are some men who may fitly be compared to thorns and briers. *The similitude may be applied to their original.* Here we must all take our share. The thorn is the child of the curse. The brier is the offspring of the Fall. There were no thorns and

briers to cause the sweat to flow from Adam's face until after he had sinned. Then did the Lord say to him, "Cursed is the ground for your sake; sorrow shall you eat of it all the days of your life, thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you." And we, too, are the offspring of the curse. What says David? "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." We are born under sin. We are subject to it from our very earliest moments and we go astray, not merely by the imitation of bad example, but from the force of a corrupt nature.

It may be that there are some here, this evening, who feel that they are under the curse. You cannot look back upon your original without discovering this. It may be, my Friends, that your parents taught you to sin—you cannot remember ever having been instructed in the way of God. It may be that this very moment you can recollect some of the earliest training that you received—and you remember that it was such as might fit you for the service of Satan, but could not lead you to the Cross of Christ. You feel that you are under the curse and you have met such afflictions and your own heart is so heavy that if I were to write anyone down as a child of the curse, you would boldly say, "Put my name in the list. Indeed, I am born of a traitor and I feel in my blood the taint of his sin." There is comfort for us, however, even though this is true of us! We are thorns, but the Lord can transform us into myrtles. Jehovah knows how to remove the curse of the first Adam by the blessing of the second Adam. He can tear up by the roots everything that is vile, sinful and accursed, and can plant in the place, thereof, everything that is lovely and of good repute—and so we shall inherit His blessing. So be of good comfort—though you are now under the curse, the Lord Jesus, who was made a Curse for us, is able yet to pronounce you blessed!

Again, *the thorn is the true image of the sinner because it is of no sort of service*. I suppose almost everything has its use, but I do not know that there has been discovered any use for the thorn and the brier. So has it been with many of us, and it is so with some of you tonight. What have you done for God? Twenty years, young man, have brought you to maturity, but what quit-rent has the Almighty ever received from you? Perhaps 40 years have ripened your manhood, but, hitherto, what songs of praise have gone up to Heaven from you? What acceptable fruits have you laid upon God's altar? You are His vineyard—what ripe grapes have ever come to Him from you? He has dug about you. He has protected you by the wall of His Providence and watched over you with tender care. How is it that when He looks for grapes, you bring forth only wild grapes? When He expects to have some return for the talent which He has committed to your care, how is it that you have wrapped it in a napkin and have hidden your Lord's money? You have been useless—not exactly so to your fellow men—your children have received your care—you have been, perhaps, some help to your neighbors and to your friends. But, as far as God is concerned, the natural man is perfectly useless! He brings no harvest to the great Owner of the ground. Did I say, just now, you were 40 years old? What if there should be, in this place, some unconverted person of sixty, seventy, or even eighty? And all these years,

in vain has the light of Heaven shone for you! In vain has the Divine long-suffering said, "Spare him yet another year." In vain the preaching of God's Word to you and all the ordinances of His House—you are still bare, leafless, fruitless! You have only lived unto yourself and you have in nowise glorified your Creator and your Preserver. You are a thorn and a brier! Yet be of good comfort—if you have a heart for better things, God can make you into the fir tree and the myrtle that yield genial shade and gladden the gardens of the Lord! He can yet transform your uselessness into true service and take you from among the idlers in the market to go and work actively and with success in His vineyard!

The thorn, too, (we have only commenced upon this point), *wastes the genial influences which, falling upon good wheat, would have produced a harvest.* The rain fell today, but it fell upon thorns and briers as well as upon the green blades of the wheat. The dews will weep and they will fall quite as copiously upon the thickly tangled thistles and matted briers as upon the cottager's well-weeded garden. And when the sun shines out with cheering ray, he will have rays quite as genial for the thistle and for the briers as for the fruit trees and for the barley and the wheat. So it is with you unconverted men and women! You have received God's daily favors in as great abundance as the righteous have. No, perhaps you have had even more! You have been sitting, clothed in fine linen, like Dives, while God's own saints have been rotting at your gates, like Lazarus. You have not pined for lack of the outward influences of the means of Grace. Some of you are sermon-hearers. You are constantly within God's gates. You frequent the place where the proclamation of mercy is freely made. Your Bibles are not unknown to you and yet, all this has been wasted on you. Are you not near unto cursing? Visited by daily favor, rebuked by conscience, awakened at times by the natural motion of your own heart, awakened by God's Spirit, awed under His Word and yet, for all this, you are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel! Yet despair not! If your souls seek after better things, God is able to transform these wasteful thorns, these briers that bear no fruit into fig trees that shall shower their luscious fruit all around!

It was a foolish saying of a certain preacher that the tares would never become wheat—what business had he to strain Christ's parable? This I know—the brier can become a myrtle and the thistle can become a fir tree by Divine Grace! Did the man mean to deny the possibility of conversion? Did he mean to say that Almighty Grace could not turn the lion into a lamb, the raven into a dove? If so, he uttered a direct blasphemy, for there is no miracle of Grace which God cannot perform! He can take the black lumps of ebony and make them alabaster! He can cast the tree of the Cross into Marah's bitter waters and make them sweet as the water of the well of Bethlehem for which David thirsted! He can take the poison out of the asp and the sting out of the cockatrice—and make them serviceable to God and man! The camel can go through the needle's eye! Know for sure that nothing is too hard for the Lord! He can accomplish whatever He pleases.

To continue our remarks upon the thorn and its transformation into the fir tree—*Is not the thorn a hurtful thing?* It rends and tears the passers-by. Sometimes, if I would pursue my path straight across to yonder point, I must break through a hedge of briers—and how often has the Christian been tormented and torn by the thorns of the ungodly? Let the age of martyrs tell how God's saints have had their flesh torn from their bones by these thorns and briers! And let a weeping mother tell how her son has broken her heart and turned her hair prematurely gray. And let a sorrowing wife tell how an ungodly husband has sent her to her chamber with briny tears streaming from her eyes. And let us all tell how sometimes our ungodly relatives have made our hearts beat fast with dread anxiety for them! Lot cannot live in Sodom without being vexed and David cannot sojourn in Mesech without crying, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" But remember, however much you have persecuted God's saints, however harshly you may have dealt with the followers of Christ, the Lord is able to transform you into one of them! Paul little thought, when he was riding to Damascus, that it would be so with him. He had his precious documents all safe. "I will harass the Nazarenes," he seemed to say. "I will bring them to the whipping post. I will drag them out of the synagogue and compel them to blaspheme!" Little do you know, Paul, that you shall soon bend the knee to that very Jesus of Nazareth whom you hate! A light shines about him, brighter than the noonday sun! He falls from his horse. He hears a voice which says, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" Them meekly he asks, "Who are You, Lord?" And the answer comes, "I am Jesus whom you persecute: it is hard for you to kick against the pricks." Ah, Sinner, perhaps you do not know that *you are persecuting Jesus.* You think that it is only your child, or your wife, or your mother. But, in persecuting the members of the body of Christ, you persecute the Head! Saul of Tarsus is lead by the hand to Damascus and, after his conversion, who is more bold than he? The preacher upon Mars' Hill, the witness before Nero, the aged man of God sitting in the dungeon, the child of God with his head upon the block—this is the man who persecuted the saints of God—but is now full of zeal above all others for the spread of the knowledge of Christ! The thorn is turned into a fir tree and the brier into a myrtle tree.

Nor have I yet exhausted the figure. *The thorn sows its own seed* and when the winds blows they bear upon their wings the thistledown—and the seed is dropped here and there and everywhere! You cannot keep thistles to themselves. If you grow them in your own garden, they will be in your neighbor's garden before long. And if your neighbor grows them, it will be difficult for you to keep them out of your plot. And here is the worst point about an unconverted man. If you have been doing mischief, your children grow up in your own image, or your servants imitate their master. If you are an unscrupulous trader, you assist to make other traders, if not palpably dishonest, yet scandalously lax. Your language pollutes the air you breathe. Or if you keep that tolerably right, your sentiments are not without their influence upon your fellow men. You

live not unto yourselves. If you were to lead a hermit's life, your very absence from society would have its influence. If you are literally a leper, I may shut you up and make you cover your lips and cast ashes on your head and cry, "Unclean! Unclean!" but with your *spiritual* leprosy, I cannot so seclude you. You will taint the air wherever you go—it is not possible for you to do otherwise than to spread pollution round about you. O thorn, seed-sowing thorn, my God change you!

Do I tonight address some infidel who has been very earnest in the propagation of his views? How would my heart leap if the Lord would make you just as earnest in lifting up the Cross upon which you have trampled! He can do it! I pray God that He may. Do I speak tonight to one who has been furiously set against the things of God? Brethren, the worst of sinners make the best of saints! And if the Lord shall please to touch you, you shall be just as hot for Him as you now are against Him. He that has much forgiven shall love much. No one could break an alabaster box of precious ointment but the woman who was a sinner. John Bunyan used to say that he believed there would be a great band of saints in the next generation, for his own generation was noted for its many great sinners and he did hope that as these great sinners grew up, God would transform them into great saints. We could mention many names of men who have been, as it were, the devil's sergeants, but who, when God has once transformed them into His own soldiers, have made most blessed recruiting sergeants for the Kingdom of Christ. Look at John Newton, John Bunyan and other men of that stamp—and see what Sovereign Grace can do in similar cases.

Yet once more. I cannot help remarking that *it was the thorn and the brier that composed the crown that pierced the Savior's temples.* And it is our sins, our cruel sins, that have been His chief tormentors. Every soul that lives without Christ, after having heard of Him, is piercing Christ's temples afresh. When you think that He is unwilling to forgive you, that ungenerous thought wounds Him more than anything else. And when you speak ill of His name—when you slander His people and despise His saints, what are you doing but plaiting another crown of thorns to put upon His head? Yet you, you who have pierced the Savior's brow, you can yet become a myrtle to crown that brow with victory! The Savior, having fought for you and won you—having bought you with His heart's blood—will put you as a wreath about His brow "and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not, be cut off." The meaning of the whole is that God does, by the power of the Gospel, transform His enemies into His friends. He turns men from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to the Kingdom of Christ, from being possessed with devils to become full of the Holy Spirit, from being a den of dragons, full of sin, to be temples where every Grace shall shine to reflect the Glory of the Most High. Some of you can bear witness to this as a matter of experience—others of you contemplate it with strong desire.

II. Secondly, we are to consider HOW THIS TRANSFORMATION IS WORKED IN MEN.

It is worked by the *secret and mysterious agency of God the Holy Spirit.* Certainly, dear Friends, it can never be worked in us by the power of man! Let us tremble if our religion rests upon any man, for that is a poor, unstable foundation. I learn each day more and more my utter inability to do good to my fellow men apart from the Spirit of God. There come to me, sometimes, cases that completely stagger me. I try, for instance, to comfort a broken heart. I seek, but in vain, all sorts of metaphors to make the Truth of God clear. I quote the promises, bow the knee in prayer and yet, after all, the poor troubled spirit has to go away still unbelieving, for only God can give it faith! There are other cases where we know of men who have lived in sin and God has been pleased to put His afflicting hand upon them and we do not know what to say to them. They profess repentance, but we fear it is only remorse. They talk of faith in Christ, but we are afraid it is a delusion. We would convince them of sin if we could. We remind them of the past and they give an assent to every sentence we utter against them, but yet they feel not the evil of their own ways. Oh, it is hard work to deal with sinners! It needs a sharper tool than man can keep in his toolbox. Only God Himself can break hearts—and when they are broken—only the same hand that broke them can bind them up.

It is the Holy Spirit, then, who is everywhere in the midst of His Church, who comes forth and puts Himself into direct contact with a human spirit and, straightway, a change is affected. I cannot tell you with what part of man the Holy Spirit begins, but this I can tell you—He changes the whole man! The judgment no longer takes darkness for light and light for darkness! The will is no longer obstinately set against God but bows its neck to the yoke of Christ! The affections are no longer set upon sinful pleasure, but they are set upon Christ! It is true that corruption still remains in the heart, but a new heart and a right spirit are given. There is put into the quickened soul a living Seed which cannot sin because it is born of God—a living Seed which lives and abides forever! "I don't know," said one, "whether the world is a new world, or whether I am a new creature, but it is one of the two, for, 'old things are passed away, and all things are become new.'" When Christ descends into the human heart to reign, He seems to take this motto, "Behold, I make all things new." Therefore is "a new Heaven and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness," within that poor sinner's heart! It is a complete change. You will observe that it is not the thorn, somewhat trimmed and pruned—it is not the brier made to grow upon a wall and trained into order—that is *reformation.* But it is the thorn turned into a fir tree—this is a perfect re-creation, a making anew of the man and this happens to everyone of us, by the power and energy of the Divine Spirit, or else in the garden of the Lord we shall never bloom, nor ought we to join the Church of God on earth, for we have no part nor lot in the matter.

But, while I have said that it is the Spirit who works this change, you are enquiring *by what means He does it.* If you will kindly refer to the chapter from which my text is taken, you will observe that the Lord Jesus has to do with it—"Behold, I have given Him for a Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people." That verse comes before my texts. We must know Christ before we can ever be changed. Some people think they are to change themselves and *then* come to Christ. Oh, no! Come to Jesus just as you are! It is the work of His Spirit to change you. You are not to work a miracle and then come to show the miracle to Christ, but you are to come to Chris to have the miracle worked. It is Christ's work to begin with the sinner as the sinner, even as the Good Samaritan did with the man who fell among thieves. He did not wait for him to be cured before he helped him, but he poured oil and wine into his wounds, lifted him upon his beast, and then carried him to the inn. And Christ is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him.

But the chapter seems to teach another lesson. You say, "I know that the Holy Spirit brings Christ home to the heart and conscience, but how am I to get at Christ?" The chapter tells you. It says that God's Word shall not return unto Him void. The way by which Christ is discovered and found by a sinner is by Christ being preached to him! "Hear, and your soul shall live." That is the Gospel! The way by which Christ comes into the soul is through Ear-gate. "Satan tries to stop up Ear-gate with mud," says John Bunyan. But, oh, it is a glorious thing when God clears away the mud of prejudice so that men are willing to hear the Truth of God! There was an old man, a member of this Church, who used to preach every Sunday in Billingsgate. Many persons tried to begin a controversy with him, but he was an old soldier in more senses than one and his answer, when anybody tried to dispute or enter into an argument with him, was, "'Hear, and your soul shall live!' I have not come to argue, but to preach the Truth of God—'Hear, and your soul shall live.'" That was a plain answer, sure enough!

Now you know that simple trust in Christ is all that He asks of you—and even that He *gives* you. 'Tis the work of His own Spirit. Hear this, then, you thorns and briers, before God sets Himself in battle array against you—before His fires devour you! Hear the gentle notes of a Father's heart as He speaks in Gospel invitations to you, "Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters." May you all be brought there! May God's Grace bring you all to lay hold on Christ!

III. And then, to close—WHAT IS THE RESULT OF THIS TRANSFORMATION?

To whose honor shall so beneficial a change accrue? *"It shall be to the Lord for a name."* As soon as that great sinner gets converted, it makes a buzz and a noise in the workshop where he goes. "What?" they ask, "has that wretch become a saint?" He used to curse, but, "Behold, he prays!" He could drink with the drunk, but now he walks in the fear of God "in

all temperance and sobriety." He could not be trusted, but now temptation cannot turn him from his integrity. The name of Christ at one time brought the blood into his cheeks, but now—

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

I say there is a buzz about the workshop—the men say to one another, "What is the meaning of this? How came this about." And though they hate the change, yet they gaze at it and admire it. They cannot understand it. They are like the magicians of Egypt—they cannot do these things with their enchantment and, therefore, they are compelled to say, "This is the finger of God." If God converts some ordinary sinners, He does not get half as much glory out of them as He does out of these extraordinary ones. The man whose vile character was known in a whole parish, whose name was foul in the court where he lived, who had acquired a reputation for evil in the whole district—when this thorn becomes a fir tree, then everyone wonders! If I had in my garden a great brier which had once torn my hands, but one day when I walked down I saw, instead of that briar, a fir tree growing and a genial shade could be enjoyed under its branches, how astonished I would be! I would naturally ask, "Who has done this? Who could have transformed this brier into a fir tree?" And so, when a great sinner is converted, the finger of God is recognized and God is glorified! Even the ungodly are compelled to honor the name of the Most High when other ungodly ones are saved!

And then *as to the church,* the members are, perhaps, at first rather shy and cannot believe it is true. They hear that he who once persecuted the Brothers and Sisters, now professes the name of their Master and, at last, they get good evidence of the truth of it—and oh, what hallowed glee there is among the sons of God! There is a church meeting and he comes forward to confess his faith—they know how foully he has erred and they rejoice to see him brought back again. There may be one "elder brother" who is angry and will not come in but, for the most part, the household is very glad when the prodigal returns! And chief in joy among you all, when such a scene occurs, is the one who has preached the Gospel to you. Oh, the joy of my soul when some of you were brought to Christ! I remember the cheering nights I had and how I went to my house rejoicing and triumphant in my God because of some of you! You were once foul, "but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." And truly, there would be more of such joy if others were brought in! Some of the best of the members of this Church are those who were brands plucked out of the burning. May we have more such sinners saved by the blood of Jesus!

Nor is this all. There was *an angel* present when the deed was done. They are always present in the assemblies of the saints—hence it is that the women have their heads covered—"because of the angels." If no one else could see it, yet the angels, who cover their faces when they bow before God, would have us come into His Presence in decency and in order. This angel hears us weep—a stream of light ascends to the regions

of the blessed. Straightway the bliss spreads throughout the celestial field and, as the news is propagated, "A prodigal has returned, another heir of Glory is born," they take their harps and tune their strings anew! They bow with great reverence! They sing with loftier joy! They shout with more glorious praise, "Unto Him that loved the souls of men and washed them in His blood, to Him be glory, and honor, and power, and dominion, forever and ever!" And thus the songs of Heaven are swollen, made more deep, more mighty with tumultuous joy by sinners saved on earth! Yes, they tell it in Heaven that the thorn-brake has become a grove of firs, that the brier has become a myrtle and what, shall I dare to say?—*even the Divine Trinity break forth in joy.* Their joy cannot be increased, for God over all is "blessed forever." But still, it is written, "He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing." Is it not said that when the prodigal was yet a long way off, his father saw him? Can it be that among the servants and friends there was joy and none in the father's heart? Impossible! The Eternal God, Jehovah, Himself, views with delight the chosen of His heart! Jesus sees the purchase of His blood! The Spirit sees the result of His own power and so, up to the very Throne of God, the impulse of a sinner saved is felt! She came from the brothel. He came from the prison and yet even Heaven thrills with the news! She had defiled herself with sin. He had polluted others with his crimes and yet angels tune their harps to Jehovah's praise because of them! Was that prophetic when the woman broke the alabaster box and filled the house with the perfume? Was that prophetic of what every repentant sinner does when his broken heart fills Heaven and earth with the sweet perfume of joy because he is saved? And when she washed the Savior's feet and wiped them with the hair of her head, was that also prophetic? Did that show how Jesus gets His greatest honor, His purest love, His fairest worship and His sweetest solace from sinners saved by blood? I think it was so. May He get such joy from us! Truly Jesus died for me and, at the foot of His Cross, I now stand weeping to tell of His true love to sinners! And O poor Sinner, Christ is able to save you! Whomever comes to Him, He will in no wise cast out. Oh, that you would come! May Sovereign Grace compel you to come in!

I sat, this afternoon, looking at one with a withered countenance and a sunken cheek, marked out for death, once a member of this Church, but foully fallen and gone far astray. And I remember two or three of his age, once also professors who, strange to say, also went away from God as he did. When I talked to him about the Lord and His infinite compassion, I could but have in my mind's eye the prodigal who wasted his substance with riotous living, and yet his father did not spurn him, did not even rebuke him, but he—

"—was to his Father's bosom pressed,
Once again a child confessed,
From his house no more to roam."

And I thought I would say to you tonight—

"Come and welcome, Sinner, come."

Do not think that God is harsh. Think not that Christ is not tender. There is no breast so soft as His, no heart so deeply full of sympathy. He cries over the very worst of you, "How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My heart is turned within Me. My repentings are kindled together. I cannot destroy you, for I am God, and not man." Oh, shall my Savior plead with you in vain? Shall the tears of Jesus fall to the ground? Shall the love of God have no attracting influence? Shall not Mercy, as it rings its silver bell, draw you to the feast of love? Oh, why will you die? Is sin so sweet that you will suffer for it forever? Are the trifles of this world so important in your estimation that you will lose Heaven and Eternal Life? I pray you "seek the Lord while He may be found: call you upon Him while He is near," and think not that He will reject you, for "He will abundantly pardon." Oh, may He do this tonight!—

"My God, I feel the mournful scene!
My heart yearns over dying men
And gladly my pity would reclaim
And snatch the firebrands from the flame!
But feeble my compassion proves,
And can but weep where most it loves—
Your own all-saving arm employ,
And turn these drops of grief to joy!"

O Lord, do it, for You can! Come forth, O Jesus! Mount Your chariot! Hell shakes at Your majesty. Heaven adores Your Presence—earth cannot resist you! Gates of brass fly open and bars of iron are snapped. Come, Conqueror, and ride through the streets of this city and through the hearts of all of us, and they shall be Yours, "and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." May God command His blessing on you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 84.

Verse 1. *How amiable are Your tabernacles, O LORD of Hosts!* "Though they are only tabernacles, temporary structures that are soon to be taken down and carried away, they are very dear to us. Your tabernacles are so lovely to us because You meet us there."

2. *My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh cries out for the living God.* A little starving brings on an appetite for health-giving food—and a brief absence from the House of God through sickness, or by reason of distance, makes a Christian sigh and cry for the dainties of the Divine Table. Even the heavy flesh, which is so slow to move, at last joins the heart in crying out for the living God!

3. *Yes, the sparrow has found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Your altars, O LORD of Hosts, my King, and my God.* He envies even the sparrows which have no sort of bashfulness, but boldly enter God's House and find a house for themselves there. O Lord, make me like the sparrows, blessed in finding

shelter in the courts of Your House! As for the swallow, she makes God's House a nest for herself, and a place where she may lay her young. And it is blessed when our children, as well as ourselves, love the House of God—when they have been so nurtured and cherished that they are at home there. We may well envy the sparrows and the swallows when we and our families are unable to go up to the House of the Lord. And it is as sad for those who have to go up to a place where there is nothing good to be had, a place where the Gospel is not preached and so their souls are not fed.

4. *Blessed are they that dwell in Your House.* The men who are always occupied in the Lord's service, or those who are in God's House even when they are in their own houses—the men who are always at home with God, who feel that the canopy of Heaven is the roof of God's House in which they dwell and who, therefore, never go away from God's House, but always dwell there with Him—

"Blessed are the souls that find a place
Within the Temple of Your Grace."

4. *They will be still praising You. Selah.* How can they do otherwise? When they are God's children, at home with their Heavenly Father, and behold His Glory, what can they do but praise, and praise, and praise yet again?

5. *Blessed is the man whose strength is in You; in whose heart are the ways of them.* Or, as it might be rendered, "In whose heart are Your ways." The man whose strength is wholly derived from God and who spends all his strength in God's service—the man who has God's ways in his heart and his heart in God's ways must be blessed. This is the man to get the blessing that the Lord is waiting to give. Half-hearted worshippers do not even know what the blessing is like, but the whole-hearted not only taste of it but drink it down with delight!

6. *Who passing through the Valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also fills the pools.* They get a blessing on the road to God's House as well as a blessing in the House itself. It does their heart good even to be on the way to the assembly of God's people! And they sing with good Dr. Watts—

"How did my heart rejoice to hear
My friends devoutly say,
'In Zion let us all appear,
And keep the solemn day!'"

They also sing with the same writer—

***"I love her gates,* I love the road."**

The very road to God's House has a blessing in it for those whose hearts are right with the God of the House!

7. *They go from strength to strength,* They get stronger as they proceed on their happy, heavenward way. The men who love God and who live with God, grow stronger and stronger—not always in body, for the flesh may be growing weaker while "the inward man is renewed day by day." "They go from strength to strength," or, as it is in the margin, "They go from company to company," from the company of mourners to the company of hopers—from the company of hopers to the company of

Believers—from the company of the men and women of feeble faith to the company of those who rejoice in full assurance!

7. *Everyone of them in Zion appears before God.* That is the glory of going to God's House, that we go there to appear before God, to spread our needs before Him, to confess our sin to Him, to sun our souls in the light of His Countenance. It is little for us to appear before our fellow men, but to appear before *God* is a blessed prelude to that day "when He shall appear" and "we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

8. *O LORD God of Hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.* O God of wrestling Jacob, hear my prayer! O God, You who did make such a gracious Covenant with Jacob, be a Covenant God to me!

9. *Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of Your Anointed.* Look upon the face of Christ, O God, for He is "Your Anointed"!—

"Him, and then the sinner see!
Look through Jesus' wounds on me!"

10. *For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand.* That is, better than a thousand days spent anywhere else! Feasting and rioting with the ungodly are not worthy to be compared with feasting and praising in the courts of God's House.

10. *I had rather be a doorkeeper in the House of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.* I hope many of us can say, again with Dr. Watts—

"Might I enjoy the meanest place
Within Your House, O God of Grace!
Not tents of ease, nor thrones of power,
Should tempt my feet to leave Your door."

11, 12. *For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give Grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. O LORD of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusts in You.* Let us share that blessedness, dear Friends, and be as happy as we can by trusting in the Lord of Hosts as He deserves to be trusted.

—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.

BELIEVERS A BLESSING
NO. 3045

A SERMON
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"You shall be a blessing,"
Zechariah 8:13.

SO terribly had God punished idolatrous Israel and Judah that their names were a byword and a proverb among all the surrounding nations. If any man wished to pronounce upon his fellow man the most dreadful curse that he could utter, he would say, "May you become like a Jew—may a blight fall upon your whole life as awful as that which has fallen upon Israel!" Even the heathen used the Jewish nation as a model of their cursing and blasphemed the name of Jehovah who had poured out the vials of His wrath upon them. But God declared that He would return to His ancient people in love and mercy—and replenish them in the multitude of His loving kindnesses to them so that, from that time, instead of being the pattern of cursing, they should be used as the model of a blessing—that when men wished good things for one another, they would say, "May you be as blessed as the children of Israel, whom the Lord of Hosts has favored above all the rest of mankind!" You remember that old Jacob, when he blessed the sons of Joseph, uttered a sort of formula for future use by others, "He blessed them that day, saying, In you shall Israel bless, saying, God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh." And I believe that to this day, in Jewish marriages, the blessing is given to the newly-married couple, "As Isaac and Rebekah may they be!" In like manner would God make His people to become the model of benediction as before they had been the pattern of a curse.

Leaving that primary meaning of the passage, I am going to apply the promise of the text to the *spiritual* Israel. In His inscrutable wisdom, God allowed His ancient people, the nation of Israel, to become a curse among the other nations of the earth. Their idolatry was not only high treason against God, but it also gave the very heathen reason to blaspheme His holy name. The Lord said, by the mouth of the Prophet Jeremiah, "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, says the Lord. For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Israel turned aside from Jehovah to worship Baal, Ashtaroth and other false gods without number—and so,

by evil example, Israel led other people into idolatry, dishonored the name of the Most High and became a curse among the nations. Yet Israel was the guardian of the Oracles of God and the time will yet come when God shall again visit His ancient people—and the branches that have been broken off, because of unbelief, shall be grafted again into their own olive tree—and their "fullness" shall be "the riches of the Gentiles," as Paul so plainly shows in the parable of the olive trees in Romans 11:11-36. Indeed, at this very hour a Jew is the riches of Jews and Gentiles alike, for our Lord sprang out of Judah and, therefore, do we "take hold of the skirt of Him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with You." And He is to us, "more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir." The Son of Mary, who is also the Son of God, is our blessed Lord and Savior, and in Him is that ancient promise fulfilled which was made to Jacob at Bethel, "In you and in your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." We cannot sing too often that grand Coronation Anthem of the Christian Church—

"All hail the power of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall.
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all!
Crown Him, you martyrs of our God,
Who from His altar call.
Extol the stem of Jesse's rod,
And crown Him Lord of all!
You chosen seed of Israel's race,
A remnant weak and small,
Hail Him who saves you by His Grace,
And crown Him Lord of all!"

Yet let us not omit to sing also —

"The hymn shall yet in Zion swell
That sounds Messiah's praise,
And Your loved name, Immanuel!
As once in ancient days.
For Israel yet shall own her King,
For her salvation waits,
And hill and dale shall sweetly sing
With praise in all her gates."

Whereas through sin, then, Israel had been a curse to the other nations of the earth, she shall, through the mercy of God, be a blessing when she repents of her sin and accepts the Messiah whom she has so long rejected. But we need not confine to the literal Israel and Judah the promise of our text, for it belongs to all the people of God, and so to you, Beloved, who are, by faith, the true seed of believing Abraham! This promise is applicable to you—"You shall be a blessing."

I. And first, I want to remind you that THIS PROMISE QUICKENS REGRET WITHIN OUR SPIRITS—"You shall be a blessing."

Then the first emotion in our heart is that of *penitential sorrow.* If God says that He will make us a blessing, surely it is implied that once we were not so. Let us look back to the days of our unregeneracy. It may be that some of us were great curses to our families and to the

neighborhood in which we dwelt. If so, we must look back with deep sorrow upon the past, for, albeit that God has blotted out the guilt of our iniquity, yet the *consequences* of the sin still continue. We cannot undo the evil that we have done to others. If we first tempted them and they fell into sin, we may be forgiven the temptation, but we cannot recall it, nor can we put them back into the place from which they have fallen. A child once learned an evil word from you—oh, how gladly would you unsay that word if you could! But it entered that child's memory and it will abide there, perhaps forever! If you led others into places of frivolous amusement, or into haunts of vice, you may abhor those places, now, and God may have forgiven you the sin of your youth—but what about those whom you led there—what will become of them? You can pray for them and I know that you will do so. You will plead with them if you know where they are and you will be quickened in your service for the Savior by your remembrance of the earnestness with which you served Satan in those evil days of the past—but Beloved, there must still remain the bitter fruit of perpetual regret that you cannot destroy the results of that early sowing of bad seed! The handfuls of cockle and darnel that you scattered broadcast in the furrows—you cannot call them back again! The firebrands you have thrown, the hot coals that you have cast about and which caused such a terrible conflagration—you cannot undo the mischief and ruin that they worked! The results of good or evil deeds will abide forever and ever, so let us beware what we do since it can never be undone. So, first, when God makes us a blessing, it reminds us that we were once a curse.

It also brings to us—at least it does to me—*a painful remembrance of the time wasted*—time spent unprofitably before our conversion when, if we were not actually doing damage to the souls of others, yet we allowed opportunities for doing them good to glide by unused. Oh, these blessed hours, these precious hours, these more than golden hours in which Christians may win souls for the Lord Jesus Christ! Angels never had them and the spirits of just men made perfect have them no more. Though they can render other and perhaps yet higher service to their Lord, this special service of soul-winning is reserved for us who are still living on this earth. We have, at the longest, only a few days, or weeks, or months, or years allotted to us in which we may glorify God by being a blessing to our fellow creatures after we have found the Lord for ourselves! Yet some of us allowed many years to pass away before we even gave earnest heed to these things for ourselves. Those of us who were brought to know the Lord in our early youth, bless Him for that, yet we regret that we were not saved in our childhood. We wish we had given to God the very first rays of the morning of our life as well as the bright beams of the fuller day, so that we might have been made a blessing to the Church and the world as soon as we had intellect and understanding—and were capable of influencing the minds and hearts of others.

There is another reflection which is also a sorrowful one and causes us deep regret—namely that since the ever-blessed hour when the Holy Spirit taught us to trust in Jesus and gave us new life in Him, *we have not been such a blessing to our fellow creatures as we ought to have been.* Not altogether in vain have we lived—we have not sown to the flesh, but to the Spirit—yet how scanty has been our sowing of the Good Seed of the Kingdom! And, in consequence, how small has been the harvest that we have reaped! Oh, that we had availed ourselves of all the golden opportunities we have had of serving the Lord Jesus Christ! How much more good we might have done had we been earnest at all times, fervent at all seasons, had we thrown spirit, soul and body entirely into this holy service—and lived and breathed alone for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! If we had reached the ideal Christian life so that we did eat, drink and sleep eternal life, having Christ living in us and we living in Him, how much more we might have achieved than any of us have yet done! The capacity to "be a blessing" to others was given to all of us who have believed in Jesus at our conversion—but we have left that precious talent unused to a very large extent. To some Christians, and to some now present, this message must go home and this question must be asked and answered—what have we done for Him who died to save us? Alas, how little—at the most, how little—but by the most idle, alas, alas, how little! God help you to turn your regret to practical account while the glad sound of the text rings in your ears like the music of a silver bell, "You shall be a blessing." Let your tears fall plenteously as you recall the sad fact that before you knew the Lord, you were a curse to others—and not a blessing—and that even since you have known Him, you have not grasped the truth of the text and realized the fullness of its blessed meaning as you should have done, for such tears of regret will be likely to lead you to change your course of action for the future!

II. Let us now notice, in the second place, that OUR TEXT IS CALCULATED TO EXCITE INQUIRY as well as to quicken regret. Inquiries will come something in this style from young Believers, "Will you kindly tell us what we can do by which we shall be a blessing? We hear the promise of the text, but how can we get it fulfilled in our own experience? In what way can we be made a blessing to others?" Beloved Friends, there are many ways in which God can make you the channels of blessing to your fellow creatures if you are, yourselves, regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

First, it will probably be *by your consistent conduct* that you will be made a blessing to others more than in any other way. An unholy professor is a downright curse both to the church and to the world and, as for a church of inconsistent members, Satan himself could not devise an instrument more fitted to carry out his diabolical purposes! A community of ungodly men that is known by everybody to be a synagogue of Satan is robbed of much of its power to do mischief—but if it is misnamed a Church of Christ, it is potent for all manner of evil! An unholy professor outside the Church of God may batter against the walls

with small effect but inside, he would be like the concealed soldiers in the wooden horse who opened the gates of Troy to the besiegers. It was only an Apostle who could be such a "son of perdition" as Judas was, so beware, you who profess to be followers of Christ! You have great capacities for usefulness, but your position gives you immense capacities for doing damage to the cause of Christ. Only holy Christians are useful Christians—and the preaching of Christ's Truth must be backed up by the consistent living of Christ's followers if it is to have its due effect upon the hearts and lives of the ungodly. No doubt many a shaft has missed the mark because it has not been shot from the bow of a consistent preacher, or because it has been turned aside by inconsistency in the church of which he is the pastor. Oh, for holy living! The honest tradesman who has just weights and measures. The diligent domestic servant who sweeps under the mats and in the dark corners. The laborious workman who may be trusted when his master is absent. The man who would not tell a lie even though he could win a fortune or a throne by doing so. The man who in all things acts justly towards men and walks humbly before his God—these are the people who "shall be a blessing" to all around them! If a man had no tongue and so never spoke a word. If it were not in his power to bestow as much as a farthing upon the poor. If he could not visit the sick or the prisoners, yet his very presence upon the earth would be in itself a blessing—a silent reproof, but none the less eloquent to ungodly men—and a powerful example to such as wish to walk in the way of righteousness. "Be you holy," for so shall you serve God and serve the Church of Christ and, in the highest sense, serve your generation and serve the world! I love to sing, with John Newton—

"Let worldly minds the world pursue,
It has no charms for me!
Once I admired its trifles too,
But Grace has set me free!
Now, Lord, I would be Yours alone,
And wholly live to Thee!"

But, in addition to that, all Christians may be made a blessing to others *by instructing them in the Truths of the Gospel.* The world is still very dark, spiritually, though many people foolishly speak of "this enlightened century." It has "light" of a certain sort—or rather, of a very *uncertain* sort—within it. But the light that is in it is almost entirely darkness! It is still true of the bulk of mankind, as it was in Isaiah's day—they "put darkness for light, and light for darkness…bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!" Today the scarcest thing in the whole world is true spiritual light and, where it is revealed, men hate it and try to banish it from their sight! Philosophy is exalted above Revelation. Science, falsely so-called, is set up in the place of Christ who is the Wisdom of God, though true science is never in conflict with the true Gospel. And anything that pretends to be light is preferred by many to Him who is "the true Light." Spiritual Light is mainly conveyed to the dark souls of

men through the proclamation of the Gospel—the good news concerning Jesus Christ, the Savior of sinners. So, proclaim that—

"Old, old story
Of Jesus and His love"—

to as many as you can! Tell it to thousands, to hundreds, to scores—tell it to one if you cannot tell it to more. Tell to all, as far as you can, these precious things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ—His Incarnation, His holy life, His wondrous Words, His perfect example and His substitutionary death! Tell these things to your children and charge them to tell them to *their* children—and to charge *their* children to tell them to the generation following. Tell that great central Truth of the substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ to the man who sits beside you in the tram or train, or who calls at your house on business! Seize every opportunity you can get of letting men know, by the Inspired Word of God, or by the written or spoken message, all that you can about "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood," "and by Him all that believe are justified from all things." And not only justified, but also glorified! Every true testimony to Christ brings glory to God and blessing to men. A preacher may halt and limp, his elocution may be faulty, his theology may be open to criticism—but if it is "the Gospel of Christ" that he proclaims, it will be precious Truth to the saints who hear him—and sinners will be saved by it!

Not only by instructing men will you be a blessing to them, but also *by reproof.* This is a far more difficult matter and probably nine out of ten of us had better keep to the easier task of giving instruction. Yet now and then there will come occasions when you must not see sin in your Brother or Sister without rebuking it. If I hear blasphemy and am able to condemn it, yet do not, my silence makes me a sharer in the sin. I am always afraid lest when I hear God's name blasphemed, my guilty silence should make me an accomplice of the blasphemer. A rebuke need not be and should not be discourteous or disrespectful. And it should not be unduly severe, but I am afraid that nowadays we are not so likely to err by our harshness, as by failing to be faithful to our conscience and our God. We must boldly stand up, at all costs, for God, for truth, for purity. Shut your ear to the lascivious song—do not allow it to be sung in your house—and let not scandal be spoken at your table! Set your face like a flint against sin of every kind and, God speeding your testimony, you "shall be a blessing."

More frequently, however, and much more pleasingly to yourself, you can be a blessing *by giving words of comfort.* And often something more substantial than words to the poor and afflicted ones with whom you may come into contact. If you know someone who is fighting with a fierce temptation, go and help to succor him. If you know another who is struggling with a troublesome doubt, try to assist him to drive it away. Your experience may be just what he needs to know, so tell him. Be not backward or bashful in speaking of what the Lord has done for you. I am

always grieved when I hear of any persons coming to this Tabernacle for a long time and nobody speaking to them—let it not be so. Do endeavor, Brothers and Sisters—you who know Christ by experience—to tell others of the sweetness that you have found in Him and of the faithfulness of God to His promises—and of the power of prayer and the reality of faith. You will thus bring many a poor soul out of bondage who, but for you, might have lingered long in Doubting Castle in the dungeons of Giant Despair. God grant you the Grace "to speak a word in season to him that is weary." A word on wheels, as Solomon calls, "a word fitly spoken," is like apples of gold on plates of silver.

Besides that you can be a blessing *by your actions,* as well as by your words. Some of you have the means with which you can assist your poorer neighbors. Of all people who ought to be kind and neighborly. Of all who should be sympathetic and generous, the Christian should be the first! The tendency nowadays is to get everything under a cast-iron code of law and I should not wonder if a law is passed, some day, making it penal to give sixpence to a poor person who is starving. Somebody said to me today when I was telling him how I had been deceived by a vagabond whom I had relieved, "It is such as you who make the vagabonds." If so, I shall go on making vagabonds sooner than let the stream of charity in my soul be frozen into ice! It is better to be taken in a few times than to let the heart become hardened like steel against the real poverty that there is in London and many other places besides—the gaunt, grim poverty that may soon be seen if we will but take a little trouble to search for it. Be charitable, notwithstanding all the mischief that unworthy applicants may make of your charity, remembering the command of our Savior to His disciples, "Give to him that asks you."

You can also "be a blessing" in many other ways which I need not mention now. In such a vast city as this metropolis, there is work for all to do. A Christian living in a remote hamlet might, perhaps, say to his minister, "Sir, can you find me an opportunity of serving the Lord?" But no person who lives in London ought to ask another person, "What can I do for Christ?" If he is willing to do *anything* for the Master, the work lies at his door! Floods of sin are surging all around you—and sinners are sinking in them! Stretch out your hands to help them—

"Rescue the perishing, care for the dying—
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave."

In such a city as this, with hundreds of thousands—I might truthfully say, millions—needing the Bread of Life and the Water of Life—and with many of them literally needing bread and water—all of you can do something to relieve them! And I beseech you, if you love your Lord and Master, do the first thing that comes to hand and "whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might." Well did Dr. Horatius Bonar write—

"'Tis not for man to trifle!
Life is brief,
And sin is here.

Our age is but the falling of a leaf,
A dropping tear.
We have no time to sport away the hours,
All must be earnest in a world like ours.
Not many lives but only one have we,
One, only one—
How sacred should that one life always be,
That narrow span!
Day after day filled up with blessed toil,
Hour after hour still bringing in new spoil."

III. Now we must pass on to the third point which is that OUR TEXT IS ALSO CALCULATED TO SUGGEST ENDEAVOR. It has quickened regret and excited inquiry—now it suggests endeavor. But what endeavor?

Well, first I think *it stirs us up to look for a blessing upon what we have already tried to do for Christ and His Church.* You, my Brother, have been teaching a Sunday school class for two years—is it not time that you saw some blessing? Go and look for it! Perhaps in looking for it, you will be the means, under God, of bringing it to your scholars. I think that an earnest, godly teacher, believing that God had blessed his message, would be well repaid if he asked the boys or girls in his class, "Has God blessed your souls through my teaching?" If he asked that question with tears, it might be more effective than all his ordinary teaching. And you, my dear Brother, have you been preaching in some little mission-room in London or in the country and have you seen no "fruit" from your sowing of the Good Seed of the Kingdom? Have you asked, "Who has believed our report?" If so, I ask you—"Have you believed the promise of my text, 'You shall be a blessing'?" If not, do so at once and go and inquire if there has not been a blessing—and never rest satisfied until you have it!

Next, *the text bids us look for a blessing wherever we may be and whatever we may do.* What have you been doing just lately? You have moved to a more suitable neighborhood? Then let one of your first questions there be, "How can I be a blessing here?" You have been recently married. I congratulate you and suggest that you should ask, "How can I, in my new relationship, be made a blessing?" You, my Friend over yonder, have gone down in the world lately—well then, ask yourself, "For what purpose am I put in this lower position? Is it not that I may be a blessing to some whom I could not have reached under happier circumstances?" Are you a commercial traveler? Are you not sent from town to town to be a blessing to those you meet? Are you a tradesman? Are you not put behind the counter to be a blessing there?

So I might go on addressing the members of various trades or professions, but I want to remind you that *there are some persons who ought, above all others, to aim at being a blessing to their fellow creatures.* And I put, first of all, ministers of the Gospel. O my Brothers in the ministry, if we are not a blessing, we are a double curse! Every so-called "place of worship" in which the true Gospel is not preached is a curse, for it is like a sepulcher full of rottenness doing nothing but harm!

Worldlings more often judge Christianity by fruitless trees than by fruit-bearing trees. O preacher, be a blessing, or never enter the pulpit again!

This rule should also apply to parents. What a blessing Christian parents often are to their children! I can conceive of nothing more natural and, at the same time, nothing more blessed than a father and mother who, by precept and example, have trained up their children in God's fear and whose loving instruction and earnest prayers have been blessed by the Holy Spirit to their children's salvation! What greater joy can we have than to see our children walking in the Truth of God? God grant that you, fathers and mothers, may all diligently seek to be a blessing to your offspring!

There may be some domestic servants here. If so, let me remind you that you have great opportunities for being made a blessing. Good servants can contribute much to the well-being of the family. By the faithful discharge of their duties, they may be the means of preventing others from committing sin. Whereas on the other hand, untidy and idle servants create so much discord in the household that they are the fomenters of sin! I do not know of any person who can have so much influence for good as a godly maid who has the care of little children—one who, instead of scaring them with wicked threats or silly tales, talks to them discreetly concerning Him who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me." I have known domestic servants who were earnest Christians, who have gone to live where there was no religion whatever, no family prayer and no Sabbath observance—and without ever intruding beyond their proper place, they have worked a blessed revolution in the house—and their masters and mistresses and fellow servants have been brought to Christ by their godly example! Let all Christian servants here endeavor to get the fulfillment of the promise of our text, "You shall be a blessing."

I might speak thus to you who have the duty and privilege of instructing the children in our schools, to you masters of large factories, to you who, as workingmen, meet with great numbers of your fellow men—all of you ought to aim at realizing this promise, "You shall be a blessing." Dearly beloved in Christ, let me say to all of you—Do, by God's Grace, maintain a holiness of walk with God and then seek to be a blessing to others. Look at the six words before our text—"So will I save you, and you shall be a blessing." It is only as you yourselves are, in the fullest sense, *saved*—saved from falling into sin, saved from inward corruption, saved from error—it is only as you are conformed to the image of Christ that you can expect to be a blessing to others. Do, I pray you, as members of this Christian Church, always feel that you are to take your full share in being made a blessing to others! There are some who hold that blessing comes to men only through priests—that is what I hold! I believe that no blessing comes to men except through priests! First, through the great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, and then through all who believe in Him, who are, as Peter says, "a holy priesthood" and "a royal priesthood," and whose song in Heaven shall be,

"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."

The priesthood of the Christian Church is common to all the saints! There is no other true priesthood but that of the Lord Jesus Christ. I cannot discharge any of your religious duties or relieve you of any of your responsibilities. My own are quite heavy enough for me to bear—I will seek, as God gives me Grace, to discharge them—but I cannot discharge the responsibilities of any other person in the world! You, having been personally redeemed by Christ, personally washed in His blood, personally saved by His Grace, are to render personal service to Him. All proxy-religion must be abhorrent to Christ, "who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." He did not seek to find someone else to save you, for He knew that no one else could do it! He tread the winepress alone and of the people there was none with Him. So, to your personal Redeemer render your personal service. Give liberally of your substance to help others to do their part of the work, but give yourself—spirit, soul and body—for these are claimed by Christ as "your reasonable service."

IV. Now I must conclude by trying to show you that our TEXT FURNISHES US WITH MANY CONSOLATIONS. "You shall be a blessing."

Some of you have to live in places where you are not comfortable. Perhaps you are not in a neighborhood that you like. Possibly in the very house where you live there may be others whose thoughts and feelings are very different from yours and, sometimes, you are grieved and perhaps perplexed because you have to live there. But if God put you there, "you shall be a blessing." My dear Friend, Mr. Orsman of the Golden Lane Mission, has often told me that the results of his work will never be visible in Golden Lane because as soon as a man is converted, he begins to save, he becomes industrious, wears a better coat, seeks a better house, for he cannot live in that dirty room in which he once lived and he cannot bear the foul language of the court or alley—so, very properly and very naturally—he moves away! Unhappily there are always others coming in to keep the place as bad as ever. Now, when a Christian man is compelled to live in such a place as that, let him conclude that he has been put there that he may be a blessing. If that is your trying lot, my Brother, fight the devil where you are placed, on his own ground! It is not fair that you should have the pick of the spot where the great duel is to be fought. Fight the devil where he has a firm foothold and beat him by God's Grace! I think if I were a gas lamp and had the choice of the place where I should be hung—and it was proposed to me that I should hang up somewhere in the West End where there is already abundance of light streaming from the fine shops—I don't know that I would particularly care to be put there. But if there was a dark corner where thieves were in the habit of meeting and where much mischief might be done if it were not for the light of a lamp—I fancy I should ask to be hung up there where I should be of the most use! At any rate, if you are

placed, in the Providence of God, in a dark neighborhood, let this be your prayer, "O Lord, make me a blessing here!"

Perhaps, however, you are a member of an ungodly family. Now, you had no hand in that matter. You were not responsible for your birth and you cannot get out of that family into which you were born. Now, instead of saying, "I wish I had a Christian mother and that our house were ordered in God's fear," say, "God has called me, by His Grace. At present I am the only one saved, but He must mean me to be a blessing to my brothers, sisters and parents and, therefore, I am thankful that He has put me where I am needed. I will try to do everything that shall be kind to them—I will win their love if I can and I will also try to win them for Christ." I am really thankful when some of you come to join the Church and tell me that there is no other in the house who cares for the things of God—for I look upon your conversion as getting in the thin end of the wedge! If we get one who fears God inside the house, I hope we shall get more, for, blessed be God, good example is contagious as well as bad! God grant that since it is your unhappiness to have ungodly relatives, it may be your happiness to "be a blessing" to them!

It may be that you are persecuted, that you live in places where you are sneered at, where the Doctrines that are dearer than life to you, are regarded with contempt and Scriptural ordinances, in which you delight, are held up to constant ridicule. Do not altogether regret this, but say to yourself, "Perhaps I am put here in order that I may be a blessing to my persecutors." Do not imagine that the unlikeliest man to get a blessing out of you is the one who laughs most at you. I sometimes think that the infidels who shout most loudly have more faith than others and that because they are afraid they shall hear conscience speak, they make a great clamor to try to drown its voice! When a man bullies you, there is a great deal better opportunity for you to get at him than when he says, as so many do, "Oh, yes, Sir, it is all true"—and there the matter ends as far as they are concerned. But there is something in a man who will stand up to oppose you and you may yet be able to say a word for Christ that will be blessed to him. Why should we want to run away because men mock us? If they say, "Come and fight," let us go and fight—only with other weapons than theirs—with the weapons of holy gentleness giving a good reason for the hope that is within us with meekness and fear, for that is always the more powerful way of speaking! Do not, therefore, fear persecution, but rather thank God for it, and say, "I have to endure this that I may be a blessing to those who revile and abuse me."

Brothers and Sisters, I think our text furnishes *sweet consolation to any who have been engaged in very arduous service.* Have you a great deal to do for Christ—a great deal too much to do, it often seems to you? Are you incessantly occupied about the Lord's business? Then thank God for it, for He has said, "You shall be a blessing"—and the more you have to do for Him, the more blessing you are likely to be the means of conveying to others!

Or on the other hand, *are you passing through a very trying experience?* If so, you are being qualified for greater usefulness. Your dark experience will only teach you more that you will be able to teach to others concerning God and His dealings with His own. Believe that you will become a blessing to others by means of your trials and cheerfully bow your heads to overwhelming floods of sorrow in the confident assurance that you will thus be made a blessing to others—and so bring glory to God!

Yes, Beloved, and *we may even be content to die* if our last testimony shall be more useful than any that we have borne before! If God will enable us to glorify Him by being a blessing to others, we will be content. I hope we can say that we desire nothing on earth compared with this—to be blessed of God and to be made a blessing by God. We covet not earthly wealth or position, but we do covet the honor of being a blessing! Have an insatiable thirst for this honor, beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ—to be a blessing to tens, to hundreds, to thousands, to the millions of this great city! Incessantly strive, by your private prayer, by your generous alms, by your kindly deeds, by your public testimony, to be a blessing and may God bless you more and more—you and your children—for His dear name's sake!

But, alas, there are many who cannot be a blessing to others, for they are not themselves saved. They are getting gray, but they are not saved! Death will soon call for them. Hell opens wide for them and they are not saved! May the Lord have mercy upon all of you who are not saved and may He, by His Grace, constrain you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and then to make the Scriptural profession of your faith, for HE said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." May God grant that you may all "be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation," for Jesus' sake! Amen.

[PUBLISHERS' NOTE—Mr. Spurgeon's Exposition of Zechariah 8 was an unusually long one, so it must appear with the next *short* Sermon that is published.] [It is in Sermon #3047, Volume 53, IF SO—WHAT THEN?—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

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

ONE OF THE MASTER'S CHOICE SAYINGS
NO. 3046

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 27, 1907.

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

"But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart."
Matthew 14:16.

OF course the Master was right, but He appeared to speak unreasonably. It seemed self-evident that the people very much needed to depart. They had been all day long hearing the Preacher. The most of them had not broken their fast and they were ready to faint for hunger. The only chance of their being fed was to let them break up into small parties and forage for themselves among the surrounding villages. But our Lord declared that there was no necessity for them to go away from Him, even though they were hungry, famished and in a desert place. Now, if there was no necessity for hungry hearers to go away, much less will it ever be necessary for loving disciples to depart from Him! If these, who were hearers only—and the bulk of them were nothing more, a congregation collected by curiosity and held together by the charm of His eloquence and by the renown of His miracles—if these needed not to depart, much less need they depart who are His own friends and companions, His chosen and beloved. If the crowds needed not through hunger to depart bodily, much less need any of the saints depart spiritually from their Lord. There is no necessity that our communion with Christ should ever be suspended—

"***To walk with Christ from morn till eve,***
In Him to breathe, in Him to live—

is no mere wish, no visionary's prayer—it may be realized—we need not depart from Jesus! There is no need that the spouse of Christ should wander from beneath the banner of His love. Mary may always sit at Jesus' feet. There is no Law which says to holy fellowship, "To here shall you come, but no further. Here shall your communion cease!" There is no set hour when the gate of communion with Christ must inevitably be closed. We may continue to come up from the wilderness, leaning upon the Beloved. We "need not depart." Yet is it so commonly thought to be a matter of course that we should wander from our Lord that I shall ask for strength from Heaven to combat the injurious opinion.

I. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, THERE IS NO PRESENT NECESSITY FOR YOUR DEPARTING FROM CHRIST. At this moment we may truthfully say of all the saints of God, "They need not depart."

There is *nothing in your circumstances* which compels you to cease from following hard after your Lord. You are very poor, you say. But you need not depart from Christ because of penury, for, in the depths of distress the saints have enjoyed the richest Presence of their once houseless

Lord. Your poverty may be pinching you at this very moment—to be relieved from that pinch you need not break away from Jesus, for fellowship with Him may be maintained under the direst extremity of need. Indeed, your need increases your necessity to walk closely with your Lord so that patience may have its perfect work and your soul may be sustained by the mighty consolations which flow out of nearness to Jesus. Need shall not separate the soul from communion with Him who hungered in the wilderness and thirsted on the Cross! You tell me that in order to relieve your necessities, you are compelled to exercise great care and anxiety. But all the cares which are useful and allowable are such as will allow of a continuance of fellowship with Christ! You may care as much as you ought to care—and I need not say how little that is—and yet you need not depart from Him who cares for you. But you tell me that in addition to deep thought, you have to expend much labor in order to provide things honest in the sight of all men. Yes, but you need not depart from Christ for that reason! The carpenter's Son is not ashamed of the sons of toil—He who wore the garment without seam does not despise the peasant's smock or the servant's apron. Labor is no enemy to communion—idleness is a far more likely separator of the soul from Christ. Not to the idlers in Herod's court did Jesus reveal Himself, but to hard-working fishermen by the lake of Galilee. If Satan is never far away from the idle, it is pretty plain that it is no disadvantage to be busy! A toil amounting to slavery may weaken the body and prostrate the spirit, but even when heart and flesh fail, the heart may call the Lord its portion. There is no service beneath the sun so arduous that you need depart from Christ in it! But rather, while the limbs are weary, the spirit should find its rest in drawing nearer to Him who can strengthen the weak and give rest to the laboring and heavy-laden.

Do you tell me that you are rich? Ah, indeed, how often has this made men depart from Christ!—

"Gold and the Gospel seldom do agree—
Religion always sides with poverty."

So said John Bunyan and his saying is true. Too often the glitter of wealth has dazzled men's eyes so that they could not see the beauty of Christ Jesus. But O, you few wealthy saints, you need not depart! The camel can go through the needle's eye for, "with God, all things are possible." Men have worn coronets on earth and inherited crowns in Heaven! He who was the man after God's own heart swayed a scepter. To grow rich in substance does not make it inevitable that you should become poor in Divine Grace. Do riches bring you many responsibilities and burdens—and are you so much occupied with them that your fellowship with the Lord grows slack? It should not be so. You need not depart from Him. You can bring those responsibilities and the wealth to Jesus and communion with Him will prevent the gold from cankering and the responsibility from involving you in sin. Very often the servant of God who ministers to the Church of Christ finds so much to do in watching over the souls of others—and in caring for the various needs of the flock—that he is in danger of losing his own personal enjoyment of his Lord's Presence. But it need not be so. We can make all our many works subser-

vient to our personal communion with our Lord and, as the bee flies to many flowers and gathers honey from each one, so may we, out of many forms of service, extract a sweet conformity to Him who was always about His Father's business. We need not be "cumbered" either with much serving or with much suffering. Our surroundings are not to be our sovereigns, but our subjects. We are, in all these things, to be "more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

Brothers and Sisters, you need not depart *because of anything in Christ Jesus.* Those whom we love most would not desire us to be always with them and never out of their sight. A guest is very welcome, but the proverb says that after three days he is stale. A mother does not always want her child in her arms! Its face is the epitome of beauty, but at eventide she is glad that those dear blue eyes no longer shine upon her—she is happy to lay her treasure in its cradle basket. We do not always wish for the company of those whom we compassionate—if they will condense their requests and do their errands rapidly, we are best content. And Jesus Christ says to us, His poor dependents, His crying children, "You need not depart." When we are weeping, He will lay us in His bosom and give us rest. When we are famishing, He will entertain us at His royal table till we forget our misery. He is "a Friend that sticks closer than a brother" in this respect, for we need not, in this instance, heed the wise man's caution, "Go not into your brother's house in the day of your calamity," for we may, at all times and seasons, resort to our elder Brother! We may ask Him, "Where do You dwell?" and when we receive His answer, we may go forth and dwell with Him and make His house our home. Do you not remember His words, "Abide *in* Me"? Not merely "Abide with Me," but, "Abide *in* Me." The closest contact with Christ may be maintained with the utmost constancy—

"You need not depart, you may tarry for, yes,
Unchanged is His heart, He invites you to stay!
He does not despise nor grow weary of you,
You're fair in His eyes and most comely to view.
Then wish not to roam, but abide with your Lord
Since He is your home, go no longer abroad!
Lie down on His breast in unbroken repose,
For there you may rest, though surrounded with foes."

II. Secondly, NO FUTURE NECESSITY WILL EVER ARISE TO COMPEL YOU TO DEPART FROM JESUS. It will always be true, "You need not depart."

You do not know what *your needs* will be and though you are no Prophet, your words will be true if you affirm that no need shall ever necessarily divide you from Jesus because your needs will, instead, bind you to Him. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." "And of His fullness have we all received, and Grace for Grace." We will draw nearer to Him, in time of need, to obtain the Grace we need! We shall never be forced to go elsewhere to find supplies for our spiritual needs! There stands another trader over the way who gladly would have you deal with him—"his Infallible Holiness," as he styles himself—but, ah, if you need Infallibility, you need not wander from Him who is "the Truth!"

And if you desire holiness, you need not withdraw from Him who was the "Holy Child Jesus." To gain all that the superstitious profess to find in Babylon, you need not depart from the Son of David who reigns in Zion! They tell us that we must confess our sins to a priest—we will stay at home and lay bare our hearts to the great High Priest who "sprang out of Judah" and who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." They teach that we must receive absolution from one chosen from among men to forgive sins—we go at once to Him who was raised from the dead "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." They tell us that we should continue in morning and evening prayers—we do so, and offer our "matins" and our "vespers" where no bells call us except the bells upon our High Priest's garments! Our daily office may not be according to "the use of Sarum," but it is according to the use of those who "worship God in spirit and in truth." They cry up their daily sacrifice of the "mass"—but in Him who "offered one Sacrifice for sins forever," we find our All-in-All! His "flesh is meat, indeed," and His "blood drink, indeed." You "need not depart" to pope or priest, church or altar, for you may rest assured that there dwells in the Man, Christ Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant, all that your spiritual needs shall need for their supply! And on no occasion—for any needs that can by any possibility arise—need you go down into Egypt for help, or trust yourself to Assyria or Babylon!

You will experience *great trials* as well as great needs. That young man, fresh from the country, has come to town to live in a godless family. And last night he was laughed at when he knelt down to pray. My young Friend, you need not forsake the faith, for other saints have endured more severe ordeals than yours and have still rejoiced in the Lord! Yours are only the trials of cruel mocking—*they* were stoned and sawn asunder—yet neither persecution, nor nakedness, nor sword divided them from the love of God in Christ Jesus their Lord! Many also are those with whom God, in His Providence, deals severely—all His waves and billows go over them! Through much tribulation they enter the Kingdom of God and everything in the future forebodes multiplied adversities—but still, "they need not depart" from Jesus their Friend! If, like Paul, you should come to a place where two seas meet. If you should experience a double trouble and if neither sun nor moon should give you cheer, yet you need not suspend, but may rather deepen your fellowship with the Man of Sorrows! Christ is with you in the tempest-tossed vessel and you, and those who sail with you, shall yet come to the desired haven. Therefore be of good courage and let not your hearts be troubled. The Son of God will be with you in the furnace heated seven times hotter than normal. He has said, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you; when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you." This proves to a demonstration that you "need not depart" from Christ in great trials!

You will also encounter *many difficulties* between here and Heaven. Those who paint the road to Glory through rose-colored glasses have

never trodden it. Many are the hills and dales between this Jericho and the city of the Great King! Let who will, be without trials—Christians will have their full share of them! But there shall come no difficulty of any kind, between here and Paradise, which shall necessitate the soul's going anywhere but to her gracious Lord for guidance, for consolation, for strength, or for anything besides! Little know we of the walls to be leaped or the troops to be overcome—but we know full well that we never need part from the Captain of our salvation, or call in other helpers.

Death will probably befall us, but we "need not depart" from Jesus in the hour of our departure out of this world. On the contrary, when the death-dew lies cold on our brow we will sing—

"If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now"—

and we will say with the Apostle Paul, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Straight on into eternity—and on and on forever—that word, "depart," never need cross our path. As never in eternity will the great Judge pronounce the sentence, "Depart, you cursed," upon His saints, so never in His Providence, nor in the severest trial will He render it necessary that the saints should in any sense depart from Him—

"***Never, O time, in your darkest hour***
Shall I need depart from Him,
Though round me your blackest tempests lower
And both sun and moon grow dim.
Faster and faster each grief shall bind
My soul to her Lord above
And all the woes that assail my mind
Shall drive me to rest in His love."

There is no necessity, then, in the present—and there will be none in the future—for departing from communion with the Lord!

III. Thirdly, "they need not depart." that is to say, NO FORCE CAN COMPEL THE CHRISTIAN TO DEPART FROM JESUS.

The world can tempt us to depart and, alas, too successfully does it seduce with its fascinating blandishments! Its frowns alarm the cowardly and its smiles delude the unwary, but none need depart. If we have Grace enough to play the man, Madam Bubble cannot lead us astray! "Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird." We need not be taken in the world's traps—there is One who can deliver us from the snare of the fowler! We are not ignorant of the devices of Satan and the temptations of the world—we are not *compelled* to fall from our steadfastness—and if we do, it is our willful fault. There is no necessity for it. Many live above the world—many in as difficult circumstances as ours. There are those in Heaven who have found as hard hand-to-hand fighting in the spiritual life as we do—yet they were not vanquished, nor need we be—for the same strength which was given to them is also available for us!

"But," says one, "you do not know where I live." Perhaps not. "You do not know what I have to endure," cries another. Most true, but I know

where my Lord lived and I have read that He endured "such contradiction of sinners against Himself" that Paul holds Him up as a pattern to all His people! He did not depart from holiness, nor from love to you. "You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Perseverance to the end is possible to every Believer—no, it is *promised* to us and we may have it for the seeking! You need not depart from Christ, my young Friend—the world cannot drag you from Jesus, though it may entice you. Yield not and you shall stand, for "there has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor 10:13).

Satan is a very cunning tempter of the souls of men, but though he would gladly constrain you to depart from your Lord, you need not do his bidding. Satan is strong, but Christ is stronger! His temptations are insinuating, but you are no longer in darkness that you should be deceived by him. You "need not depart." Even though surprising temptation should assault you unawares, it ought not to find you sleeping. Has not Christ said, "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch"? You will not be surprised if holy anxiety stands sentinel to your soul. Prayer and watchfulness will warn you of the enemy's approach and, therefore, you need not be driven to forsake your Lord.

Yes, but it may be that in addition to the world and to Satan, you are very conscious of *the terrible depravity of your own heart.* And, indeed, that is the chief ground of fear! The heart is deceitful, prone to wander and ready enough to depart from the living God—but you "need not depart" from the Master because of that. The newborn nature takes up arms against the body of sin and death. The Holy Spirit also dwells within to conquer indwelling sin. Shall not the life which is from above subdue the natural death? Shall not the Spirit of God purge out the old leaven? You "need not depart" from Jesus! It is true that you have a fiery temper, but it must not prevail—there is a cure for that plague. Perhaps we are inclined to levity, but we need not let our frivolous nature reign—Grace can overcome it and will. "Where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound." There is no unconquerable sin! There is no Dagon that shall not be broken in the presence of the Ark of God! There is no temple of the Philistines which shall not fall beneath the might of our greater Samson! We need not, as the result of temperament, or because of any sin that does so easily beset us, depart from Jesus, for Grace is equal to all emergencies.

Do you call to mind that there may be another force employed beside that of the world, or of Satan, or the corruption within, namely, *the lamentable coldness of the Christian Church?* Truly it is to be feared that more have departed from close walking with Christ through the chilliness of inconsistent professors than from almost any other cause! Newborn children of God too often feel the atmosphere of the church to be as freezing as that of an ice-well. Their holy warmth of zeal is frozen and their limbs are stiffened into a rigor of inactivity—so that it is a marvel that they do not die—and die they would were not the spiritual life im-

mortal and eternal! But, Brothers and Sisters, even in the midst of the coldest church we "need not depart" from a near and elevated fellowship with the Lord. The church of Rome is a church defiled with error and debased with superstition, but was there ever a nobler Christian woman in this world than Madame de la Mothe Guyon? She did not depart from Christ, though in the midst of a pestilent atmosphere. Remember, too, the names of Jansenius, Arnold, Pascal, and Fenelon which are an honor to the universal Church of Christ—who ever walked in closer communion with Christ than those holy men did? In the midst of the darkest ages, there have shone forth the brightest stars! John wrote, by Inspiration, "You have a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments." Often am I told, by some Brother in a country village where the minister seems to have gone to sleep 20 years ago and has never awakened since, that he finds it very hard to rejoice in the Lord, for his Sabbaths are a burden instead of a joy. My dear Brother, you need all the more Grace if this is your case! You must have more vitality within if you see so much death without. You "need not depart" from Christ—on the contrary, by becoming an example of living near to Christ, yourself, you may be the means of quickening others, for, thank God, Grace is contagious as well as sin! At any rate, it is certain that though many influences may seduce us, no force can compel us to depart from Jesus—

"***No power in earth or Hell***
Can force me to depart—
Christ is my unconquerable strength,
He fortifies my heart!
Fixed in His love I stand,
And none shall drive me thence—
Enclosed I am within the hand
Of Love's Omnipotence!"

IV. Regarded from another point, our text may teach us that THERE IS NO IMPOSSIBILITY IN KEEPING CLOSE TO THE BELOVED.

Many Believers think that if they have fellowship every now and then with Jesus, with long intervals between, they are quite as much advanced as they need be and have probably reached as far as human nature is ever likely to go. An affectation of superfine godliness is suspicious but, at the same time, a higher standard of religion than is commonly seen among professors at this time *can be maintained*—and ought to be maintained. We ought to attain to such a walk with God—to so calm and serene a frame—that the light which shines upon our pathway shall be constant and clear. "Enoch walked with God" for hundreds of years. So cannot a man, nowadays, walk with God for 20 years? Enoch lived in the dark age of the world, comparatively, so cannot we, who live under the Gospel dispensation, continuously walk with God? Enoch begat sons and daughters and so had all the cares of a household—yet he walked with God—so cannot we, who have the same cares, yet still, by Divine Grace, be enabled to maintain unbroken communion with Christ? I know the place is high where they stand who consciously abide in Christ, but will you not strive to climb there and bathe your foreheads in the everlasting sunlight of Jehovah's face? I know that it would require most

jealous walking, but you serve a jealous God and He demands holy jealousy from you! Oh the joy of living in the embrace of Jesus and never departing from it! Oh the bliss of sitting always at His feet, abiding with the Bridegroom and listening to His voice! Surely the gain is worth the exertion and the prize is worthy of the struggle! Let us not, since the attainment is not impossible, murmur at the difficulty, but rather, in faith, let us ask that we may begin tonight to achieve the blessed result and continue to achieve it till we are privileged to see the face of Christ in Heaven! Others have done so—why shouldn't we?

Brothers and Sisters, the way to maintain fellowship with Christ is very simple. If you desire to retain in your mouth all day the flavor of the "wines on the lees well refined," take care that you drink deeply of them by morning devotion. Do not waste those few minutes which you allot to morning prayer! Lay a text on your tongue and, like a wafer made with honey, it shall sweeten your soul till nightfall! During the day, when you can do so, think about your Redeemer—His Person, His work. Pray to Him and ask Him to speak to you. All day long lean on the Beloved. During the day, serve Him and constantly say, "Lord, how can I best serve You in my calling?" Consecrate the kitchen, consecrate the marketroom—make every place holy by glorifying the Lord there. Converse much with Him and it will not be impossible for you to abide in Him from the year's beginning to its close! You "need not depart." There is no mental or spiritual impossibility in the maintenance of unbroken communion with Christ if the Holy Spirit is your Helper!

V. Once more, we "need not depart." That is to say, THERE IS NO REASON THAT CAN BE IMAGINED WHICH WOULD RENDER IT A WISE, PROPER AND GOOD THING FOR A CHRISTIAN TO DEPART FROM CHRIST.

Suppose that *the search after happiness* is the great drift of our life, as the old philosophers assert—then we "need not depart" from Jesus to win it, for He is Heaven below! If you desire pleasure, forget not that the pleasures of God which are in Christ—His joy, the joy that fills His great heart—are more than enough to fill *your* heart! I sometimes hear people say, as an excuse for professors going to doubtful places of amusement, "You know, they must have some recreation." Yes, I know, but the *re*-creation which the Christian experienced when he was born-again has so completely made all things new to him, that the vile rubbish called recreation by the world is so dull to him that he might as well try to fill himself with fog as to satisfy his soul with such utter vanity! No, the Christian finds happiness in Christ Jesus—and when he needs pleasure, he does not depart from Jesus.

Perhaps it is said that *we require a little excitement now and then,* for excitement gives a little stimulant to life and is as useful to it as stirring is to a fire. I know it and I trust you may have excitement, for the medicinal power of a measure of exhilaration and excitement is great. But you "need not depart" from Christ to get it, for there is such a thing as the soul's dancing at the sound of His name while all the sanctified passions are lifted up in the ways of the Lord! Holy mirth will sometimes so bubble

up and overflow in the soul, that the man will say with Paul, "Whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell; God knows." Joy in Christ can rise to ecstasy and soar aloft to bliss! If you desire to wear the highest crown of joy, you "need not depart" from Christ.

"But," it is said, "*we require food for our intellect.* A man needs to develop his intellectual faculties. He must learn that which will enlarge and expand his mind." Certainly, by all means. But, O beloved Brothers and Sisters, you "need not depart" from Christ to get this, for the science of Christ Crucified is the most excellent, comprehensive and sublime of all the sciences! It is the only Infallible science in the circle of knowledge! Moreover, by all true science you will find Christ honored, and not dishonored. And your learning, if it is true learning, will not make you depart from Christ, but lead you to see more of His creating and ruling wisdom. The most profound astronomer admires the Sun of Righteousness! The best-taught geologist has no quarrel with the Rock of Ages! The greatest mathematician marvels at Him who is the sum total of the universe! He who knows the most of the physical, if he knows aright, loves the spiritual and reverences God in Christ Jesus! To imagine that to be wise one needs forsake the Incarnate Wisdom is insanity! No, to reach the highest degree of attainment in true learning, there is no reason for departing from Christ.

"W*e must have friends and acquaintances,*" one says. You "need not depart" front Christ to get them. We admit that a young woman does well to enter the marriage state—a young man is safer and better for having a wife—but, my dear young Friends, you need not break Christ's Law and depart from Him in order to find a good husband or a good wife! His rule is that you should not be "unequally yoked together with unbelievers." It is a wise and kind rule and is an assistance rather than a hindrance to a fit marriage. "But," says one, "I do not intend to depart from Christ, though I am about to marry an unconverted person." Rest assured that you are departing from Jesus by that act! I have never yet met with a single case in which marriages of this kind have been blessed of God. I know that young women say, "Do not be too severe, Sir, I shall bring him around." You will certainly fail! You are sinning in marrying under that idea. If you break Christ's Law, you cannot expect Christ's blessing. To be happy in future life with a suitable partner you "need not depart" from Jesus. There is nothing in life you can need that is truly desirable, nothing that can promote your welfare, nothing that is really good for you that can ever make it necessary for you to depart from the Lord Jesus Christ!

Now, if this is true, do not some of us feel very guilty? I could weep to think that I have so often departed from close fellowship with my Lord and Master when I need not have done it. I am cast down and weary—and occasionally cumbered with much serving. I know my faith is in Christ, but I have not the calm, unstaggering faith I desire to have. And I know that with a thousand cares, (and I have ten thousand), I need not for a moment lose serenity and peace of mind if I can reach the place

which, by God's Grace, I will yet reach. Do you not feel ashamed that your family troubles and perhaps your family joys have taken you off from your Savior? Some of you have a great deal of leisure and yet you slide away from Christ. Let us be ashamed together, but let us remember that while this verse stands true—if we have departed from Christ and the enjoyment of His fellowship—we can offer no excuse by saying that we could not help it! We do it willfully, we do it sinfully! It is not to be thrust on the back of circumstances. It cannot be laid on the devil nor blamed to this, nor blamed to that—it is our own fault. We "need not depart!" There never was any need for it and there never will be. May God's Grace descend mightily upon us so that we may henceforth abide in our Lord! May those who know Him not, be led to seek Him by faith even now, and find Him, and then even they shall not need to depart from Him at the last.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 14:13-36.

Verse 13. *When Jesus heard of it, He departed from there by a boat into a desert place apart.* It is well for us to get alone with God when He takes Home the best and most faithful of His servants. Neither the Church nor the world could afford to lose such a man as John the Baptist—so it was well for Christ's disciples to retire with Him to a desert place that He might teach them the lesson of that highly-favored martyr's death.

13, 14. *And when the people had heard thereof, they followed Him on foot out of the cities. And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick.* He needed quiet, but He could not get it just yet. He was not "moved" with indignation against the crowd that had sought Him out, but He "was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick." Out of the fullness of His heart of love, He condescended to do for the people what they most needed.

15. *And when it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.* Human compassion might have moved the disciples to say something more kind than that heartless request, "Send the multitude away." Perhaps they wished to spare themselves the sight of so much distress, but they evidently did not expect the answer that Christ gave them.

16. *But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; you give them something to eat.* Christ seemed to say to His disciples, "If you only exercise the power that is within your reach, *with Me in your midst,* you are equal to this emergency—'You give them something to eat.'"

17, 18. *And they said unto Him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. He said, Bring them to Me.* "They are little enough in your hands, but they will be ample when they get into Mine." When everything that we have is in the hands of Christ, it is amazing how much He can make

of it. Bring your talent to the Lord Jesus, be it ever so little—sanctify to Him every possibility that lies within your reach—you cannot tell how much He can and will do with it.

19. *And He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass.* It must have been a beautiful sight to see those thousands of men, women and children at once obeying His command! There were five loaves and two fishes—probably five small barley cakes and a couple of sardines—so the people might have said, "What is the use of such a multitude sitting down on the grass to partake of such scanty fare as that?" But they did not say that—there was a Divine Power about the very simplest command of Christ which compelled instant obedience! "He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass."

19. *And He took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to Heaven, He blessed.* This was that "blessing of the Lord" of which Solomon says that "it makes rich, and He adds no sorrow with it." If you get this blessing on your five loaves and two fishes, you may feed five thousand men with them—besides the women and the children!

19, 20. *And broke, and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.* Much more than they began with, for it is a Law of the Heavenly Kingdom that he who gives to God shall be no loser—his five loaves and two fishes shall turn to twelve baskets full after thousands have eaten and been satisfied! The more there is of complete consecration to Christ and His blessed service, the more reward will there be in the world to come and, possibly, even here!

21, 22. *And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children. And straightway Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a boat, and to go before Him unto the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.* He always takes the heavier task upon Himself. They may go off by themselves, but He will remain to send the multitudes away. Besides, no one but Christ could have done it—only He who had made them sit down to the feast could make them go to their homes.

23. *And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray.* He had had a long day of preaching, healing and distributing the bread and fish—and now He closed the day with prayer to His Father.

23. *And when the evening was come, He was there alone.* Dr. Watts was right in saying to His Lord—

"Cold mountains, and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of Your prayer."

He is not now on the bare mountainside, but He is engaged in the same holy exercise up yonder before His Father's Throne.

24. *But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.* This is the case with the good ship of the Church of Christ today—it is "tossed with waves" and the wind is "contrary." It is very contrary just now, but then, Christ is still pleading for the ship and all on board. And while He pleads, it can never sink.

25-29. *And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit: and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spoke unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered Him, and said, Lord, if it is You, bid me come unto You on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the boat, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.* You who are wanting to get to Jesus should make a desperate effort to get to Him—even walk on the water to get to Jesus. Walking on the water might be an idle and evil exhibition, but to walk on the water to go to Jesus is another matter. Try it and the Lord enable you to get to Him!

30-32. *But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me! And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him, and said unto him, O you of little faith, why did you doubt? And when they were come into the boat, the wind ceased.* The Greek word implies that the wind was tired, weary, "done up," as we say. It had had its boisterous time and spent its force—but now it knew its Lord's voice and, like a tired child, fell asleep.

33. *Then they that were in the boat came and worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth You are the Son of God.* This seems to have been the first time that the disciples arrived at this conclusion so as to state it so positively. Yet, do you not think that after the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes they might have very fitly said, "Of a truth You are the Son of God"? Sometimes, however, one wonder will strike us more than another and, possibly it was because they were in danger when this second miracle was worked and, therefore, they the more appreciated the coming of Christ to them at midnight. They were in no danger when the multitude were fed. Perhaps they were not themselves hungry. That strikes us most which comes most home to us, as this miracle did.

34-36. *And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place had knowledge of Him, they sent out into all that country roundabout and brought unto Him all that were diseased; and besought Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.*

—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.

IF SO—WHAT THEN?
NO. 3047

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 4, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 15, 1871.

"If the righteous are scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"
1 Peter 4:18.

SOME people suppose that it is a very easy thing to be saved, but our Lord said, "Strive ("Agonize" is the original word) to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able." When men hear a simple Gospel sermon of which the pith and marrow is the great soul-saving message, "Believe and live," they say, "If it is such a simple matter, will not all believe?" But the Prophet Isaiah spoke not so, for his sad inquiry was, "Who has believed our report ("our doctrine" is the marginal reading)?" Faith seems so easy that one might ask, "Where will it not be found? But our Savior thought not so, for He asked, "When the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?" He who knows where to look for it and who has the quickest eyes to discern it, asks whether He shall be able to find, anywhere on the earth, that scarce thing called *faith*—"the faith of God's elect." Believe me that though "the way of holiness" is so plain that "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein," yet on account of the hardness of our hearts, it is no easy thing for any of us to enter that way and to continue in it until it leads us to our everlasting Home above.

I do not intend to keep strictly to my text, but to give you the meaning of it in this way. First, *here is a fact stated*—"The righteous are scarcely saved." Then, secondly, *there is an inference drawn from that fact*—if they are truly saved with great difficulty, "where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" When we have considered that inference, we shall take the liberty to draw *two other inferences which may afford us further instruction.*

I. First, then, HERE IS A FACT STATED—"The righteous are scarcely saved." That is to say, they are only saved with great difficulty. This is not because there is any deficiency in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, or any lack of efficacy in His atoning Sacrifice, or in His intercession for transgressors. God be thanked that there is no difficulty *there*! It is not through any lack of power to save on the part of the Holy Spirit. Nor is it through any failure of God's faithfulness that "the righteous" are only saved with great difficulty. But it is for two reasons which I will now give you.

The first reason is, *because of the strictness of Divine rule.* Read the first clause of the verse preceding our text—"The time is come that judgment must begin at the House of God." And that judgment is so severe that even "the righteous are scarcely saved." When Christ comes even to His own people, He comes to purge and purify them. The Prophet Malachi wrote concerning His first coming, "He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap; and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." John the Baptist said, concerning Christ, "He that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire: whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Judgment must always "begin at the House of God" and there is, as good Archbishop Leighton very properly says, both "equity and congruity in such an arrangement." There is equity in it, for Christians profess to be better than others and so they ought to be. They say they are regenerate, so they ought to be regenerate. They say that they are a holy people, separated unto Christ, so they ought to be holy and separate from sinners, as He was. It is right that where there is a high calling and an honored name, there should be a life proving the accuracy of these two things. So, when God begins to test that which professes to be gold and silver, who can say that He does not begin His testing at the right place, and with the right material? There is also a congruity or fitness in this arrangement. The Church of God is His house—and where does a man begin cleansing and reforming? Why, in his own house, of course! He might perhaps feel that he must have some filth in the farmyard, but not in his own sitting-room! There may be much evil abroad that he cannot remove, yet he can begin cleaning up at home. If we want to do any good in reforming the world, the very first duty for each of us is to begin reforming at home— and the Lord, when He means to clear away the dross, begins at home by setting up His "fire in Zion and His furnace in Jerusalem."

The tests to which God subjects those who profess to be His people are not easy ones. When His fan is in His hand, woe be unto those who are "like the chaff which the wind drives away." The Lord says, by the mouth of the Prophet Amos, "I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." Nor shall an atom of chaff be left in the sieve. When Omnipotence and Omniscience unite to sift the chaff from the wheat, you may depend upon it that the sifting will be thoroughly done! There is also the testing by fire. And if any are not able to endure that test, "reprobate silver shall men call them because the Lord has rejected them." Then God will weigh us—we shall be put into the balances of the sanctuary and if we are found wanting, how terrible it will be! We often judge by appearances, but God looks at the heart. We may be deceived by the outward profession, but God sees what is within. He looks for the Truth in our

inward parts and in our hidden parts there must be the true Wisdom or else we are not saved.

Now, dear Friends, as the tests are so severe, you see how it is that the righteous are only saved with difficulty. Oh, if I may but come out of that scale full weight, if I may but come out of that fire as pure gold, if I may but remain with the wheat in that sieve and not be blown away with the chaff, I shall bless God forever and ever that I was saved, even though it was with great difficulty!

Further, *the experience of all Christians proves that the work of Grace in their hearts is not easily accomplished* and that their pilgrimage to Heaven is full of difficulties. At the very beginning of the Christian life, some find it hard to lay hold on Christ. We truly sing or say—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One."

Yet there was a time when I felt that I would gladly give my life in exchange for that look! Easy as it seems to be to cast ourselves into the Savior's arms, there are Satanic doubts, evil questionings, and fierce temptations that cause even that simple act to be accomplished only with great difficulty. Indeed, wherever it is accomplished, it is a miracle of Divine Mercy and in every case saving faith is "the gift of God."

Then, how difficult it is to overcome the flesh! Are you a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ? Then I need not ask whether you find it so. You love holiness, yet unholiness tries hard to make you its slave. Perhaps it is a fiery temper that is your "thorn in the flesh," or some constitutional sin, or some lust that you thought had been subdued. You may have said, with David, "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well-near slipped." And I know that if your life is that of a true child of God, you have to fight hard in order to "put off the old man with his deeds," and to lead a godly life in the midst of this ungodly generation.

The temptations that assail you from without are equally hard to overcome. There are temptations of wealth and temptations of poverty—temptations to turn aside to the right or to the left—and it is not easy to keep to the middle of the King's highway and to walk in the footprints of Jesus who has left us an example that we should follow His steps. When the world, the flesh and the devil combine to assail us—if the Lord does not cover our head in the day of battle, how can we gain the victory? With some Christians it is a very hard struggle from day to day, and even from hour to hour—and then we are like Mr. Stand-Fast who, when he was in what Bunyan calls the Enchanted Ground, was assailed by Madam Bubble and who could do nothing but fall on his knees and cry to God for help! There are many of us who have felt like that and who, in the bitterness of our agony, have had to cry to God to help us, for it is only with difficulty that we are saved. I can say, with good John Fawcett—

"Temptations everywhere annoy,
And sins and snares my peace destroy.
My earthly joys are from me torn,
And oft an absent God I mourn.
My soul, with various tempests tossed,

Her hopes overturned, her projects crossed,
Sees every day new straits attend,
And wonders where the scene will end.
Is this, dear Lord, that thorny road
Which leads us to the Mount of God?
Are these the toils Your people know,
While in the wilderness below?
'Tis even so, Your faithful love
Does thus Your children's graces prove—
'Tis thus our pride and self must fall,
That Jesus may be All-in-All."

How difficult is it for a true Christian even to perform necessary duties in a humble and holy spirit! It is a simple matter to pray—it is just going, like a child, to tell God all that you feel and all that you need. Yet I ask you, Christian, whether you do not sometimes find it hard work to pray? When you are on your knees, all sorts of cares come buzzing about you, like so many hornets. You want to wrestle with God as Jacob did, but you find that your wrestling has to be with the devil! I know what it is to long to pray when I cannot find a prayer in my soul! I make this confession because I believe there are many of God's people who get into that state. And, moreover, I know that we often pray best when we think we are not praying. Perhaps those groans that come from the lowest depths of our spirit when we think we are not groaning at all are just the most potent prayers that ever reach the Throne of God! But there are seasons when one can only say, "May the Holy Spirit feel for me what I cannot feel, and utter for me what I cannot speak, and do for me what I cannot perform!"

And if such ordinary acts of devotion are so difficult, how much more difficult is it to reach gracious attainments in the Divine life! If any of your graces come to you very easily, suspect whether they are genuine, for in the Christian life, all that is worth having has to be fought for in stern conflict. So determined are the powers of darkness to prevent the Christian pilgrim from entering the Celestial City that all the way to Heaven will be more or less a Hill of Difficulty. You will have to go often upon your hands and knees because the road is so rough and the ascent is so steep that you cannot advance in any other way. We would be holy as God is holy, but there is another law in our members warring against the law of our renewed minds. God knows that we yearn after perfection but, alas, like the bird that would gladly fly, there is something that holds us down! Many of you have seen an eagle in a cage and you know how he looks up with those bright eyes of his that were made to gaze into the sun! If he stretches his wings and tries to fly, he only wounds himself against the bars of his cage and, oh, what wounds some of us have had when in our aspirations after better things, to will has been present with us, but how to perform that which we would, we found not! Often have I had to cry, with Paul, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Yes, it is hard work for any of us to get to Heaven. God, the Eternal Spirit, helps us to overcome our infirmities, but we are often made to feel those infirmities and to confess that our

weakness is no match for the strength of sin—and to admit that were it not for God Himself, we should certainly perish after all. I delight to sing with holy John Newton—

"Beyond a doubt, I rest assured
You are the Christ of God!
Who has eternal life secured
By promise and by blood.
The help of men and angels joined
Could never reach my case,
Nor can I hope relief to find
But in Your boundless Grace!"

Do you not, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, sometimes feel how hard it is for you to be saved when you put your soul before the tribunal of your own enlightened conscience? Our own conscience, at the best, is a poor partial judge compared with the impartial and Infallible Judge who will, by-and-by, sit upon the Great White Throne. Yet I ask any Christian here who is really aware of his own frailties and infirmities—when he comes seriously to take stock of himself, whether he finds any reason in himself for glorying? I have turned over my sermons and my many labors for the Lord, but there is scarcely one of them that I dare to think of without tears—they are all marred by sin and imperfection! As I think of every act I have ever done for God, I can only cry, "O God, forgive the iniquity of my holy things!" But what about our unholy things? Brothers and Sisters, look well to the evidences of your new birth. And as you examine them, see if you do not have to say with the Prophet, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." If so, then let each one of us pray with penitent David, "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." If we are really God's people, it is a great consolation for us to know that—notwithstanding our many infirmities and iniquities, our many anxieties and doubts and fears as to whether, after all, we have been self-deceived or devil-deceived—God will never forsake us!

II. This must suffice concerning the fact that Christians are only saved with great difficulty. Now, secondly, let us consider THE INFERENCE FROM THAT FACT.

Peter says, "If the righteous are scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" By which he means, I think, first, that *if even the righteous are so severely tested, what short work will God make with the unrighteous*—if the wheat must thus be winnowed, how certainly will the chaff be destroyed—if the gold must pass through the fire, how assuredly will the dross be consumed! The God who tries and tests the best will certainly not wink at the worst.

He means next, I think, that *if "the righteous" only attain to felicity with great difficulty, "the ungodly and the sinner" can never attain to it.* Suppose there has been a terrible storm on a rock-bound coast. The lifeboat has gone out and the men have nobly done their duty and saved

many precious lives. But as each man leaps ashore, he says, "I was never before out in such a storm. It is only by the merciful Providence of God that we were able to get back." When the people on the shore see that even the lifeboat so narrowly escaped destruction, they naturally ask, "What must become of those poor leaky and unseaworthy boats that are hardly fit to be in a mill pond?" Or imagine a river, full of sandbanks, with a channel that twists and turns in a tortuous fashion—and there is a vessel on it with an experienced pilot on board—yet even he is very anxious and is constantly heaving the lead, and frequently going at half-speed, or stopping altogether! Now, if a steamer with a good pilot on board can scarcely get up the river, what will happen to a small sailboat, in the charge of a reckless drunk, who scarcely steers at all, but lets the boat drift wherever it will? Why, it must be lost! So, if "the vessels of mercy…before prepared unto glory," on which Christ is the Pilot, barely escape the rocks and quicksands, what must be the end of "the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" which have no pilot on board and drift here and there at the mercy of winds and waves? If there is a great conflagration in the city and there is a massive stone structure with iron girders which the firemen can only save from destruction with great difficulty, what will be the fate of a wooden house, covered with pitch and tar and full of oil? If a man who has built for eternity upon Christ, the only true Foundation—and who has built, not with gold, silver and precious stones, but with wood, hay and stubble—if such a man "shall be saved, yet so as by fire," what will become of the sinner who is only like a dry log fitted for the everlasting burning?

My text does not tell us *where* "the ungodly and the sinner" will appear. This is one of the unanswered questions of Scripture—"Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" So I shall scarcely speak of that dreadful place where our Savior says, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," "where their worm dies not and the fire is not quenched." These metaphors, terrible as they are in their grim suggestiveness, are only faint images of the awful reality! And I again remind you that they are the words of Him to Whom we teach our *children* to pray—

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child."

In Psalm 50:22 there is this dreadful Divine warning, "Consider this, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." If it is difficult for a Christian to be saved—and I have shown you that it is—where shall you who are not God's people, you who have no Christ, you who have no Holy Spirit to guide you—where shall *you* appear? The Apostle Paul wrote, "I keep my body under and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." If Paul entered Heaven with difficulty, where will *you* be? Martin Luther's biography tells us that he was the subject of grievous doubts, depressions and soul anxieties. So, if he only reached Heaven as a sinner saved by Grace, where will *you* be who know nothing experimentally of the Grace of God? If John Knox, after serving his God

so faithfully that his epitaph truly says, "Here lies a man who in his life never feared the face of man"—if he, on his deathbed, found it hard to cherish a hope of Heaven—what will *you* do who despise Christ's mercy and riot in sin?

Before I close, I want to draw two other inferences. The first is this—IF THE RIGHTEOUS ARE ONLY SAVED WITH DIFFICULTY, WHAT ABOUT THOSE PEOPLE WHO ARE "SAVED" SO VERY EASILY? It looks as if they were not righteous, does it not? Perhaps there is a man here who is like Bunyan's Formalist. This is his hope—"I was 'christened' when I was a child, I was confirmed as a youth, I attend my church and take the 'sacrament' regularly." Or he may say, "I regularly attend chapel." He says, "Don't talk to me about anxieties as to my state—I have no such anxieties." No, I expect you have not, but if you have no doubts about yourself, permit me to have *my doubts about you*! And let me go a great deal further than doubts and solemnly tell you that a hope founded on ceremonies will lead to your "everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

There may be another who says, "I have made a profession of religion, but I never have any questions about whether I am saved or not. I pray—in a fashion. As to praising God, I always could sing and I believe I am about as right as I can be. I don't see any cause for distressing myself." Yes, Friend, but let me remind you that there is a great difference between presumption and "full assurance of faith." There is also a very great difference between believing that you are saved and being really saved!

Possibly there is another who says, "I believe I am one of God's elect and that I am quite safe." Well, Friend, if it is so, no one is more thankful than I am. But if that is your only hope of salvation and you have never been born-again and know nothing of the new life with its anxieties and joys, I would not give a bent pin for your hope of Heaven! And the sooner you get rid of it, the better. A dead fish finds no difficulty in floating down the stream—it is only the living fish that can swim against the current. The broad road is very smooth and there is a good deal of company on it—but it leads to destruction. There are few in the narrow way and many difficulties there—but it leads to eternal life. You say that you never know any changes. No, nor do the statues in St. Paul's Cathedral. There they stand, year after year, upon their marble pedestals because they are dead—and you are the same. "But I never have to fight that battle of which you have been speaking." No, of course not, because the world and you are friends! And because you are of the world, the world loves its own. If you were a stranger and a foreigner in this world, you would be treated as strangers and foreigners are in an inhospitable country.

I will draw only one more inference from our text and that is a very comforting one. THE RIGHTEOUS ARE ONLY SAVED WITH DIFFICULTY—THEN TEMPTED SOULS MAY BE SAVED. That Truth of God has given me comfort when I have thought, "Well, it is difficult for me to be saved, then it appears that I am numbered with the righteous

and that I am on the right road." "Oh, Sir," says a poor sinner here, "I am glad you said that. I hope I have cast myself wholly upon the Lord Jesus Christ and I thought I was going to have peace always, but, instead of that, ever since I have believed, or thought I had believed, I have had more fights in my soul than I ever had before." Well, the righteous are only saved with difficulty, so do not be depressed. "But I have been more tempted than I ever was before and it seems, Sir, as if everybody is against me and tries to drive me back. I thought I should find cheerful companions who would help me on the road to Heaven, but I seem to be alone in an enemy's land." My dear Brother, it is always so with the righteous—no strange thing has happened to you. "But, Sir," says one, "horrible thoughts and terrible blasphemies arise in my mind even when I try to pray. And I say to myself, 'If I were a child of God, could it be thus with me?'" Dear Friend, be comforted! Satan is afraid of losing you, so he is putting out all his force to try to hold you. Now that you are a Christian, you are a target for all the devil's fiery darts, so do not be astonished—this is the lot of the people of God! When a man has been drowning, I have heard that his sensations have often been very pleasant, but when the circulation of the blood commences again, pain begins at once and the more pain he suffers, the more surely is he being restored to life! It is just so with the spiritual blood that is circulating in your soul. You are not dead, so you smart and suffer because you are alive. If you imagine that the moment you believe, your battle is over, you make a great mistake—your battle has only just begun and because while really trusting in Jesus, you have battles, contentions, difficulties and troubles, conclude that, *therefore,* you are a child of God!

Remember this, if the righteous are only saved with great difficulty, they would never be saved if they did not look right away from themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ. There lies the one hope for sinners and saints—in the finished work of the blessed Redeemer! "I know what you are at," said a good man once to one who was doubting, "Christ has finished the work of salvation, but you are not content with what He has done, so you want to patch it up with something of your own." Come sinners and come saints, back to the foot of that dear Cross where Jesus bought with His own blood the souls of all who believe in Him! let us throw ourselves prostrate before Him and say, "You are all our confidence, our only hope and our full salvation forever and ever. Save us, O Savior! We are sinners and You are the sinners' Friend—save us now and we shall be saved forever!" Amen, so let it be!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ZECHARIAH 8.

[See Note to Sermon No. 3045, on Zechariah 8:13.]

Verses 1, 2. *Again the word of the LORD of Hosts came to me, saying, Thus says the LORD of Hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy,*

and I was jealous for her with great fury. Because they worshipped idols instead of the living God, Jehovah of Hosts, who is a jealous God, was very angry with His ancient people and allowed them to be carried away into captivity. And it is well for us in these days to remember that we serve a jealous God and that if our hearts are not true to Him, He will soon send us sharp afflictions and make us feel the weight of His rod! It was Paul's anxious desire that he might be able to present the Church at Corinth "as a chaste virgin to Christ" and, certainly, our Lord Jesus Christ will not accept the professing Church of these days on any other terms. Let your heart be loyal and true to Him, or else you will stir up the holy jealousy of your God! Yet the same jealousy which makes God punish His people for their unfaithfulness, prompts Him to return to them in love as soon as He sees that He can justly do so. When their enemies have sorely vexed and oppressed them, then is the Lord jealous, not against them, but against their enemies—and He swiftly returns to His own people in love.

3. *Thus says the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of Hosts the holy mountain.* The first coming or the return of God to a Church, or to an individual heart, always promotes holiness. So, unless your piety is growing daily, do not imagine that God is in the midst of you, for wherever the Lord comes, He comes "as a refiner and purifier." You will never find Jesus come except as John the Baptist pictured Him to the Pharisees and Sadducees of his day—"whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor." The coming of Christ into any soul, or into any Church, is the death of sin and the birth of holiness!

4, 5. *Thus says the LORD of Hosts, There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.* It is an indication that there is peace in the city when the children can play in the streets without fear. We may thus apply these verses spiritually—when God greatly blesses a Christian Church, there are sure to be many aged persons in it, those who, by their long experience and their matured wisdom, are able to teach others the lessons which they have themselves learned at the feet of Jesus. Happy is the Church that has in it many fathers and mothers in Israel. At the same time, a Church that is largely blessed by God will also have in it many young converts who will be as full of life and joy as children playing in the streets of a city in time of peace. There is a text which is true both in its literal and its spiritual sense—"Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord…Happy is the man that has his quiver full of them." There is no glory so great to a Christian minister and a Christian Church as that of having an abundance of spiritual children and multitudes of converts brought to Christ. So shall it be with any Church when God is in the midst of her.

6. *Thus says the LORD of Hosts; If it is marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvelous in My eyes? says the LORD of Hosts.* This is a very remarkable passage, warning us not to judge of God by ourselves. Though a thing may be difficult to us, there are no difficulties with God. No, even if we imagine anything to be impossible to man, the word *impossibility* has no relation to the Deity, for "with God all things are possible." Are you in trouble today? Do you say that it is impossible for you to be delivered? It is an easy thing for God to deliver you, though the task seems so hard to you. Do you feel the weight of your sin and do you imagine that it is impossible for your sin to be pardoned? Would you look upon it as a miracle and because it seems so marvelous to you, do you think it is marvelous in God's eyes? Remember what He said by the mouth of Isaiah, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord." Consider the infinite difference between God and man—and look no longer at God through the misleading glasses of your own feebleness!

7, 8. *Thus says the LORD of Hosts; Behold, I will save My people from the east country, and from the west country; and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.* Mark God's emphatic language, how full it is of, "shalls" and, "wills." "I will," and "they shall," says He, again and again. And if God says, "I will," who shall dare to say that it shall not be? What God declares shall certainly come to pass. Surely this is golden language of comfort to those who are bowed down! Then how great must be the sinfulness of that unbelief which dares to despair when God says, "shall" and, "will"! That one sentence in the eighth verse contains the whole Gospel in two short sentences—"They shall be My people, and I will be their God." This is the tenor of the Covenant of Grace. There is no "if," nor "but," nor "perhaps" in it. God does not say, "I will be their God if they will be My people." Nor, "I will love them if they will keep My Laws." That is the Old Covenant of works which has been broken forever! The Covenant of Grace runs thus, "They shall be My people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness."

9-11. *Thus says the LORD of Hosts; Let your hands be strong, you that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the Prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of Hosts was laid, that the Temple might be built. For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men, everyone against his neighbor. But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, says the LORD of Hosts.* The Jewish people had been brought into abject poverty. They were all so poor that there was not one who could hire his fellow man or even pay for the hire of a beast of burden. This was before the foundation of Solomon's Temple was laid. But, as that wondrous structure grew, the State also grew and often the

prosperity of a Church brings prosperity to the people around it. And to the residue of God's people there comes a blessing, and not a curse.

12. *For the seed shall be prosperous.* It is a happy omen for a Church when the Word preached is with power.

12. *The vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase.* Happy are the hearts that are like fruitful vines, and good and fertile ground yielding thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold increase.

12. *And the heavens shall give their dew.* We cannot bring forth fruit unto God without the bedewing influences of the Holy Spirit. This is that "womb of the morning" of which David speaks in Psalm 110:3—and out of which the precious fruit of the Spirit must come.

12-15. *And I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. And it shall come to pass, that as you were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and you shall be a blessing; fear not, but let your hands be strong. For thus says the LORD of Hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked Me to wrath, says the LORD of Hosts, and I repented not: so again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear you not.* Did you notice the repetition of the exhortation, "Fear not," and then again, "Fear you not"? The Lord knows how much mischief, doubts and fears do to His people and, therefore, many a time in Scripture He aims a blow at them. "Fear nots" abound in Scripture! It would be well if you made every one of them into a gallows upon which to hang your unbelief until it died! What is your fear at this moment? What is the cause of your trembling? "Fear you not," says God to you! Will you dare to fear after this?

16, 17. *These are the things that you shall do; Speak you every man the truth to his neighbor; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: and let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbor.* Some have wickedly said that "thought is free and can't be condemned." But here we see that if it goes after evil, it is a wicked thing which God abhors.

17-19. *And love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, says the LORD. And the word of the LORD of Hosts came unto me, saying, Thus says the LORD of Hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace.* God turns sad fasts to glad feasts when He visits His people in love! Is there one here who has been having a long fast? Has your soul been sorely afflicted? Have you been desponding and trembling so that you have had no joy and gladness? Ah, when the Lord Jesus Christ reveals Himself to you, He will soon change your sad state into something brighter and better! He will give you "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Look up, poor trembling Soul, to yonder hill of Calvary where Jesus bled and died for you—and there let your joys begin and never, never end!

20, 21. *Thus says the LORD of Hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of Hosts: I will go also.* You see that in the latter days there is to be a great spirit of prayer and of seeking the Lord. This will include the hearing of the Word and the love of the Truths of God. And one good sign is that the people will say, "Let us go speedily." They will not come in late, as so many do nowadays, just getting into their seats when the Scripture is being read, instead of being present at the opening prayer. I am sorry to say that some of you are getting later and later—and some morning I shall most certainly carry out my threat, and preach the sermon first unless you are more punctual! A little more thought and a little sooner start and you might all be at God's House on time. David longed to be a doorkeeper in the Lord's house and you know that the doorkeeper is always the first in and the last out. May you all have more of David's spirit, though you cannot all be doorkeepers! These people are to say, "Let us go speedily (the marginal reading is 'continually') to pray before the Lord and to seek the Lord of Hosts: I will go also." That is the best way of bringing others to God's House—to say, "I will go also." I have read that Julius Caesar never said to his soldiers, "Go," but, "Let us go." So should we seek to get others to God's House by saying to them, "Let us go…I will go also."

22, 23. *Yes, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of Hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus says the LORD of Hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.* In the latter days, the Jews, who are still despised, oppressed and persecuted in many countries, shall be so highly honored by God that men of other nationalities will want to be in their company! But, no doubt, there is here a special reference to Jesus, the Jew, the Son of God who became the Son of Mary, too. Oh that this very day many Jews and Gentiles may take hold of His skirt by a living faith and so may receive blessing from Him and be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation!

—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 HOLY SPIRIT IN THE COVENANT
NO. 3048

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 11, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON A LORD'S-DAY MORNING IN 1856.

"And I will put My Spirit within you."
Ezekiel 36:27.

THE Holy Spirit is the third Person in the Covenant. We have considered "God in the Covenant" and "Christ in the Covenant" [See Sermons #93 and 103, Volume 2—GOD IN THE COVENANT and CHRIST IN THE COVENANT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] and now, this morning, we have to consider the Holy Spirit in the Covenant. For, remember, it is necessary that the Triune God should work out the salvation of the Lord's people if they are to be saved at all. And it was absolutely requisite that when the Covenant was made, all that was necessary should be put into it and, among the rest, the Holy Spirit, without whom all things done even by the Father and by Jesus Christ would be ineffectual, for He is needed as much as the Savior of men, or the Father of spirits. In this age, when the Holy Spirit is too much forgotten, and but little honor is accorded to His sacred Person, I feel that there is a deep responsibility upon me to endeavor to magnify His great and holy name. I almost tremble, this morning, in entering on so profound a subject, for which I feel myself so insufficient. But, nevertheless, relying on the aid, the guidance and the witness of the Holy Spirit, Himself, I venture upon an exposition of this text, "I will put My Spirit within you."

The Holy Spirit is given, in the Covenant, to all the children of God and received by each in due course. And yet upon our Lord Jesus Christ did the Spirit first descend and alighted upon Him as our Covenant Head, "like the precious ointment upon the head that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments." The Father has given the Holy Spirit without measure unto His Son—and from Him, in measure, though still in abundance, do all "the brethren who dwell together in unity" (or union with Christ) partake of the Spirit. This holy anointing flows down from Jesus, the Anointed One, to every part of His mystical body, to every individual member of His Church. The Lord's declaration concerning Christ was, "I have put My Spirit upon HIM." And He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon ME, because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted." The Spirit was first poured upon Christ and from Him

descends to all those who are in union with His adorable Person. Let us bless the name of Christ if we are united to Him—and let us look up to our Covenant Head, expecting that from Him will flow down the heavenly unction which shall anoint our souls!

My text is one of the unconditional promises of Scripture. There are many conditional promises in the Word of God given to certain characters, although even these promises are in some sense unconditional, since the very condition of the promise is by some other promise secured as a gift—but this one has no condition whatever. It does not say, "I will put My Spirit within them if they ask for Him." It says plainly, without any reservation or stipulation, "I will put My Spirit within them." The reason is obvious. Until the Spirit is put within us we cannot feel our need of the Savior, neither can we ask for or seek Him and, therefore, it is necessary that there should be an absolutely unconditional promise made to all the elect children of God—that they should have given to them the waiting Grace, the desiring Grace, the seeking Grace, the believing Grace which shall make them pant and hunger and thirst after Jesus! To everyone who is like Christ—"chosen of God and precious"—to every redeemed soul, however sunken in sin, however lost and ruined by the Fall, however much he may hate God and despise his Redeemer, this promise still holds good, "I will put My Spirit within you" and, in due course, every one of them shall have that Spirit who shall quicken them from the dead, lead them to seek pardon, induce them to trust in Christ and adopt them into the living family of God!

The promise is also concerning an internal blessing to be bestowed—"I will put My Spirit *within* you." Remember, we have the Spirit of God in His written Word and with every faithful minister of the Gospel the Spirit is likewise vouchsafed to us in the ordinances of Christ's Church. God is perpetually giving the Spirit to us by these means. But it is in vain for us to hear of the Spirit, to talk of Him, or to believe in Him unless we have a realization of His power *within* us! Here, therefore, is the promise of such an internal blessing—"I will put My Spirit within you."

We come now to consider this promise in all its comprehensiveness. May the Holy Spirit Himself assist us in so doing! We shall take the various works of the Holy Spirit, one by one, and shall remember that in all the works which He performs, the Spirit is put in the Covenant to be possessed by every Believer.

I. In the first place we are told by Christ, "IT IS THE SPIRIT THAT QUICKENS."

Until He is pleased to breathe upon the soul, it is dead to any spiritual life. It is not until the Spirit, like some heavenly wind, breathes upon the dry bones and puts life into them, that they can ever live. You may take a corpse and dress it in all the garments of external decency. You may wash it with the water of morality—yes, you may bedeck it with the crown of profession and put upon its brow a tiara of beauty. You may paint its cheeks until you make it like life itself. But remember, unless

the Spirit is there, corruption will, before long, seize on the body. So, Beloved, it is the Spirit who is the Quickener—you would have been as "dead in trespasses and sins" now as ever you were if it had not been for the Holy Spirit who made you alive! You were lying, not simply "cast out in the open field," but worse than that—you were the very prey of mortality! Corruption was your father, the worm was your mother and your sister—you were noxious in the nostrils of the Almighty. It was thus that the Savior beheld you in all your loathsomeness and said to you, "Live." In that moment you were "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Life entered into you at His bidding—then it was that the Spirit quickened you! The words of Jesus, so He told His disciples, "They are Spirit, and they are life." You were made alive entirely through the might of the quickening Spirit—

"The Spirit, like some heavenly wind
Blows on the sons of flesh—
Creates a new—a heavenly mind
And forms the man afresh."

If, then, you feel at any time death working in you, as doubtless you will, withering the bloom of your piety, chilling the fervor of your devotions and quenching the ardor of your faith, remember that *He who first quickened you must keep you alive.* The Spirit of God is the sap that flowed into your poor, dry branch because you were grafted into Christ. And as by that sap you were first made green with life, so it is by that sap, alone, you can ever bring forth fruit unto God. By the Spirit you drew your first breath when you cried out for mercy—and from the same Spirit you must draw the breath to praise that mercy in hymns and anthems of joy! Having begun in the Spirit, you must be made perfect in the Spirit. "The flesh profits nothing." The works of the Law will not help you. The thoughts and devices of your own hearts are of no avail. You would be cut off from Christ, you would be more depraved than you were before your conversion, you would be more corrupt than you were previous to your being regenerated—"twice dead, plucked up by the roots"—if God the Holy Spirit were to withdraw from you! You must live in His life, trust in His power to sustain you and seek of Him fresh supplies when the tide of your spiritual life is running low.

II. WE NEED THE HOLY SPIRIT AS AN ASSISTANT SPIRIT IN ALL THE DUTIES WE HAVE TO PERFORM.

The most common Christian duty is that of *prayer,* for the meanest child of God must be a praying child. Remember, then, that it is written, "The Spirit also helps our infirmities, for we know not what to pray for as we ought." The Spirit of God is in the Covenant as the Great Aid to us in all our petitions to the Throne of Grace. Child of God, you know not what to pray—rely, then, on the Spirit as the Inspirer of prayer who will tell you how to pray! Sometimes you know not how to express what you desire—rely upon the Spirit, then, as the One who can touch your lips with the "live coal from off the altar," whereby you shall be able to pour

out your fervent wishes before the Throne of God. Sometimes even when you have life and power within you, you cannot express your inward emotions—then rely upon that Spirit to interpret your feelings, for He "makes intercession for us with groans which cannot be uttered." When, like Jacob, you are wrestling with the Angel and are nearly thrown down, ask the Holy Spirit to nerve your arms. The Holy Spirit is the chariot wheel of prayer. Prayer may be the chariot, the desire may draw it forth, but the Spirit is the very wheel whereby it moves. He propels the desire and causes the chariot to roll swiftly on and to bear to Heaven the supplication of the saints when the desire of the heart is "according to the will of God."

Another duty to which some of the children of God are called is that of *preaching.* And here, too, we must have the Holy Spirit to enable us. Those whom God calls to preach the Gospel are assisted with might from on high. He has said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." It is a solemn thing to enter upon the work of the ministry. I will just make an observation here for in this place there are young men who are striving to enter into the ministry before they scarcely know the alphabet of the Gospel. They set themselves up as preachers of God's Word when the first thing they ought to do is to join the infant class in a school and learn to read properly. I know there are some to whom God has given the desire to seek the glory of His name and the welfare of souls and who humbly wait till He has opened the way. God bless them and speed them! But—would you believe it?—a young man was baptized and received into the Church one Sunday—and he positively went off to a College on the Monday or Tuesday to ask if they would receive him! I asked him whether he had ever preached before, or addressed half-a-dozen Sunday scholars. He said, "No." But what surprised me most was that he said he was called to the work before he was converted! It was a call from the devil, I verily believe—not a call from God in the least degree! Take heed that you touch not God's Ark with unholy fingers! You may all preach if you can, but take care that you do not set yourselves up in the ministry without having a solemn conviction that the Spirit from on high has set you apart—for if you do, the blood of souls will be found on your skirts! Too many have rushed into the Holy Place uncalled of God who, if they could have rushed out of it on their dying beds would have had eternal cause for gratitude! But they ran presumptuously, then preached unsent and, therefore, unblessed! And when dying, they felt a greater condemnation from the fact that they had taken on themselves an office to which God had never appointed them! Beware of doing that! But if God has called you, however little talent you may have, fear not anyone's frown or rebuke. If you have a solemn conviction in your souls that God has really ordained you to the work of the ministry and if you have obtained a seal to your commission in the conversion of even one soul, let not death or Hell stop you—go straight on and never think you must have certain endowments to make a successful preacher! The only

endowment necessary for success in the ministry is the endowment of the Holy Spirit.

When preaching in the presence of a number of ministers last Friday, I told the Brothers, when one of them asked how it was God had been pleased to bless me so much in this place, "There is not one of you whom God could not bless ten times as much if you had ten times as much of the Spirit." For it is not any ability of the *man*—it is not any human qualification—it is simply the influence of God's Spirit that is necessary! And I have been delighted to find myself abused as ignorant, unlearned and void of eloquence—all which I knew long before, but so much the better—for then all the glory belongs to God! Let men say what they please, I will always confess to the truth of it. I *am* a fool! "I have become a fool in glorying," if you please. I will take any opprobrious title that worldlings like to put upon me, but they cannot deny the fact that God blesses my ministry, that harlots have been saved, that drunks have been reclaimed, that some of the most abandoned characters have been changed and that God has worked such a work in their midst as they never saw before in their lives! Therefore, give all the Glory to His holy name! Cast as much reproach as you like on me, you worldlings—the more honor shall there be to God who works as He pleases, and with what instrument He chooses, irrespective of man!

Again, dearly-Beloved, whatever is your work, *whatever God has ordained you to do in this world, you are equally certain to have the assistance of the Holy Spirit in it.* If it is the teaching of an infant class in the Sunday school, do not think you cannot have the Holy Spirit! His succor shall be granted as freely to you as to the man who addresses a large assembly. Are you sitting down by the side of some poor dying woman? Believe that the Holy Spirit will come to you there as much as if you were administering the sacred elements of the Lord's Supper. Let your strength for the lowliest work as much as for the loftiest be sought from God! Spiritual plowman, sharpen your plowshare with the Spirit! Spiritual sower, dip your seed in the Spirit so it shall germinate—and ask the Spirit to give you Grace to scatter it that it may fall into the right furrows! Spiritual warrior, whet your sword with the Spirit and ask the Spirit, whose Word is a two-edged sword, to strengthen your arm to wield it!

III. The next point we refer to shall be that THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GIVEN TO THE CHILDREN OF GOD AS A SPIRIT OF REVELATION AND OF INSTRUCTION.

He brings us "out of darkness into marvelous light." By nature we are ignorant, extremely so, but the Holy Spirit teaches the family of God and makes them wise. "You have an unction from the Holy One," said the Apostle John, "and you know all things." Student in the School of Christ, would you be wise? Ask not the theologian to expound to you his system of divinity, but, sitting down meekly at the feet of Jesus, ask that His

Spirit may instruct you. For I tell you, student, though you should read the Bible many a year and continually turn over its pages, you would not learn anything of its hidden mysteries without the Spirit. But perhaps, in a solitary moment of your study, when suddenly enlightened by the Spirit, you may learn a Truth of God as swiftly as you see the lightning flash. Young people, are you laboring to understand the Doctrine of Election? It is the Holy Spirit alone who can reveal it to your heart and make you comprehend it. Are you tugging and toiling at the Doctrine of Human Depravity? The Holy Spirit must reveal to you the depth of wickedness of the human heart. Are you wanting to know the secret of the life of the Believer as he lives by the faith of the Son of God and the mysterious fellowship with the Lord he enjoys? It will always be a mystery to you unless the Holy Spirit shall unfold it to your heart. Whenever you read the Bible, cry to the Spirit, "Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law." The Spirit gives eye-salve to the blind and if your eyes are not now open, seek the eye-salve and so you shall see—yes, and see so clearly that he who has only learned in man's school, shall ask, "How knows this man letters, having never learned?"

Those who are taught of the Spirit often surpass those who are taught of man. I have met with an entirely uninstructed clod-hopper in the country who never went to school for one hour in his life—who yet knew more about the Holy Scriptures than many a clergyman trained at the University! I have been told that it is a common practice for men in Wales, while they are at work breaking stones on the road, to discuss difficult points in theology which many a Divine cannot master! How? Because they humbly read the Scriptures, trusting only to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, believing that He will lead them into all Truth—and He is pleased so to do. All other instruction is very well. Solomon says "that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good." We should all seek to know as much as can be known, but let us remember that in the work of salvation real knowledge must be obtained by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. And if we would learn in the heart and not merely in the head, we must be taught entirely by the Holy Spirit. What you learn from man, you can unlearn—but what you learn of the Spirit is fixed indelibly in your heart and conscience—and not even Satan himself can steal it from you. Go, you ignorant ones, who often stagger at the Truths of Revelation—go and ask the Spirit, for He is the Guide of benighted souls! Yes, and the Guide of His own enlightened people, too, for without His aid, even when they have been "once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift," they would not understand all Truths of God unless He led them into it.

IV. I desire further to mention that GOD WILL GIVE THE SPIRIT TO US AS A SPIRIT OF APPLICATION.

Thus it was that Jesus said to His disciples, "He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you." [See Sermons #465,

Volume 8—THE HOLY SPIRIT GLORIFYING CHRIST; #2213, Volume 37—'HONEY IN THE MOUTH!'—Mr. Spurgeon's *last* sermon to the Members and Associates of the Pastors' College Evangelical Association, on April 24th, 1891 and #2382, Volume 40—THE SPIRIT'S CHIEF OFFICE—— Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] To make the matter still more plain, our Lord added, "All things that the Father has are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you." Let me remind you how frequently Jesus impressed on His disciples the fact that He spoke to them the words of His Father—"My Doctrine," said He, "is not Mine, but His that sent Me." And again, "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwells in Me, He does the works." As Christ thus made known the will of God the Father to His people, so the Holy Spirit makes known to us the words of Christ. I could almost affirm that Christ's words would be of no use to us unless they were applied to us by the Holy Spirit! Beloved, we need the application to assure our hearts that they are our own, that they are intended for us and that we have an interest in their blessedness! And we need the unction of the Spirit to make them bedew our hearts and refresh our souls.

Did you ever have a promise applied to your heart? Do you understand what is meant by *application* as the exclusive work of the Spirit? It is as Paul says the Gospel came to the Thessalonians, "not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance." Sometimes it comes all of a sudden—your heart may have been the scene of a thousand distracting thoughts, billow dashing against billow till the tempest rose beyond your control. But soon some text of Scripture, like a mighty fiat from the lips of Jesus, has stilled your troubled breast and immediately there has been a great calm—and you have wondered from where it came. The sweet sentence has rung like music in your ears. Like a wafer made of honey it has moistened your tongue. Like a charm it has quelled your anxieties while it has dwelt uppermost in your thoughts all day—reining in all your lawless passions and restless strivings. Perhaps it has continued in your mind for weeks! Wherever you went, whatever you did, you could not dislodge it nor did you wish to do so, so sweet, so savory was it to your soul. Have you not thought of such a text as that as the best in the Bible, the most precious in all the Scriptures? That was because it was so graciously applied to you!

Oh, how I love applied promises! I may read a thousand promises as they stand recorded on the pages of this Sacred Volume and yet get nothing from them. My heart would not burn within me for all the richness of the store—but one promise brought home to my soul by the Spirit's application has such marrow and fatness in it that it would be food enough for forty days for many of the Lord's Elijahs! How sweet it is, in the times of deep affliction, to have this promise applied to the heart—"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you

shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you"! Perhaps you say, "That is all enthusiasm." Of course it appears so to you, if, as natural men you discern not the things of the Spirit! But we are talking about *spiritual things to spiritual men* and to them it is no mere enthusiasm—it is often a matter of life or death. I have known numerous cases where almost the only plank on which the poor troubled saint was able to float was just one text of which, somehow or other, he had got so tight a grasp that nothing could take it away from him! Nor is it only His Word which needs to be applied to us. "He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you," may be referred, likewise, to our Savior's precious blood. We sometimes sing—

"There is a Fountain filled with blood"—

and we talk of bathing in it. Now faith does not apply the blood to the soul—that is the work of the Spirit. True, I seek it by faith, but it is the Spirit who washes me in "the fountain opened...for sin and for uncleanness." It is the Spirit who receives of the things of Christ and shows them to me. You would never have a drop of blood sprinkled on your heart unless it was sprinkled by the hand of the Spirit. So, too, the robe of Christ's righteousness is entirely fitted on us by Him. We are not invited to appropriate the obedience of Christ to ourselves—but the Spirit brings all *to* us which Christ has made *for* us. Ask, then, of the Spirit, that you may have the Word applied, the blood applied, pardon applied and Grace applied—and you shall not ask in vain—for Jehovah has said, "I will put My Spirit within you."

V. But now we have to mark another very important point. WE MUST RECEIVE THE SPIRIT AS A SANCTIFYING SPIRIT.

Perhaps this is one of the greatest works of the Holy Spirit—sanctifying the soul. It is a great work to purge the soul from sin. It is greater than if one should wash a leopard till all his spots were obliterated, or an Ethiopian till his sable skin became white, for our sins are more than skin-deep—they have entered into our very nature! Should we be outwardly washed white this morning, we would be black and polluted before tomorrow! And if all the spots were taken away today, they would grow again tomorrow, for we are black all through! You may scrub the flesh, but it is black to the last—our sinfulness is a leprosy that lies deep within. But the Holy Spirit sanctifies the soul. He enters the heart, beginning the work of sanctification by conversion. He keeps possession of the heart and preserves sanctification by perpetually pouring in fresh oil of Grace till at last He will perfect sanctification by making us pure and spotless, fit to dwell with the blest inhabitants of Glory!

The way the Spirit sanctifies is this—first He reveals to the soul the evil of sin and makes the soul hate it. He shows it to be a deadly evil, full of poison—and when the soul begins to hate it, the next thing the Spirit does is to show it that the blood of Christ takes all the guilt away and, from that very fact, to lead it to hate sin even more than it did when it

first knew its blackness. The Spirit takes it to "the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel." And there He tolls the death-knell of sin as He points to the blood of Christ and says, "He shed this for you, that He might purchase you unto Himself to be one of His peculiar people, zealous of good works." Afterwards, the Holy Spirit may, at times, allow sin to break out in the heart of the child of God that it may be more strongly repressed by greater watchfulness in the future. And when the heir of Heaven indulges in sin, the Holy Spirit sends a sanctifying chastisement upon the soul until the heart, being broken with grief by the blueness of the wound, evil is cleansed away and Conscience, feeling uneasy, sends the heart to Christ who removes the chastisement and takes away the guilt!

Again, remember Believer, *all your holiness is the work of the Holy Spirit.* You have not a Grace which the Spirit did not give you! You have not a solitary virtue which He did not work in you. You have no goodness which has not been given to you by the Spirit. Therefore, never boast of your virtues or of your Graces. Have you now a sweet temper, whereas you once were passionate? Boast not of it—you will be angry if the Spirit leaves you. Are you now pure, whereas you were once unclean? Boast not of your purity, the seed of which was brought from Heaven—it never grew within your heart by nature—it is God's gift. Is unbelief prevailing against you? Do your lusts, your evil passions and your corrupt desires seem likely to master you? Then I will not say, "Up, and at 'em!" but I will say—Cry mightily unto God that you may be filled with the Holy Spirit—so shall you conquer at last and become more than conqueror over all your sins—seeing that the Lord has engaged to put His Spirit "within you."

VI. When I have spoken of two more points, I shall conclude. THE SPIRIT OF GOD IS PROMISED TO THE HEIRS OF HEAVEN AS A DIRECTING SPIRIT to guide them in the path of Providence.

If you are ever in a position in which you know not what road to take, remember that your "strength is to sit still," and your wisdom is to wait for the directing voice of the Spirit saying to you, "This is the way, walk you in it." I trust I have proved this myself and I am sure every child of God who has been placed in difficulties must have felt, at times, the reality and blessedness of this guidance. And have you never prayed to Him to direct you? If you have, did you ever find that you went wrong afterwards? I do not mean the sort of prayers that they present who ask counsel, but not of the Lord—"who walk to go down into Egypt…to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh," and then ask God to bless them in a way that He never sanctioned. No, you must start fairly by renouncing every other trust. It is only thus that you can make proof of His promise, "Commit your way unto the Lord; trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." Take with you, then, child of God, an open confession. Say, "Lord, I desire, like a sheet of water, to be moved by the

breath of the Spirit. Here I lie, 'passive in Your hands.' Gladly would I know no will but Yours. Show me Your will, O Lord! Teach me what to do and what to refrain from doing."

To some of you this may seem all fanaticism. You believe not that God the Holy Spirit ever guides men in the way they should take. So you may suppose if you have never experienced His guidance. We have heard that when one of our English travelers in Africa told the inhabitants of the intense cold that sometimes prevailed in his country, by which water became so hard that people could skate and walk upon it, the king threatened to put him to death if he told anymore lies, for he had never felt or seen such things. And what one has never seen or felt is certainly fit subject for doubt and contradiction. But with regard to the Lord's people who tell you that they are led by the Spirit, I advise you to give heed to their sayings and seek to make the trial for yourselves! It would be a good thing if you were just to go to God, as a child, in all your distresses. Remember that as a Solicitor whom you may safely consult, as a Guide whose directions you may safely follow, as a Friend on whose protection you may safely rely, the Holy Spirit is personally present in the Church of Christ and with each of the disciples of Jesus! And there is no fee to pay but the fee of gratitude and praise, because He has directed you so well!

VII. Just once more—THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL BE GIVEN TO GOD'S CHILDREN AS A COMFORTING SPIRIT.

This is peculiarly His office. Have you ever felt, immediately before a great and grievous trouble, you have had a most unaccountable season of joy? You scarcely knew why you were so happy or so tranquil. You seemed to be floating upon a very Sea of Elysium—there was not a breath of wind to ruffle your peaceful spirit, all was serene and calm. You were not agitated by the ordinary cares and anxieties of the world. Your whole mind was absorbed in sacred meditation. By-and-by, the trouble comes and you say, "Now I understand it all. I could not, before, comprehend the meaning of that grateful lull, that quiet happiness, but I see now that it was designed to prepare me for these trying circumstances. If I had been low and dispirited when this trouble burst upon me, it would have broken my heart. But now, thanks be to God, I can perceive through Jesus Christ how this 'light affliction, which is but for a moment,' works for me, 'a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.'" But, mark you, I believe that it is worthwhile to have the troubles in order to get the comfort of the Holy Spirit—it is worthwhile to endure the storm in order to realize the joys!

Sometimes my heart has been shaken by disgrace, shame and contempt, for many a brother minister, of whom I thought better things, has reviled me—and many a Christian has turned on his heels away from me because I had been misrepresented to him and he has hated me without a cause. But it has so happened that at that very time, if the whole Church had turned its back on me and the whole world had hissed

me, it would not have greatly moved me, for some bright ray of spiritual sunshine lit up my heart and Jesus whispered to me those sweet words, "I am My Beloved's, and My Beloved is Mine." At such times the consolations of the Spirit have been neither few nor small with me! O Christian, if I were able, I would bring you yet further into the depths of this glorious passage but, as I cannot, I must leave it with you. It is full of honey—only put it to your lips and get the honey from it. "I will put My Spirit within you."

In winding up, let me add a remark or two. *Do you not see here the absolute certainty of the salvation of every Believer?* Or rather, is it not absolutely certain that every member of the family of God's Israel must be saved? For it is written, "I will put My Spirit within you." Do you think that when God puts His Spirit within men, they can possibly be damned? Can you think God puts His Spirit into them and yet they perish and are lost? You may think so if you please, Sir, but I will tell you what God thinks—"I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes; and you shall keep My judgments, and do them." Sinners are far from God by wicked works and they will not come unto Him that they may have life. But when God says, "I will put My Spirit within you," He compels them to come to Him!

What a vain pretense it is to profess to honor God by a Doctrine that makes salvation depend on the will of man! If it were true, you might say to God, "We thank You, O Lord, for what You have done—You have given us a great many things and we offer You Your wages of praise, which are justly due to Your name, but we think we deserve more, for the deciding point was in our free will." Beloved, do not any of you swerve from the free Grace of God, for the babblings about man's free agency are neither more nor less than lies, right contrary to the Truth of Christ and the teachings of the Spirit.

How certain, then, is the salvation of every elect soul! It does not depend on the will of man—he is "made willing" in the day of God's power. [See Sermon #74, Volume 2—A WILLING PEOPLE AND AN IMMUTABLE LEADER. This remarkable sermon was *given by God to Mr. Spurgeon in his* sleep, during the night of Saturday, April 12, 1856, and preached by him the next morning!] He shall be called at the set time and his heart shall be effectually changed, that he may become a trophy of the Redeemer's power. That he was unwilling before is no hindrance, for God gives him the will, so that he is then of a willing mind. Thus, every heir of Heaven must be saved because the Spirit is put within him and thereby his disposition and affections are molded according to the will of God!

Once more, *how useless is it for any persons to suppose that they can be saved without the Holy Spirit!* Ah, dear Friends, men sometimes go very near to salvation without being saved—like the poor man who lay by the side of the pool of Bethesda, always close to the water, but never getting in. How many changes in outward character there are which very much resemble conversion but, not having the Spirit in them, they fail

after all! Deathbed repentances are often looked upon as very sincere, although too frequently, we fear, they are but *the first gnawing of the worm that never dies.* I have read, this week, an extraordinary anecdote, told by Dr. Campbell, of a woman who, many years ago, was condemned to death for murdering her child and was hung in the Grass Market at Edinburgh. She very diligently improved the six weeks allowed her by the Scottish law, previous to her execution, and the ministers who were with her continually gave it as their opinion that she died in the sure and certain hope of salvation. The appointed day came. She was hung, but it being very rainy, and no awning having been prepared, those who had the charge of her execution were in a great hurry to complete it and get under shelter—so she was cut down before the legal time and, as the custom is, the body was given up to her friends to be buried. A coffin was provided and she was moved in it to East Lothian where her husband was going to bury her. They stopped at a public-house on the road, to refresh themselves, when, to their great surprise and alarm, in rushed a boy and said he heard a noise in the coffin! They went out and found that the woman was alive! The vital powers had been suspended, but the life was not extinct and the jolting of the cart had restored her circulation. After a few hours she became quite well. They moved their residence and went to another part of the country. But the sad part of the tale is that the woman was as bad a character afterwards as she ever was before and, if anything, worse. She lived as openly in sin and despised and hated religion even more than she had previously done.

This is a most remarkable case. I believe that you would see that the great majority of those who profess to repent on their deathbeds, if they could rise again from their graves, would live a life as profane and godless as ever. Rely on this—it is nothing but the Grace of the Spirit of God that makes sure work of your souls. Unless He shall change you, you may be changed, but it will not be a change that will endure! Unless He shall put His hand to the work, the work will be marred, the pitcher spoiled on the wheel. Cry unto Him, therefore, that He may give you the Holy Spirit, that you may have the evidence of a real conversion and not a base counterfeit! Take heed, Sirs, take heed! Natural fear, natural love, natural feelings are not conversion! Conversion, in the first instance, and by all subsequent edification, must be the work of the Holy Spirit and of Him alone! Never rest comfortable, then, until you have the Holy Spirit's operations most surely effected in your hearts!

—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.

"GOING AND WEEPING"
NO. 3049

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON TUESDAY, JULY 18, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 9, 1871.

"Going and weeping."
Jeremiah 50:4.

POSSIBLY someone says, on hearing my text, "I like better to be going and singing." Yes, my Friend, and I do not blame you for making such a choice. As long as you can go and sing in the name of the Lord, let nothing stop you from doing so. It is meet that we who have been redeemed by Christ from destruction and are heirs of Heaven, should make merry and be glad. We should "rejoice in the Lord always," yet we must not despise others if they should seem to give more prominence to another phase of spiritual experience, namely, "going and weeping," for there are sons of sorrow on earth who will undoubtedly be sons of joy in Heaven. Among the sweetest flowers that bloom in the Savior's garden are those that, like the snowdrops and the lilies of the valley, hang down their heads.

It is also possible to be going and singing and yet, at the same time, to be going and weeping, for the mind may be in such a complex condition that while it has abundant cause for joy, it has a sweet well of happy grief within itself. There is such a thing as a bitter sweet—the worldling has that. But there is also such a thing as a sweet bitter—and the Christian often has that—so that while he is weeping, he can also be singing. While his soul is cast down within him, yet does he lift up his horn on high and rejoice in the God of his salvation! It is quite possible to blend these two experiences and the life of God's people thus becomes like a rainbow, consisting partly of the sunshine of Heaven and partly of the raindrops of earth. They sing because of their present and future joy—and they weep because of the sad past and the relics of the Fall that are still about them—and the sins of the age that still surround them. I will not say that "Going and Weeping" is a better motto than "Going and Singing," but sometimes it is the only one we can use. And often it may be joined with the other. I hope I shall be able to show you that "going and weeping" is a very choice way of living.

We see in our text, first, *a blessed combination.* When we have spoken of that, we will mention *when and where this combination should be conspicuous.* And lastly we will give *reasons why this combination should be manifest in our lives.*

I. First, here is A BLESSED COMBINATION—"going and weeping." The two things certify each other, supplement each other and stimulate each other.

First, *they certify each other.* I mean that when a man is going away from his past sins, away from his old habits, away from self-righteousness, if that reformation is a work of Divine Grace, it will have a watermark upon it—there will be "weeping" with the "going." If the prodigal had only said, "I will arise and go to my father," we might have doubted the reality of his repentance. But when he added, "and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son," then the tears of penitence, which must have accompanied such a confession, verified the reformation. Beware, Beloved, of all dry-eyed reformations! Certain preachers disparage and run down repentance—they say that it is simply "a change of mind." That is true in a sense, but what a change of mind it is—not such a change of mind as a man makes when, instead of buying one hat, he buys another or, instead of spending a shilling, he saves nine pence out of it! I have heard preachers refer to repentance as if it were a trifling, insignificant alteration of opinion—but if that is all the repentance we have had, it is a repentance of which we need to repent! The old-fashioned repentance is the only one that will bring you to Heaven! If you do not leave—

"The sins you loved before,
And show that you in earnest grieve,
By doing so no more"—

you will come short of the repentance which the Holy Spirit works in the souls of the Lord's own chosen people! There must be, as John the Baptist told the Pharisees and Sadducees, "fruits meet for repentance." Or, as the marginal reading puts it, "answerable to amendment of life." There must be true godly sorrow over your past evil conduct. There must be a loathing of yourself in the sight of God. And all the "going" that is not attended by "weeping" will be a bad going after all.

Now I will turn this Truth of God around the other way by reminding you that there are some persons who profess to be very repentant concerning the past—if they could live their lives over again they would not live at all as they have done—so they say and their tears flow copiously. I am not always pleased to see copious tears. When seeing inquirers, I have noticed that when men weep very much, they are either men of a tender spirit who are easily moved to tears, or else they have been so accustomed to drink that they have got into a maudlin state and cannot help crying. I would rather have tears falling inside a penitent than outside. Never condemn a man because he does not weep as others do—it may be that his heart is too full for tears. Nor condemn those who cry outwardly, for tears are often genuine evidences of repentance. I merely remark that a briny tear, in itself, is not a sufficient proof of that godly sorrow for sin of which the tear is only the index. And when I warned you against dry-eyed reformations, I meant those so-called reformations which do not include real sorrow for sin. External weeping

is quite a secondary matter, but inward weeping there must be in all true converts. Some people cry a great deal and talk a great deal—they say that their heart is adamant and that they are dead as a stone. Of course they are dead! They never were spiritually alive and the natural, stony heart has never been taken out of their flesh! There is a great deal of truth in what they say, but they have not learned it from the Spirit of God. They have caught certain phrases from the lips of gracious people and merely say what they hear others say—just as parrots do when they are taught to repeat what their owners say.

How am I to know whether this profession of repentance is genuine or not? Why, as I know the value of the "going" by the "weeping," so I know the value of the "weeping" by the "going!" Is the weeping man's life changed? Has God the Holy Spirit enabled him to lay the axe to the roots of those old habits of which he says he repents? Does he go on drinking and yet say that he mourns that he was a drunkard? Does he go on swearing and yet say that he laments his profanity? Is his temper constantly boiling over, yet he says that he repents of it? My dear Friends, there must be something more than that, for God cannot look upon our expressions of regret for the past as having any sincerity in them unless they are attended by a Grace-assisted effort to put an end to such sins for the future! There must be the "going" to prove the "weeping" to be true, as well as the "weeping" to prove that the "going" is in the right road.

In the next place, *these two things supplement each other.* That is to say, what is deficient in the "going" is supplied in the "weeping." And what is not in the "weeping" will be found in the "going." For instance, the "going" concerns the present. When a man is, by the Grace of God, renewed in the spirit of his mind, he is a different man from what he used to be—there is faith instead of unbelief, love to God instead of enmity against Him and holiness instead of sin. In fact, he is "a new creature" in Christ Jesus! And this "going" applies to the future as well as to the present, for the man will "go from strength to strength." Led on by the Divine Spirit, he will "grow in Grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." He will tread the path of holiness till he enters the Celestial City, to go no more out forever. But when the black and dreary past of his sinful life again comes before his mind, he cannot help weeping. Yet even then he pleads the merit of the precious blood of Jesus and prays with penitent king David, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving kindness: according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions." When that black past is blotted out like a cloud blown away by the wind, the "weeping" and the "going" are not separated—tears have still to be shed because of the turning aside, the faltering, the halting even in going along the road which God has marked out for us. When we see men reclaimed from outward sin. When we mark the manifest change in their character we may call that "going" in the right road! But unless there is some "weeping" through intense heart-emotion, some manifestation of sincere

sorrow over that in which they once delighted and of regret that they have not attained to the high and holy things which ought to be the portion of all true Christians, there is something lacking.

Now turn the thought the other way and notice how the "going" supplements the "weeping." The "weeping" is an evidence that we have learned our need. The "going" to Christ in faith supplies that need. The "weeping" is the acknowledgment of the disease. The "going" is the application to the Great Physician. The "weeping" mourns over our nakedness. The "going" takes us to the King's wardrobe to put on Christ's spotless robe of righteousness. The "weeping" is because of our emptiness. The "going" links us on to His fullness. It would be wretched "weeping" if we did not know the blessed way of "going" to Him of whom Paul wrote, "My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

I also said that *these two things stimulate each other*—and the truth of this statement is readily perceptible. Our "going" leads to our "weeping," and our "weeping" excites us to "going." The poor prodigal felt the pangs of hunger within his body and he felt in his spirit that he had sinned against his father. Therefore he said, "I will arise and go." And I expect that as he went, his hunger quickened his pace—and that every pang of his emptiness, and every sight of his filthiness—and every consequent tear would make him speed with greater energy towards his father's house. A deep sense of sin is often a blessedly impelling power to drive us to the Savior. I desire never, in this world, to be free from a deep sense of the bitterness and guiltiness of sin. Even though freed from the guilt of sin by the precious blood of Jesus, I still desire to feel what an abominable thing sin is, that I may go, eagerly and passionately, to my dear Lord's wounds and get the one only effectual remedy for all my soul diseases. Light thoughts of sin breed light thoughts of the Savior. When our "weeping" over our transgressions ceases, our "going" to Him who "was wounded for our transgressions" is apt to also cease. Repentance and faith are like the Siamese twins. If one is sick, the other cannot be well, for they live but one life. If ever you are asked which comes first, repentance or faith, you may answer, by another question, "Which spoke of a wheel moves first when the wheel begins to revolve?" You know that they are all set in motion at the same time. So, when the hand of God sets our soul "going" in the right road, it also sets our soul and often our eyes "weeping." And I believe that when our soul is really "going" towards God, it is with a deepened repentance over the past and a sincere "weeping" over the imperfections which it still has to lament.

So that the "weeping" stimulates the "going" and I am sure that the "going" stimulates the "weeping." If the Lord helps you to grow in Grace and you get much joy and peace in believing, you will be sure to say, "What a fool I was to have been all those years a slave to sin and an enemy to such a blessed Savior!" And when you get very near to God and "walk in the light, as He is in the light," you will see your imperfections more than you ever did before. When I meet with a Brother who tells me that he is nearly perfect, I know that he is living in the dark, for, if he

lived in the light, he would see how far short he came of the Glory of God. You think your white linen looks very white, do you not? But when the snow falls and you place your linen upon it, it no longer looks white. So, until you come near to God, you do not know what "perfection" is—but when you get even a dim perception of what His holiness is, you say, with the Patriarch Job, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Oh, that the Lord would enable us to have more true "going" in the way of holiness—growing in communion with the Holy Spirit, advancing in our likeness to Christ and becoming more humble, more prayerful and more fervent in spirit and more diligent in service, for then I am certain that the blessed art of holy "weeping" would be more practiced by us every day of our life! So, the "weeping" helps our "going" in the right road and our poor "going" leads to more "weeping" because we do not go better.

II. Now I leave the explanation of this strange combination of "going and weeping" to point out WHEN AND WHERE IT SHOULD BE MOST CONSPICUOUS.

And here, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, *I begin with myself and with my Brothers engaged in the same holy office.* Scripture teaches us that with the sower of the Good Seed of the Kingdom, there should always be a "going" and a "weeping." Here is a passage to prove my assertion to be true, "He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." We have a Christ-like task if our "going" is what it should be—to "preach the Word," to "make full proof of our ministry," to "keep back nothing that is profitable unto you," to bring forth, as scribes instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven, "things new and old" out of the Divine Treasury—to go after the outlying masses and "compel them to come in," that our Master's great House may be filled for the great Gospel feast to care for the sick, the sad and the dying—all this is included in the "going" of "a good minister of Jesus Christ." But it will be a poor "going" if there is no "weeping" with it! Think of the Prince of Preachers—what a wonderful "going" was His! Ah, and what wonderful "weeping" was His—at the grave of Lazarus and over the Jerusalem sinners! How deeply He loved even those who rejected Him! Oh, that we who profess to be His servants had more tender hearts! Then we would say with the weeping Prophet Jeremiah, "Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" Paul was indeed a "going" preacher—"in journeying often" and, "in labors more abundant." But what a "weeping" preacher he was also! You know how he said to the elders of the Church at Ephesus, in his farewell address at Miletus, "Remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears." And to the Church at Philippi he wrote, "For many walk, of whom I have told you often and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ." So these two things, "going and weeping," ought to be

characteristic of every true preacher of the Word—and of all teachers and other servants of the Lord Jesus Christ whose office is of the like kind. I often feel that I can adopt Doddridge's language and say—

"Arise, my most tender thoughts, arise!
To torrents melt my streaming eyes
And you, my heart, with anguish feel
Those evils which you cannot heal!
See human nature sunk in shame.
See scandals poured on Jesus' name!
The Father wounded through the Son—
The world abused and souls undone.
See the short course of vain delight
Closing in everlasting night—
In flames that no abatement know
Though briny tears forever flow.
My God, I feel the mournful scene.
My heart yearns over dying men
And gladly my pity would reclaim
And snatch the firebrands from the flame!
But feeble my compassion proves,
And can but weep where most it loves!
Your own all-saving arms employ,
And turn these drops of grief to joy."

This combination, "going and weeping," should be conspicuous, not only in those who plead with men for God, but *also in those who plead with God for men.* The best praying consists in "going" "boldly unto the Throne of Grace" and pleading there—yet they who win most from God are those whose hearts are most deeply affected—those in whom there is the "weeping" as well as the "going." Such was the prayer of Jacob in that great night of wrestling concerning which the Prophet Hosea says, "He had power over the Angel and prevailed. He wept and made supplication unto Him." Weeping is a wondrous help to those who would find their way to the heart of God! So, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, pour out your hearts before Him—pour them out like water before the Lord and when your heart is breaking for the longing that it has, even if you shed no outward tears, you have learned the sacred art of praying and you shall receive what you have asked in so far as it is according to the will of God!

Beloved, it is a sad thing to have to say, yet it is true, that *this* "*going and weeping*" *ought to be very conspicuous in backsliders.* I am always glad to see backsliders returning to their first love and restored to fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. But there are one or two things that I always like to see about such people—the absence of all arrogance and self-justification and the presence of deep humility both towards God and towards His Church—for their offense has been against God's people as well as against God, Himself. When a Church member falls into sin, all the members have to suffer in their repute among men and they also have to suffer in their power with God and, therefore, the returning of a backslider should always be accompanied by manifest signs of the deepest contrition. Many speak of David's sin, but say nothing of David's penitence. Nathan rebuked him in a fashion that very few kings would

have endured, yet there was no anger in David's heart against him for the stern way in which he told him of his faults. The 51st and other penitential Psalms show how melted by contrition David's soul was—groans, sobs and sighs escaped from his heart instead of his former joyous music. There was a "going" and a "weeping" on the part of the repenting backslider! If he had known George Herbert's quaint lines, he might have said—

"O who will give me tears? Come all you springs,
Dwell in my head and eyes—come, clouds and rain!
My grief has need of all the watery things
That Nature has produced. Let every vein
Suck up a river to supply my eyes!
My weary weeping eyes are too dry for me
Unless they get new conduits, new supplies,
To bear them out and with my state agree.
What are two shallow fords, two little spouts
Of a lesser world? The greater is but small—
A narrow cupboard for my griefs and doubts,
Which need provision in the midst of all.
Verses, you are too fine a thing, too wise
For my rough sorrows—cease, be dumb and mute!
Give up your feet and running to my eyes,
And keep your measures for some lover's lute,
Whose grief allows him music and a rhyme—
For mine excludes both measure, tune and time.
Alas, my God!"

But, Beloved, *this "going and weeping" should also be seen in Christians who are making progress in the Divine Life.* I believe it always will be seen in those who are diligently and carefully watching and striving against even the *appearance* of evil. That "going" which consists in a sort of feverish excitement, or in a sudden leap into a high condition of soul is to be very seriously suspected. I have found that I have had to fight for every inch of the road that I have ever traveled Heavenward. I do not think I ever gained any spiritual victory easily. If any here find the road to Heaven to be strewn with flowers and one in which they can run without being weary, I can only say that I have not found it so—and that if I did not wait upon the Lord, I should utterly fall. Brothers and Sisters, I pray you to suspect that it is presumption and not the full assurance of faith if you are always "going," but never "weeping." I have already explained that this "weeping" does not put aside the rejoicing, for a Christian may "rejoice in the Lord" all the more while he mourns before God on account of his own shortcomings, waywardness and faultiness. I think the most joyful soul among us may willingly sing—

"Lord, let me weep for naught but sin,
And after none but Thee
And then I would, oh, that I might
A constant weeper be!"

And *this "going and weeping" should also be conspicuous in every student*—I mean not only students for the ministry, but students for Heaven, and that is what every Christian is. The Apostle John was a student, and he once saw, in the hand of God, "a book...sealed with

seven seals." And when it was asked, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" and there was no man found worthy, what did John do? He says, "I wept much." And often that is almost as good as knowing the original languages—indeed, it may be better! If the heart can weep over a Doctrine, it will get that Doctrine opened up before long. There is no chemical so strong as our tears for piercing through the hard shell of the Truth of God. Sincerely cry over the Truth and soon the Truth will enter your soul and you will know its inmost meaning! There is a way of "going" by bending the mind to the Truth of God, but there is also a "weeping" in the passionate longing that we ought always to have towards God's statutes. "Going and Weeping" is a noble motto for the student.

So it is *for the Christian worker and for the Christian sufferer.* I will put the two together. The Christian worker goes and weeps—the Christian sufferer weeps, yet goes. I desire, while working for God in vigorous health, to maintain a lowly, humble, penitent frame of mind. But if sickly and laid low—and made to weep through bodily pain or relative affliction, I ask that I may have cheerful courage, so that if I cannot do much, I may do *something* for the Lord and still keep on "going." I have seen and often is my spirit melted at the sight of one whose sufferings seldom abate, yet whose desire to serve God never abates, but rather increases and who would give anything if activity might take the place of patience. Blessed be those weak ones whom the Lord elects to suffer, yet who still seek to serve Him! And blessed are those who actively serve Him, yet sit humbly at His feet and feel that they are less than nothing and who weep tears of joy to think that God should so honor such poor worms as they are as to permit them to do *anything* for His dear name's sake!

This "going and weeping" ought to be most conspicuous in those of you who are not yet saved. If you really want to be saved you will seek the Lord your God by hearing His Word and by much earnest prayer. If His Grace is really working in you, you will seek Him by casting yourselves at His feet and by looking to the great Sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross and by trusting in His redeeming blood. But with all that "going" there will be "weeping." You will loathe yourselves in your own sight—you will bemoan the corruptions of your heart and cry, "The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. From the soles of the feet even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." Never cease your "weeping" till Christ has said, "I absolve you." Sigh and cry until, at His dear Cross you have seen all your transgressions blotted out forever. O Sinner, I pray God to work in you this "going" and this "weeping!" I have already told you that the "weeping" is of no use without the "going" by faith to Christ, but I have also said to you that the supposed going to Christ is not a real "going" to Him unless there is also sincere "weeping" on account of sin. May your "going" be away from your sin and may your "weeping" lead you to look to Christ as you pray—

"Lord God of my salvation,
To You, to You, I cry!

Oh let my supplication
Arrest Your ear on high!
Distresses round me thicken,
My life draws near the grave—
Descend, O Lord, to quicken,
Descend my soul to save!"

III. Our time is nearly exhausted, but I ask you to have patience with me for two or three minutes more while I mention a very few out of the multitude of REASONS WHY THE "GOING" AND THE "WEEPING" SHOULD BE CONJOINED IN OUR LIVES.

And, first, speaking to the members of this Church, I mention that which is always uppermost with me. We want to see a great enlargement of our Church, a deep and permanent revival of religion. We have had a foretaste of it, but we are sighing and crying for a great deal more. If we are to have it, there must be in the Church a "going" and a "weeping." Every Brother and every Sister must be doing something for the Lord! You who can preach in the street, go and do it! You who can distribute tracts, go and do it! You who can teach in the Sunday schools, go and do it! You who can serve the Lord in the lodging houses or anywhere else—you who can speak to the ones and the twos—go, *go,* GO, in the Lord's name, "go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature!" But you will go best where you go "weeping." Ah, me, what cause we have for weeping! Planted in the midst of the greatest city upon the face of the earth—the greatest for population and, considering its Light of God, the greatest for transgression—what cause we have for weeping! If you knew what some of us have to know, you would know enough to give you heart-ache or heart-break. If you went into some of our streets on the Sabbath, you might ask, "Is there any Sabbath at all with all this marketing and bargaining?" Look at the gin-palaces—those doors of Hell are wide open in almost every street—as though they sold the Bread of Life, men multiply these places where they destroy both body and soul! I dare hardly remind you of the haunts of vice—I will rather speak of the agents of superstition. How busily they ply their deadly trade! Some damn men by open sin but these damn them by a lie which they offer to them as the truth of God! This city is a reeking dunghill and, "except the Lord of Hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." May God, in His mercy, preserve us as salt in the midst of the general putridity!

Some of you have even greater cause than this for weeping for, in your own houses there are those who love not the Lord. Your children are not the Lord's children. Perhaps your wife or your husband loves not your God. You may well weep as you go! Sympathy and activity, compassion and diligence—with this sweet mixture every saint ought to be anointed. The anointing of the Holy Spirit is better still, for that anointing has among its choicest ingredients the power to give us the sympathy and the diligence that we need.

Now, Beloved Friends, I speak to you who are not converted. If you are seeking the Lord, there ought to be in you the "going" and the "weeping." The "weeping" as you think of Jesus and His great love to sinners like yourself. They despised Him, rejected Him, laughed Him to scorn but He still pursued them with love, as I trust He has pursued you. And I know some for whom He has, by His Grace, continued the pursuit until, at last, with a Divine art known only to Himself, He has made the unwilling, willing in the day of His power! For the love that Christ has to sinners, we ought all to feel our heart "weeping" that we should ever have offended such a Divine Lover. To transgress against His crown is high treason, but to transgress against His Cross is the sin of sins! I know not by what name to call such hardness of heart, such barbarity of spirit, such brutishness of soul. Think, for a moment, (for perhaps this may help you to go and weep), of the Lord, Himself, the King of Glory coming down among men and finding a poor shelter in His birth, little comfort in His life and no solace in His death. Very poor was He who could have worn the sun upon His head and the stars as rings upon His fingers! Very lowly was He before whom the tallest angel shrank into less than nothing in joyful adoration! Think of Him amidst the cold night of Gethsemane sweating great drops of blood! Think of Him scourged, spit upon, mocked and, at last, fastened to the cruel Cross to die the death of a slave—all for love of guilty men! Where are our hearts? Surely adamant is softer than our hearts if we do not weep to think that all this was for undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving sinners! And for no motive but that He was so full of love to them that He must give Himself thus to suffer and to die for them. Let us go to His Cross and look upon Him whom we have pierced and mourn because of Him. And while we rejoice over pardoned guilt, let us mourn that we have pierced the Lord.

If nothing else will make us weep, there is one other reflection that should bring out the sorrow and also the activity of all Believers—and that is the fact that though we were once lost and far from God, we are now saved! There are sitting in this house hundreds, if not thousands of persons who were "heirs of wrath, even as others," "but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God"! And now, "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." "Oh, what amazing mercy," each saved soul may well say, "and all this for *me!*" Everlasting Love ordained it. Immutable Love has accomplished it. And unchanging Love will perfect it! The chief of sinners, yet chosen before time began! A sinner since conversion, yet loved with a love that will never change—it cannot increase and it never will diminish—loved with a love that will outlast the sun when its bright lamp has burned up all its oil! A love that shall outlast time so that when the angel shall "stand upon the sea and upon the earth," and swear "by Him that lives forever and ever," that there shall be time no longer, it shall not affect the heritage my soul possesses in the Infinite, Eternal Love of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit!

Oh, how could I ever offend such a God as this? Shame on my heart! Gladly would I smite you that you could ever be an enemy to One who loved you before the day-star knew its place. And O base spirit that does not now serve God better, more ardently, more passionately, more perfectly, seeing that all this love has been spent on you! Beloved, God grant that we may realize, in all its sweetness, the meaning of our text, "going and weeping," and unto Him shall be glory forever and ever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EPHESIANS 1:1-14.

In this chapter we see what Paul, writing under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has to say about the possessions and privileges of Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verses 1, 2. *Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.* Brothers and Sisters in Christ, this is a benediction for you as well as for the saints at Ephesus! It is for all "the faithful in Christ Jesus." May you all have Grace without measure and may you all have "the peace of God, which passes all understanding," to "keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"! Grace and peace are both to be had by believing in Jesus.

3. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.* It is right that we should bless God as He has so richly blessed us. Blessed be the Heavenly Father who has so abundantly blessed His children. How has He blessed us? "With all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (or, things) in Christ."

4. *According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world,* That is the commencement of all the blessing, God's electing love. This is the Fountain from which the Living Waters flow. There would have been no stream of blessing to us at all if it had not been for this first primeval choice of us by God, even as Jesus said to His disciples, "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you."

4. *That we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.* Here is the blessing of sanctification—we are chosen that we may be made holy. To what nobler end could we have been elected? Is not this the very highest of our heart's desires—"that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love"?

5. *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.* Oh, what a blessing this is, altogether inconceivable in its results!—

"Behold what wondrous Grace,
The Father has bestowed
On sinners of a mortal race,
To call them sons of God!"

6. *To the praise of the glory of His Grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved.* Here is music for you—"accepted in the Beloved." Are there grander words in any language than those four? Oh, the joy of being Beloved, adopted, accepted by God the Father because of His beloved Son! Now comes something more.

7. *In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His Grace.* Redemption from destruction, the forgiveness of our sins—we have all this through "the riches of His Grace."

8-14. *Wherein He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will: that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.* There is no end to the blessing which God gives to His chosen. He is always blessing us with blessings upon blessings, Grace upon Grace, and then there will be Glory to crown it all. Blessed be 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.

THE ERRAND OF MERCY
NO. 3050

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 25, 1907.

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

"For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."
Luke 19:10.

GOD came down from Heaven but once to be united with human flesh. *On what errand did He come and who were the objectives of it? What messenger was sent on that errand? What method was pursued by Him? With what success was it attended?* Our text gives us the information—"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Let us speak briefly upon these four points.

I. First, AS TO THE OBJECTIVE OF CHRIST'S ERRAND—"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

That word, "lost," is constantly applied by desponding and despairing persons to themselves. Such people say, "We are lost—we feel that we are lost, wholly lost. There is no hope for us." Herein they betray both their ignorance and their unbelief—their ignorance, for to be lost is nothing so peculiar that they should claim to be heritors of a strange doom since the whole human race is lost! And their unbelief since Christ came especially to seek and to save the lost. Therefore, their being lost is not a ground for despair, but may be construed into a ground of hope! Let us think over that word, "lost," and see in what sense those are lost whom Christ came to save.

Christ came to save those who were *lost hereditarily*. You often hear people say, "Man is in a state of probation." No such thing! There is no man now in a state of probation. Adam was in a state of probation and man in Adam was in a state of probation in the Garden as long as he stood in obedience to the test that was given. He was upon his trial, but the moment that Adam tasted of the forbidden fruit, the probation was over—he was a lost man! And our probation was over, too, for we were lost in him. Man, in this world, is either in a state of condemnation or a state of salvation. "He that believes not" is not in a state of probation—he is "condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." We have Divine authority for this. A man who has believed in Jesus is not in a state of probation, for "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," and, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." The fact is that we are all absolutely lost through the sin of Adam and we need a Revelation to show us that we

are absolutely saved in the righteousness of Christ! It is not a question whether I shall fall or not—I have fallen in Adam. "By one man's disobedience," says the Apostle, "many were made sinners." I stood in Adam as long as he stood, but when Adam fell, he so represented me and all my kith and kin, that I fell in him—and fell so as to be hopelessly and forever lost—if Jesus Christ had not stepped in "to seek and to save that which was lost."

We are lost, again, in another sense. We are *lost naturally.* It is supposed by some that man has it now in his power to choose his own character and so become the arbiter of his own destiny. They say that his nature is, at first, in such a state of equilibrium that he can select either the strait and narrow path of rectitude, or pursue the broad road which leads to destruction. No, my dear Friends, both Scripture and experience teach us otherwise! We are born with natures that incline towards that which is evil and never of themselves tend towards that which is good! "Behold," says David, "I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Well did Job ask, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one." How, then, can he be pure who is born of a woman who is herself sinful? How can we, who are impure, be the parents of pure children? Such a thing is not possible! The whole head of human nature is sick and the whole heart faint. Naturally from our very birth we go astray, speaking lies! There is written upon human nature, by the finger of our first parent, this word, "Lost!"—lost to God, therefore lost to the virtuous exercise of the affections and the true balance of the judgment, lost to rectitude, the will lost to obedience, the mental vision lost as to a sight of God, the moral sense lost as to that proper sensibility of conscience by which it shall stand out against sin. The reigning power in man is dislodged from its place—manhood's glory, his victory and integrity lost, lost forever—unless some greater Man shall restore it. This is how we truthfully describe the whole human race and so, surely, those whom Christ came to save were hereditarily and naturally lost.

Among these, *there are some so totally lost to all feeling that they do not know they are lost.* Even the preaching of the Gospel does not suffice to bring them to a consciousness of their condition. Their conscience has become seared and their heart hardened by perversity in sin. If they once knew what it was to tremble at the wrath to come, that time is past. Even the wooing of Divine Mercy fall upon them as oil would fall upon marble and runs off without producing any effect. They wish they could feel. They envy souls that despair and wish that they could, themselves, despair. They despair, however, of ever being able to get into a good enough state of heart to despair! "If anything is felt," they say, "'tis only pain to find we cannot feel," and not much of that is felt. Now, even such Jesus Christ came to save—and we know this because such were some of us! Do not I recollect the time when I would have given my eyes for a tear and would have been willing to suffer anything if I could have but bent my knees and uttered one groan? But my heart would not yield a

sigh or my eyes a tear! I turned to the Book of God but that did not move me. I listened to the preacher without emotion. It seemed as if even a dying Savior's groans could never move a heart so base as mine—and yet I bear witness that Christ came to save such, for I do myself rejoice in His salvation! You who are lost to all feeling may well catch at this text, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Then there are others who are *lost to all hope.* It is in vain that you pray with them. They rise up from their knees and thank you for your prayers, but they are assured that God will never hear them. They sometimes pray—necessity drives them to their knees—but they pray with the conviction that they are merely talking to a God whose mind is made up about them and determined to cast them forever from His Presence. Comforts that are available to others are of no use to them. You may skillfully seek to adjust your consolation so as to suit their case, but they ward off your comfort as skillfully as a warrior guards himself from the enemy's arrow with his shield. They will not hear a word of comfort, charm you ever so wisely. They have made up their minds that there cannot be anything in the Book of God for them except thunder and lightning and "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." Yes, and if they had their own names put in the Bible and a promise appended to their names, they would deny their own names and the promise too! They have come to be in such a state of subjection to that tyrant, Unbelief, that they say, "Never shall we have hope. It is impossible that such sinners as we are, should ever be partakers of eternal life." If you ask them the reason for their despair, they cannot always tell you. "No," they say, "we would not tell any man living what we have done and what we feel." In one case it is some overwhelming sin. In another case it is having resisted at certain periods the convictions of conscience. Or yet again, it is old age—their having been living so long a time in impenitence. They have all different arguments and none of them are the arguments of truth.

They believe Satan's lie that God is not willing to forgive, in preference to God's own oath—"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." I do not know how it is that these poor souls manage to get away from such texts as these—"All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." And such an one as this—"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 say again that I do not know how they escape from the soothing influence of such words of hope, but they do manage, by some means, to fly from them! And still they hug their chains and sit in a sort of willful bondage in the darkness of their dungeon. Yet Jesus came to save just

such sinners as those and there are some here of elastic step and bright eyes who once were "bound in affliction and iron!" But you have been brought out of the Valley of the Shadow of Death and Christ has broken your bonds asunder! You can now sing praises unto God and your songs shall testify to others, who were your fellow captives, that Jesus Christ has come "to seek and to save that which was lost."

Some whom Christ saves are *lost socially.* Their names are not mentioned in the family—they would bring such a pang to the mother's heart, such a flush to the father's cheek. They could not now enter into any respectable society—they are marked men and marked women. There are some who are lost even before the law of the land. The hand of justice has been laid upon them and they are held in bonds under the law. It may be that they are even marked as felons. Yet the Son of Man has come to seek and to save those who are socially lost! When the gates of society are shut, the gates of Mercy are not shut. When man considers the case to be utterly hopeless and the social outcasts are put into a sort of leper colony lest the infection should spread, Jesus walks into the colony and touches the leper and says, "Be you clean." You may shut them out from yourselves, but not from the Savior! When they have come to their worst and have run the whole round of dissipation till they are jaded and sick, still can the Master step in and whisper into that ear rendered attentive by pain and sickness—and snatch the fire-brand from the flame—to the Glory of His own Grace!

Others whom the Savior doubtless came to save, were, at one time, *lost avowedly and determinedly.* There have been those who have made a league with Satan and a covenant with death. They have said, "Turn to God? Never! We will burn first." They have not only resisted conscience, but they have, as it were, proclaimed war to the knife against God Himself! They have called Heaven and earth to witness that they were the slaves of Satan and had chosen him to be their master—and would serve him to their dying hour! Yet their covenant with death has been broken and their league with Hell has been broken! God has, by mighty Grace, made them quite as decidedly His servants as they were once the servants of the Evil One! Oh, what has not Grace done, and what can it not still do? Take the word, "lost," in the very worst possible sense that you can attach to it and still my text shall apply to it also—"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Perhaps of all lost souls, *the most miserably lost are those who perish under the sound of the Gospel.* There are some of you who have been prayed over, preached at and wept over year after year till you seem to be hopeless cases. You yourselves feel that there is a hardness which is begotten in the light of the Gospel which is not begotten anywhere else. The same sun which melts wax hardens clay and it has hardened you after an awful fashion till, now, you really dread to hear the Gospel lest you should drift still further away from God! Well, even such lost ones Jesus came to save! I am conscious that my language cannot sufficiently

express the extent to which the word, "lost," may be applied. Some of you think there is very little difference between you and the damned in Hell—they *feel* the flame—you are *waiting* for it. You feel that they are undergoing the execution while you are in the condemned cell. They have heard Christ say, "Depart, you cursed." You feel that you are cursed though He has not yet said to you, "Depart." You think (though you think wrongly, let me say), that your death warrant has been signed and sealed—you declare that you might as well be banished from this world, for you know that if you live ever so long, you will live and die without hope and without God! Ah, poor Soul! Jesus Christ has come to seek and to save just such sinners as you are! And I trust, notwithstanding all you say to the contrary, He has come to seek and to save you—even *you*.

Such are the woe-begone objects of this mission of mercy! Now let us turn to the Messenger of mercy—the Savior of the lost!

II. If the lost are to be saved, someone of extraordinary character must come to do it. No, IF THEY ARE TO BE SOUGHT AND FOUND, THERE MUST BE A SPECIAL MESSENGER.

Ordinary men, if they go to seek the lost ones, soon grow weary in the search. Perhaps they have to seek them where pride does not like to go, or to follow them when their perseverance fails and their patience cannot endure. It needs a special One to seek the lost. But when the sinner is found, who can *save* the found one? No human arm is long enough, no human merits strong enough, no human plea prevalent enough—it is delightful, therefore, to read that "the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Who is this Son of Man? "*Christ, who is over all, God blessed forever.*" Though peerless in dignity, He assumes a humble title with a lowly estate when He condescends to undertake this menial service. Before He came to be the Son of Mary, He was the eternal Son of God! He sat upon the Throne of His Glory, adored by the spirits which His own hand had made, but He came down from yonder starry sky to seek and save the lost! This proves how full of pity, how condescending and how kind was God's eternal Son. Lost one, here is some comfort for you! If Jesus, from His Throne of Glory, pitied you in your lost estate and if it is the same pitying One who is come to seek and to save the lost, then is He not the One to find and to save you?

But remember who He is, "*the Son of Man.*" He gives Himself that title, "the Son of Man!" He feels as you feel. He was tempted in all points like you are tempted. He never had a single sin of His own, but He bore the sins of many and He knows what the weight of sin is. You think Christ has forsaken you and Christ once thought His Father had forsaken Him—"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He cried. You are broken in heart. He knows what that means for He said, "Reproach has broken My heart." You think that all God's waves and billows have gone over you. He said they had all gone over Him and in very truth they had!

It is not possible that you should have a grief deeper than that which the Savior knew. You cannot plunge lower than He went. What if I say that though sin is come over you so that you cannot look up, there cannot be so black a cloud of sin between you and God as there was once between the Substitute and the Father—for ALL the sins of His elect ones rolled like an ocean's tempest between the God of Justice and the Surety who was smitten in our place! Think of Christ, you who are lost, as being just such an One as yourself, except in the matter of sin—poor, having not where to lay His head—destitute, afflicted and tormented as much as you can be. He is the Son of Man! Oh, rest you upon that tender bosom and confide in that compassionate heart!

If it were merely that He came from Heaven, it would be a proof of love and a token of sympathy, but that is not enough. It is written, "He is come to seek and to save." Here is a proof of His activity. He does not sit still and pity men, does not stand up and propose a plan for them, but He is come to seek and to save them! The angels celebrated His Advent when they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." The Son of Man is *come!* They watched Him in His journey through the 30 years of His earthly pilgrimage and they seemed to sing, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save." But how the song must have deepened with a wondrous emphasis when they saw Him sweating great drops of blood in Gethsemane, when they saw Him bound, scourged and tormented by the Roman soldiers, when they saw Him bearing the weight of the Cross, when they marked Him fastened to the accursed tree, pouring out His soul in streams of blood! How they must have felt, then, that the Son of Man was come to seek and to save! Earth heard the note, "The Son of Man is come." Sin heard it and Death heard it—and when the Savior bowed His head upon the Cross, there went up a great shout, "The Son of Man *is* come!" And startled Hell heard it when Satan saw those whom he had expected to be his prey, delivered by the strong arm of the dying Sufferer! Heaven heard it as the peal rolled upward and angels said, "The Son of Man is come to bring up here that which was lost." So, then, there is *activity* in the Savior and on this you may rely!

I shall say but little more concerning the Savior, except these few thoughts on which you may meditate at your leisure. He who has come to save the lost, loved sinners from before the foundation of the world, was appointed of God to be their Savior, comes on a Divine mission clothed with the Spirit of Power, comes with an atoning Sacrifice in His hands, comes with a plea in His mouth—the voice of blood, "which speaks better things than that of Abel"—comes with love beaming from His eyes and overpowering compassion in His heart! He comes not to those who come to Him, but to those who cannot come and are afraid to come! The Son of Man, none other than He who said, "I am meek and lowly of heart," has come to seek and to save the lost!

III. Now notice THE PLAN OF THIS LOVING COMMISSION.

It does not say, "He is come to save" merely, but, "to seek and to save." It is an astounding thing and a great proof of human depravity that men do not, themselves, seek salvation. They even deny the necessity of it and would sooner run away than be partakers of it! If you pass by a dispensary in the morning, you will often see the poor outpatients at the door. And when the time comes for the doctor to see them, many will be found waiting in his outer room, but you do not often hear of a doctor who goes out seeking for *gratis* patients. But my Savior not only cures, but seeks the patients out—and if He did not, He would never have patients, for our sickness is of a kind that never brings men to the Physician, but drives them farther and farther from Him!

He is come to seek them. *He seeks them by the Gospel.* Tonight He seeks some of you. *He seeks them by Providence.* Sometimes His *rough* Providences seek them. At other times the daily mercies of His goodness beckon them to come. He seeks them by the death of their fellows—a mother's dying bed, the snatching of a baby to Heaven—all these are the ways in which Jesus is seeking that which was lost. *He seeks them effectually by His Spirit.* His Spirit comes and reveals to them their darkness, points them to Christ, the true Light, and thus clearly they are found out, just where they are, and stand discovered to themselves in their ruin.

But it is added that He not only came to seek, but to save. "Oh!" says one, "I don't need any seeking. I am found. Convinced of my folly, here I sit, and acknowledge my sin. I am indeed sought out and found, but I need saving." Now, Friend, the Son of Man has come to save the lost, as well as to seek them. And He does it in this way—*He saves them from the guilt of past sin.* In one moment, as soon as ever the blood of Christ is applied to the conscience, every past sin is gone and the man is, in God's sight, as if He had never sinned. Christ puts away iniquity in a moment. The next thing He does is that *He kills the power of sin within* and makes the man "a new creature." He does not merely save him from the guilt of the past, but from the power of sin in the present! If He does not tear up sin by the roots, He at least cuts it down. And sin does not have dominion over us because we are not under the Law, but under Grace. The man who has trembled long, trembles no longer! He who was sinking deeper and deeper in the mire feels that there is a new song in his mouth and that his goings are established. And as He saves him from the power of sin in the present, so *He saves him from future falling.* He saves, not only for a year, or for ten years and then lets men fall, but He finally and completely saves that which was lost! And this one act will enable you, sinner, to realize all this blessedness—cast your guilty soul on Him who saves you! Do this with your whole heart and your sin is blotted out—your soul is saved and you may go in peace!

IV. Lastly, let us rejoice in THE SUCCESS OF THIS BLESSED SCHEME. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was

lost." Does He succeed in what He came to do? He does, thank God! And in these later times we live to see how the Master saves that which was lost. The opening of the theatres for the preaching of the Word has been a very blessed thing. The raising up of Evangelists who have gone throughout the land preaching the Word has been a proof that the Son of Man has not ceased to seek and to save! When I look back to 11 years ago, when I commenced my pastorate in London, [1851] I recollect that there seemed to be very little care, then, about the preaching of the Word. We could not, then, do what we now can—count up some 20 Evangelists always going through the country, and all of them in their measure useful men—I mean such men as Richard Weaver, Reginald Radcliffe and Brownlow North and a great many others, all in their way adapted to the work. It seemed then as if the Church of Christ had given up seeking the lost—but God has raised up one and another for the purpose of preaching the Word, fulfilling this Scripture, that "the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Some say, "If the people want to hear the Gospel, let them go to church or chapel—they can always hear the Gospel when they like." That is not Christ's way! We are to go and seek them! Open-air preaching is a blessed institution and though you may sometimes block up a thoroughfare, it is better to do that than that the thoroughfare to Hell should be crowded! If you can turn a soul from the road to Hell, it will not matter though you may turn some passenger in the street out of his way, so that he may have to muddy his boots! Midnight services, hunting after the poor sinners in the streets at midnight, the opening of Ragged Schools and Reformatories—all these things are the fulfilling of the word, "The Son of Man is come to *seek* that which was lost."

We know that He seeks, but does He save them? If I must give an answer from my own observation, I can point to many members of this congregation and say, "Save them? Indeed He does! Has He not delivered them from the bonds of sin? Has He not made them new creatures in Christ Jesus?" But if you look anywhere, wherever a faithful Gospel is preached, you will see that salvation-work does go on! I hope it may go on with us for many and many a year until Christ shall come. Christ is not disappointed in the souls He came to save. All for whom He stood as Substitute shall sing His praise in Heaven. He has not redeemed souls that may afterwards be cast into Hell. He did not suffer for my sins that I might suffer for them, too! His Atonement is effectual! Every sinner He died to save He does save. He is not foiled at any point, nor disappointed in any single aim. The lost He came to seek and save, He finds and saves! And in eternity we shall find, when turning over the register of the chosen, that every one of them has been gathered around the Eternal Throne singing the praise of His Sovereign Grace!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 19.

Verses 1-5. *And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, who was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who He was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him: for He was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at your house.* Remember that the Lord Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem to suffer and to die. And there He was, the patient, suffering Lamb of God—but here He speaks in that commanding tone which well became the Prince of the House of David—"Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at your house."

6. *And he made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully.* Solomon said, "Where the word of a king is, there is power." Omnipotence went with the word of this King of kings, so Zacchaeus was bound to obey it.

7-11. *And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That He was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchaeus stood and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, for as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. And as they heard these things, He added and spoke a parable, because He was near to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the Kingdom of God should immediately appear.* Their minds were full of thoughts concerning Christ's coming as a King—and they had very mistaken notions concerning His Kingdom, so He indicates to them that, for the present, the practical matter to be remembered was that He had come "to seek and to save that which was lost." If they had not been so full of their idle dreams of a temporal sovereignty, they would have perceived that in the calling of Zacchaeus, Christ had manifested His Kingship in the realm of mercy and had there exercised the Sovereignty of His Grace. In order that they might be able the better to understand the meaning of His spiritual Kingdom and not have their eyes so dazzled by the illusions which had so long deceived the Jews, our Lord pointed out to them, in the parable of the pounds, the practical way of preparing for His Second Coming.

12-15. *He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he*

might know how much every man had gained by trading. It would have been well if our translators, instead of using that ugly Latin word, "occupy," had kept to the expression, "trade with it," for here we get the same words again—"that he might know how much every man had gained by trading."

16. *Then came the first, saying, Lord, your pound has gained ten pounds.* The genuine servant, with due humility, puts himself in the background. It is not he who has "gained ten pounds"—it is his lord's pound that has done it. He is pleased to bring the ten pounds, yet he claims no credit for himself, but says, "Lord, *your* pound has gained ten pounds."

17. *And he said unto him, Well, you good servant: because you have been faithful in a very little, have you authority over ten cities.* There is no comparison between the servant's work and the reward for its faithful performance. That ten pounds, if his lord had given it all to him, would not have bought a house in a village, unless it had been a very tiny one—"a cottage in a vineyard," or "a lodge in a garden of cucumbers." Yet his lord gives him "authority over ten cities."

18, 19. *And the second came, saying, Lord, your pound has gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be you also over five cities.* How he must have opened his eyes when he received authority over five cities!

20. *And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is your pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin.* The napkin with which he ought to have wiped away the sweat from his brow, he had used merely as a wrapper for the pound that his lord had entrusted to him for the purpose of trading with it. He had done nothing with the pound—he thought he was all right because he had not done any harm with his lord's money. He had not joined the revolting citizens who said, "We will not have this man to reign over us." He had not spent the pound, nor embezzled his master's money—in fact, he had been very careful to keep intact the treasure that had been entrusted to him—and he felt proud of his own prudence and said, "Lord, behold, here is your pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin."

21. *For I feared you, because you are an austere man: you take up that you lay not down, and reap that you did not sow.* This was impudence indeed! But his master took him on his own ground and showed that even if his statement had been true, he ought to have been the more diligent in obeying his lord's command.

22, 23. *And he said unto him, Out of your own mouth will I judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: therefore then gave not you my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required my own with usury?* "You might have done that, at any rate, even if you were afraid to trade with it, as I bade you." God often deals with men on their own ground and condemns them out of their own mouth. They say that God is very severe in threatening them with "the wrath to come." Well, if

you so believe and so speak, there is the more reason why you should fear to disobey Him and so to incur His just displeasure! If, in spite of such terrible threats, you still defy Him, it only brings out the more clearly the greatness of your guilt!

24, 25. *And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that has ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he has ten pounds).* They were quite astonished. "What? Give more to the man who has so much already?" "Yes," says the master, "that is my command."

26. *For I say unto you, That unto everyone which has shall be given; and from him that has not, even what he has shall be taken away from him.* Hear again the note of sovereignty. Christ will do as He wills! And His mode of action shall sometimes be so singular that even His own attendants will wonder at the strangeness of His procedure and will begin to ask, "How is this?" But, as Elihu said to Job, "He gives not account of any of His matters."

27-31. *But those my enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring here and slay them before me." And when He had thus spoken, He went before, ascending up to Jerusalem. And it came to pass, when He was come near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples, saying, Go you into the village over against you; in the which at your entering you shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him here. And if any man asks you, Why do you loose him? Thus shall you say unto him, Because the Lord has need of him.* Here we see Christ's true royalty again flashing out from beneath the humiliation of His Humanity! He lets us know that although He is going up to Jerusalem to die, it is not because He is not Lord of All! But that being Lord of All, He makes Himself of no reputation, takes upon Himself the form of a Servant, is made in the likeness of men and being found in fashion as a Man, He humbles Himself and becomes "obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross."

32-34. *And they that were sent went their way, and found even as He had said unto them. And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose you the colt? And they said, The Lord has need of him.* The word of the King was again with power and the owners of the colt were willing to let the animal go since the King had "need of him." They may have been secret disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, but we have no information upon that point. Our King's warrant runs anywhere—and even when His personal Presence is not consciously realized, His royal and Divine word still rules the minds and hearts of men!

35-38. *And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon. And as He went, they spread their clothes in the way. And when He was come near, even now at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began*

to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen. Saying, Blessed be the King that comes in the name of the Lord: peace in Heaven, and glory in the highest. They were so jubilant that they seemed to have caught some notes from the song that the angels sang at the Savior's birth—"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." There had been war in Heaven, but these disciples of Christ sang, "Peace in Heaven, and glory in the highest."

39-41. *And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto Him, Master, rebuke Your disciples. And He answered and said unto them, I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out. And when He was come near, He beheld the city and wept over it.* What a contrast! The King's courtiers shouting for joy and the King, Himself, weeping over the guilty city where the greatest tragedy in the history of the whole universe was about to take place! The King saw, in the near and more remote future, what no one else could see, so, "when He was come near, and beheld the city, He wept over it."

42-48. *Saying, If you had known, even you, at least in this your day, the things which belong unto your peace! But now they are hid from your eyes. For the days shall come upon you that your enemies shall cast a trench about you, and compass you round, and keep you in on every side, and shall lay you even with the ground, and your children within you; and they shall not leave in you one stone upon another; because you knew not the time of your visitation. And He went into the Temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought; saying unto them, It is written, My house is the House of Prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves. And He taught daily in the Temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy Him, and could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear Him.* There was a popular wave of enthusiasm in His favor but, alas, it soon ebbed away and then the multitudes that had cried, "Hosanna!" were just as loud in their shouts of, "Crucify Him! Crucify 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.

LESSONS FROM A DOVECOT
NO. 3051

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 1, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 24, 1872.

"Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?"
Isaiah 60:8.

THE chapter from which our text is taken predicts very glorious times for the true Church of God. The promises recorded in this chapter were, in a measure, fulfilled when Jews and Gentiles were gathered into the fold of Christ in great numbers in the days of the Apostles. But God's promises are not like man's. When a man has kept his promise once, it does not stand good any longer—but God's promises may be fulfilled a hundred times over and yet remain just as valid as when He first gave them. So what God did for His Church at Pentecost, He is prepared to do today—and He will do it on a yet larger scale in those happy times that are yet to come—the latter days for which we look and long with joyful expectation!

I do not intend, however, to explain the text in its strict connection, but shall try to turn it to profitable account with regard to ourselves. You will notice that the question indicates a measure of surprise and that surprise reveals some dark fear which must have been lurking in the background. The Church sees an innumerable company of converts coming to join her ranks and she cries out in amazement, "Who are these that fly as a cloud?" She could not, therefore, have been expecting them. Her faith must have been weak and, in consequence, a great gloom had settled upon her mind. And a similar kind of gloom comes over our minds when our faith is weak and our expectations are slender. I think that all of us who love the work of God and who especially love that work in connection with our own branch of Christ's Church are apt, at times, to feel a deep anxiety of soul and to fear lest God should forsake His work among us because of our sins. God may leave a Church that He has formerly greatly honored if it grows lukewarm, as did the Church at Laodicea, or has left its first love, as did the Church at Ephesus. There will always be a Church of God in the world, but there may not always be a Church in any particular place. There will always be a people whom He has chosen to show forth His praise and to proclaim His Gospel—but they may not be found in this place, or in any other where the Lord has been known to meet with them.

The idolatrous church of Rome calls itself the only true church, outside which none can find salvation, but although the church in Rome

was once a bright and glorious church, God forsook it and for many a day it has been the very center of apostasy and abomination! It is like Shiloh where the Ark abode for a time, but concerning which God said, "Go you now unto My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel." And it may be so with any professed Church of Christ today—and my fear often is lest, in any measure, it may be so with us. Have we not, even in this Church, sins enough to provoke the Lord to leave us? Have we not, at any rate, sufficient sins of omission in our lack of earnestness, our lack of prayerfulness and our lack of Christ-likeness, to cause Him to say, as He is reported to have been heard to say during the siege of Jerusalem, "Arise, let Us go from here"? Then would "Ichabod" be written on these walls and we might make this building like the Jews' place of wailing, for if the Lord should forsake us, we might well say, "The glory is departed. The Church has lost her strength, her honor and, indeed, her very life!" We fear, then, lest the Lord should leave us. But, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if you turn your fears into *prayers* there may be no longer any need for your fears!

My other fear has been lest converts should not continue to come into this Church and that appears to also have been the fear of the Church in Isaiah's day, or else she would not have been so surprised to see them come. I watch, each month, and each week, with prayerful anxiety and ask—Will there be more Believers putting on Christ in Baptism? Will there be more sinners crying out, "What must we do to be saved?" Will there be more of our hearers boldly but truthfully declaring—

"We are on the Lord's side.
We will serve the King!"?

I would rather suffer any personal affliction or calamity than that God's work of Grace should be stopped among us. It is a terrible thing when a professing Church continues to exist, in a fashion, yet is unfruitful—a vine whereon hang no ripe clusters—a field that yields no harvest. There may be some ministers who can be content when their churches do not grow, but I am thankful to say that I am not one of them! My heart is troubled, and I trust, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that your heart is also troubled unless converts continue to come to us "as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows."

There is another fear that often passes across my mind like a dark threatening cloud—and that is lest some of those already brought into the Church should grow cold and others should apostatize altogether because they never had "the root of the matter" in them—and lest the rest should stand still in mere dead formality and not live in the Light of God. We need to have churches and church members that are full of life! And if there really is true spiritual life within us, we need to "have it more abundantly." Cold or lukewarm religiousness is to be found on all sides, but where can we find such holy fervor as blazed in England in the days of Whitefield and Wesley? Even on the old Methodist altar, it burns but very feebly. Oh, that everywhere it could be fanned into a vehement

flame! We have some of this fervor here, but we pray that it may come with still greater force. Some of you, dear Friends, have had it and have been very zealous for the Lord of Hosts—are you growing cold? If so, may the Master revive you! Are you curtailing your efforts? Are you shortening your prayers? Are your offerings less generous than they used to be? Is your consecration to Christ less complete than it once was? Oh, for a great revival to begin with us at home—for if the Lord is not with us, warming our hearts, fanning our zeal and inflaming our love—we cannot expect that our efforts on behalf of others will be attended by any great measure of success! Paul truly wrote to Timothy, "The husbandman that labors must be first partaker of the fruits." The water must gush up at the fountainhead otherwise it cannot flow down the hills to make fertile the meadows and make glad the vales. May God grant that inasmuch as these fears of ours have good reason for existing, we may not put them away, but may turn them into earnest prayers such as these—"O Lord, do not forsake us! O Lord, do not leave us without continual additions to our membership! O Lord, do not let us, as a Church, be without many true conversions! O Lord, do not allow Your people to grow cold—to become dead—but 'visit us with Your salvation!'"

Now I can advance a step further. Our text, though it came to persons possessed by gloomy fears, contains in itself a very bright picture. You will understand the metaphor that is used in it if I just tell you that a traveler in the East saw, near Ispahan, many large round towers crowned by conical spiracles through which the pigeons descended. Inside they were like a vast honeycomb, pierced with a thousand holes, in each one of which pigeons could build. And he said that when he saw them fly back to their homes at night, they were so numerous and so compact that they might well be compared to a cloud—and the swiftness with which they flew back to their dovecot forcibly reminded him of this passage, "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" We have here, then, a beautiful picture of souls coming to Christ and to Christ's Church in great numbers and with great speed! And we will ask and try to answer three questions concerning them. First, *why should they come?* Secondly, *how should they come?* And thirdly, *why should so many of them come?*

I. First, WHY SHOULD THEY COME?

There is a very complete answer to that question with regard to the doves. It is natural that doves should come to their dovecots and there is an equally complete answer to the question, Why should souls come to Christ? There are four reasons why they should come.

First, *because Christ is the true food of souls.* No doubt the doves or pigeons were often fed at the dovecot. Therefore they knew where it was and they gladly flew to it. Hungry Soul, Christ is the only food that can ever appease your hunger—are you as eager to get to Him as the hungry doves are to get to the dovecot? Do you long for peace, happiness, forgiveness, salvation? All these are to be found in Christ! Yes, all that

your empty soul can require to fill it to the brim is stored up in Christ Jesus! Therefore you should come to Him—and our prayer is that you may come to Him even now.

Next, *the doves came to the dovecot because it was a place of security for them*—and for the same reason sinners should come to the Savior. They are unsafe as long as they are out of Christ. Go where you may, O Soul—until you come to the Lord Jesus Christ, you are in jeopardy! Whether you live in sin or in self-righteousness, you are equally liable to be destroyed until you come to Christ! The whole world is the City of Destruction and Christ is the only Gate of Salvation, as Paul says in writing to the Galatians, "Scripture has concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." [Sermon #1145, Volume 19—THE GREAT JAIL—AND HOW TO GET OUT OF IT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

But next, *the doves came to their dovecot because it was their home.* And the only true home of any human heart is in the wounds of Jesus. He who really finds Christ finds rest, enjoyment, peace, tranquility—in fact, all that the word, "home," really means. The man who truly believes in Jesus is forgiven. He is reconciled to God. For him there is no gloom with regard to the world to come—no Hell to dread and only a Heaven of bliss to enjoy! Moses wrote, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations." And God is still the dwelling place of His people—they find rest and peace in Him. Therefore should souls go to Christ, even as the doves go to the dovecot. The fourth reason why the doves came to the dovecot was *because it was a fit place in which to lay their young.* Some of you may remember a sermon I preached on Psalm 84:3, [Sermon #3041, Volume 53—THE SPARROW AND THE SWALLOW—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "Yes, the sparrow has found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Your altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God." A saved man has at least a greater probability than any unsaved man has of seeing his children saved. On the day of Pentecost, in answer to the question, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For *the promise is unto you, and to your children,* and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." So, for your children's sake as well as for your own sake—

"Come, guilty souls and flee away,
Like doves, to Jesus' wounds!
This is the welcome Gospel-Day
Wherein Free Grace abounds!"

II. Secondly, the text answers the question, HOW SHOULD THEY COME? They should come "as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows."

That is, *they should come very swiftly.* A dove's flight is very rapid and when a cloud of doves is driven by the wind, they fly very swiftly through the air. That is the way for sinners to come to Christ—come at once

without delay. The very best time to trust the Savior is NOW, for, "behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." I cannot give you a promise of salvation tomorrow, but I find many promises in the Word of God concerning the present time. Oh, that God would, by His Grace, incline some soul to break away from the bands of procrastination and say, "Since it may be 'now or never' with me, it shall be NOW! I will fly to Christ at once."

There are many reasons why you should fly to Christ at once. First, *because you are in present danger.* Should not the dove fly at once to its windows when the hawk is after it? And Sinner, sin is after you and wrath is after you if you are out of Christ. "He that believes not"—and mark, this is God's Word—"he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." "*Condemned already.*" Then you are in a condition of present danger and I say to you as the angel said to Lot, "Escape for your life! Look not behind you, neither stay you in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed." Already the venom of the fiery serpent's poison is boiling in your veins! Look then, at once to Him who is lifted up before you as the bronze serpent was lifted up before the bitten Israelites, for there is healing in a single glance at Christ Crucified! Though you are at the very ends of the earth, the message can reach you, for the Lord says, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." So come to Christ at once because you are in present danger. [See Sermon #60, Volume 2—SOVEREIGNTY AND SALVATION. This Sermons was preached by Mr. Spurgeon on January 6th , 1856, the sixth anniversary of his own conversion under an uneducated local preacher's pointed and personal discourse upon this passage, Isaiah 45:22—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

Besides that, there is great reason why you should fly at once to Christ *because time is flying faster than you can fly.* And with the flight of time, the approach of the night of death is certain. The dove seeks its dovecot before nightfall, for it knows the dangers to which it would be exposed in the darkness. The night is fast approaching with some of you. In the nature of things, you cannot live much longer, yet how strange it is that men often think that they will continue to live though they expect that others will die! I heard, only this week, of a man of 86 who expects some property to come to him, but there is another man's life that delays his possession of it—and he is eighty-four. Yet the older man told a friend of mine that he expected very soon to inherit the property as the person who held it was a very old man and could not live much longer, though he himself was two years older—an admirable commentary on the words of the poet, "All men think all men mortal but themselves." Yet if we use our wits, we shall know that we are also mortal. Possibly old age is already creeping over us or, if not, there is an unseen hand that may be, even at this moment, tugging at our heartstrings—some fatal disease or sudden stroke from God may swiftly come upon us and we shall be gone from earth as so many others have gone. Fly, O you doves,

for death's arrows are flying! Fly, for the fowler's nets are spread all around you! Fly, for true life is only to be found through those blessed windows which Christ has opened for guilty souls!

I am praying for conversions tonight. Brothers and Sisters, you who know how to pray, join with me in praying for conversions tonight that before the unsaved sleep, they may come to Jesus and be saved!

III. Now, having spoken of why they should come and how they should come, I have to answer the third question, WHY SHOULD SO MANY COME? They are to fly in such a vast flock that they shall be like a cloud! My heart rejoices at the very thought of great numbers of sinners coming to Christ, but why should so many come?

Well, first, *because there is room for them.* There is room in the dovecot for every dove that comes and there is room in the heart of Christ for every soul that ever will come to Him. There never was a true penitent whom Christ repelled, saying, "I did not shed My blood for you." There never was a Believer whom Christ refused, saying, "You had no right to believe in Me." No, His gracious message still stands—

"Engraved as in eternal brass,"—

"Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." [See sermon #3000, Volume 52, COME AND WELCOME—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Write that truly golden text in starry letters across the sky, or, better still, ask the Holy Spirit to write it in your memory so that you will never forget it—"Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Though he may have been a drunk, a swearer, or a thief—though he may have been unchaste or unjust—though he may even now be black or red with crime—if he does but come and trust in Jesus Christ, he cannot be cast out! There is room in Christ's heart for all who come to Him, so let many come now.

Besides, *'tis sweet for many to go together.* How glad I am when I can receive husband and wife into the Church at the same time! And I am still more glad when there is a little train of their sons and daughters behind them, all coming together to confess their faith in Christ! You know that if only one member of a family is brought to Christ, that one will be like a speckled bird in the home-nest, but when the Lord draws the whole family to Himself, how blessed it is for them all to walk hand in hand to Heaven! I think that, if necessary, I should have been glad to go on pilgrimage alone, as Christian went, but I should have liked much better to have gone with Christiana, Mercy and the children, and with Mr. Greatheart, and old Father Honest and all that noble party of pilgrims who went together to the Celestial City.

Further, *the same reason that should make one go to Christ should make others go to Him.* When I used to preach at Waterbeach, the chapel was crowded, but when I first came to London, I was very much discouraged by the sight of so many empty seats. But somebody said, "You may depend upon it that the Gospel that will draw 600 in a country village will draw 6,000 in London." And I have found it so all these years. If Christ can draw one soul to Himself, why can He not draw twenty? And

if He can draw twenty, why not twenty thousand, and why not thousands of millions? Why should not we live to see many millions of souls converted to God? Let us pray to the Holy Spirit to present the irresistible attractions of Christ to the hundreds of millions in the whole human race!

And then, Beloved, *when sinners come to Christ in great numbers, think what honor it brings to Him.* A soul saved here, and another saved there may go unremarked—but what a joy it is to us, and what Glory it brings to God—when hundreds, or thousands, as on the day of Pentecost, are converted at once! Then the Church is refreshed, revived and encouraged! And the world hears of it and other churches hear of it and ask for the same blessing. I do, therefore, beg you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, to join with me in prayer that we may have a cloud of converts flying to Christ—multitudes of precious souls coming to Him as the doves fly to their windows!

IV. My time fails me, so I must close by again reminding you that OUR TEXT SETS BEFORE US A BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL PICTURE—"Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?"

Shall I tell you who they are? I am not going to speak of them as being God's elect, though that is true. And Christ's redeemed, though that is also true. And the Holy Spirit's effectually called ones, though that, too, is true! But I am going rather to dwell upon another phase of the subject and that is this. *Some of those that will fly as a cloud,* if our prayers are heard, and they do really come to Christ, *will be our own sons and daughters.* It has been one of the greatest joys of every revival season which we have ever had, that among the converts there has always been a considerable proportion of the sons and daughters of the members of the Church. Does not the very mention of that fact make your mouths water? Do not your prayers now go up, "O Lord, bring my boy in! Lord, save my girls! Let our children live in Your sight"? Perhaps you have other young people living with you who are not literally your sons and daughters, but who stand to you in almost the same relationship. They are your nephews and nieces, or some orphan children for whom you are caring, or it may be your pupils. Well, may the Lord grant that when you ask the question, "Who are these that fly as a cloud?" the answer may come, "Why, they are the very ones who dwell with you! God has blessed those who are nearest and dearest to you!" Dear young people, we cannot wish for you a greater blessing than that you may be brought to Christ early and be united to His Church!

Yet again, how delighted would many of you be if, in answer to this question, "Who are these that fly as a cloud?" it would be said, "Why, *some of them are from the Sunday school*—and you would be even more gratified if the reply would be, "Some are from your own class, the very scholars for whom you have been especially praying—the boy to whom you spoke so seriously—the girl whom you so affectionately sought to come to Jesus." Teachers, would you not clap your hands for joy if that

could be truly said to you? Why should it not be the case? God has often blessed such instrumentality and His arm is not shortened that it cannot save, nor is His ear heavy, that He cannot hear. Go in faith and ask for the blessing—and then work in real earnest, believing that it will come—and it will assuredly be bestowed upon you and upon those whose salvation you are seeking!

It would be peculiarly gladdening to my heart if the answer to the question of our text should be, "Some of those that are flying to Christ, as the doves fly to their windows, are *your old hearers, old seat-holders who have long been unconverted.*" I thank God that there are not very many such hearers, for the Lord has brought in one after another until there are not many of those who have long heard the Word who still remain unsaved. The axe of Grace has cut down these trees of sin, one after another, and built them into the Temple of God! Our unconverted seat-holders are getting to be fewer and fewer—and my prayer is, "O Lord, bring Your sharp axe and cut every one of them down!" I am sorry that there are any of my old hearers who are still unsaved—how I would praise the Lord if, after ten, twelve and some of you 18 years of hearing the same voice preach the same Gospel, you should be saved at last!

Probably, however, there will be another answer to the question of our text. "*Some strangers, some of your casual hearers, have been brought to Christ.*" Dear Friends, I repeat the request that I have often made—Please look after those who come here only occasionally to hear the Word. Do all you can to make them comfortable and then, if there is any sign of attention to the preacher's message, or of impression produced by it, do not let anyone be able to say, "I went to the Tabernacle half-a-dozen times, yet nobody ever spoke to me." Be sure that no one shall be able to truthfully say, "Why, I am still quite a stranger there, though I have been attending for years! But nobody has spoken to me." We used to have—I wish we had more of the same sort now—some very gracious people who were always on the watch for anxious souls. I remember one young man who joined the Church in this way—he came up from the country—we were then worshipping at the Surrey Gardens Music Hall. And the first time he was at our service, one of our brethren took him into the hall and gave him a seat. On another Sunday, when he saw him again, he asked him home to dinner and he talked to him about the things of God in such a way that, in a very short time, that young man became a Christian and joined the Church, though before he had lived without the fear of God. Would it not be something for which to praise the Lord for many a day if, among those that fly to Christ, as the doves fly to their windows, there should be one to whom *you* had spoken—a casual hearer, smitten by the Word preached, but brought into peace and liberty through a few sentences which you spoke privately to him?

I pray that among those who are brought to Christ, there may be many rank outsiders. I do not know when I ever more enjoyed speaking, or hearing anybody else speak, than I did while speaking or listening to my Brother Varley last Wednesday when we had the area of this

Tabernacle full of butchers. They appeared to be thoroughly in earnest and they drank in the Gospel—and I do trust that some of them retained it in their hearts and will bring forth fruit in their lives. We must constantly try to lay hold of men who are outside all ordinary religious worship. You who go with tracts all round this district, you who visit the people in their homes, you who stand at the corners of the streets and preach, you who are spiritual Uhlans, riding ahead of the main army of God, you who are breaking up fresh ground and trying to increase the area of ground that is being cultivated for Christ—may you all have a present reward as you see the converts coming to Christ as the doves fly to their windows! May our Bible classes for men and women be richly blessed in bringing many to Christ and His Church! May our College be richly blessed and every man become abundantly useful in the Master's cause! And may every one of us seek to have a share in the great additions to our numbers which we trust God will soon send to us!

I have only to ask one more question and then I will close. Among these that are to fly as a cloud, and as doves to the dovecot, will *you* be one, my Hearer? "Do you want me to join this Church?" I did not say that! I did not say anything about your joining any church. You must be joined to *Christ* before you can join His Church. That was the Apostolic way—"They first gave their own selves to the Lord and unto us by the will of God." I do not first ask if you are willing to be baptized. I do not want you to be baptized before you believe in Christ. That is useless—no, it is worse than that—it is wicked! There is no Scriptural warrant for the Baptism of an unbeliever. To sprinkle a baby, or to immerse an adult who does not believe in Jesus is a transgression of Christ's Law! He has laid down the order, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Do you ask, "What do you want me to do?" I want you to be one of those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Is the Spirit of God working in your heart and saying to you, "Turn you, turn you, for why will you die?" Is He saying to you, "Trust yourself to Christ"? Then, yield to that gracious influence now, and say—

"Now to be Yours, yes, Yours alone,
O Lamb of God, I come!"

If that is your sincere utterance, you are a saved soul! Now be baptized, now join the Church! But first see to it that you believe in Jesus, for that is the first business. May God bring you to Christ and may the blessing of the Triune Jehovah be with you forevermore! Amen and amen!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 10.

This chapter is a Gospel in itself—it very clearly points out the plan of salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 1. *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.* Paul had a tender heart towards all unconverted men and women and he longed and pleaded with God that they might be

saved. Have all of us this unselfish compassionate feeling? I am afraid that there are some Christians who are very deficient in it, yet in the dread of an immortality to be spent in unutterable woe by all unbelievers, our hearts' desire and perpetual prayer should be as Paul's prayer for Israel was, "that they might be saved." And if there is one class among the ungodly which should touch our hearts more than all the rest, it is those who are earnestly seeking salvation but who are seeking it where they will never find it, namely, by the works of the Law.

2. *For I bear them record that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.* It is not sufficient for a man to be sincere in his zeal for God—sincerity must be according to knowledge if it is to be of any value. If a man travels North, his sincere belief that he is on the right road will not bring him to his destination in the South! If a man, in all sincerity, drinks poison under the belief that it is a cheering cordial, it will kill him, notwithstanding his sincerity. And if a man sincerely believes a lie, it will turn out to be a lie notwithstanding his sincerity. So that it is not enough to be sincerely zealous for God, or sincerely anxious to be saved—but you must seek salvation in God's *revealed way* if your search is to be a successful one.

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.* This is not an error on the part of only the Jews—it is to be found also among many Gentiles. Such people must have a righteousness of their own and Paul says they are continually "going about" to establish it. To do this they will undertake any labor, endure any suffering, or perform any self-denial, but all the while they despise God's righteousness—despise it by the very act of preferring their own, or seeking another way of salvation instead of walking in the one which God has provided! How sad it is that so many, in all sincerity of blind zeal, should be dishonoring God and virtually dethroning Him by the attempt to set up a righteousness of their own when He has already provided a perfect one which they will not accept.

4. *For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believes.* Even the Law itself has this for its main drift and purpose—that it may introduce Christ. Its end, its intent, is to show to us our need of Christ, to point us to Christ and to make us willing to have Christ as our Savior. And as even the Law aims at this objective, much more clearly does the Gospel. Oh, that none of us might miss the aim and objective of this blessed design of God—that we might find righteousness through believing in Christ!

5. *For Moses describes the righteousness which is of the Law.* And he does it in very brief, concise and satisfactory terms.

5. *That the man which does those things shall live by them.* That is the beginning and end of the Law, "Do and live."

6-8. *But the righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise, Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above), or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring*

up Christ again from the dead). But what says it? The word is near you. The saving, life-giving word is not to be sought above, nor below, nor afar off—it is "near you."

8. *Even in your mouth, and in your heart.* It is not a matter of doing with the hands but of believing with the heart and of confession with the mouth!

8, 9. *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 Gospel's command, "Believe and live," is quite as clear and plain and positive as the Law's command, "Do and live."

10, 11. *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.* He shall never be ashamed of having believed on the Lord Jesus Christ! If he really believes on Him, he shall never be ashamed of the result of so believing, for that result will be eternal salvation to him—there is no doubt about that!

12. *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.* If there are great numbers to be saved at one time, Christ will not have to do as we do when we have too many guests at a feast, namely, cut the portion of each one smaller. Oh, no! For "the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him," whether they are Jews or Gentiles.

13. *For whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* Let us read that blessed verse again.

13, 14. *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?* When I hear anyone say, "I cannot believe in Christ, but I will pray to Him for faith." I say, surely the prayer is more difficult than the believing—"How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?"

14, 15. *And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they are sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!* We, dear Friends, have had this whole process carried out in our midst. The Gospel has been preached—preached, I trust, by one who can prove, by the many seals to his ministry, that he has been "sent" by God who has given him these confirmations of his commission in the constant conversion of those to whom he has preached. Then many of you have heard the preaching and have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, you are "saved" to all eternity. But, alas, there are some of you who have not believed in Jesus! Yet you must be saved by this process, or you can never be saved at all, for God will never try any other plan! His way of saving men is to send the preacher whom He has called and qualified to preach. The preacher preaches. The people hear.

By hearing they believe and by believing they are saved! This is God's way of saving sinners and He will not depart from it! So let us walk in it. May His gracious Spirit take away from us all our proud, foolish and wicked objections to His simple plan and may we all believe and live!

16. *But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our report?* So you see that even the Prophet Isaiah had the idea that salvation comes to sinners by believing. He mourned and cried to his God because men did not believe the "report" which he had been sent to deliver to them concerning that Man who was "despised and rejected of men," that Man of whom the Prophet truly said, "Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows…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."

17. *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.* With what solemnity this invests our hearing! I often hear people say, "We go to such-and-such a place of worship, to hear so-and-so preach." That is well if the preacher is, like John the Baptist, "a man sent from God," for, "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Only let us all so hear the Word of God that hearing it we believe on Jesus Christ whom God has sent—believing on Him, we confess our faith in the Divinely appointed way, devoutly worship and adore the ever-blessed God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—and do all we can to make the Savior known to others.

18, 19. *But I say, Have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know?* These Jews for whom Paul prayed—these people who were so zealous in seeking to establish their own righteousness—did not they know God's way of salvation? Did not they know Jesus of Nazareth, the Divinely appointed Savior? Yes, they did, but they refused to believe on Him—they would not walk in God's way of salvation.

19-21. *First Moses says, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Isaiah is very bold, and says, I was found of them that sought Me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me. But to Israel he says, All day long I have stretched out My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.* Oh, that God would soon bring these "disobedient and gainsaying people"—whether Jews or Gentiles—to submit themselves unto His righteousness and so to be saved! May He graciously grant it, 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.

CHRIST'S LONELINESS AND OURS
NO. 3052

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 8, 1907.

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

"Jesus answered them, Do you now believe? Behold, the hour comes, yes, is now come, that you shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me." John 16:31, 32.

[Another sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is #2271, Volume 38—ALONE , YET NOT ALONE —Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

"Do you now believe?" Then it seems that faith held them fast to Christ, but as soon as fear prevailed they were scattered and left their Master alone. Faith has an attracting and upholding power. It is the root of constancy and the source of perseverance under the power of God's Spirit. While we believe, we remain faithful to our Lord. When we are unbelieving, we are scattered, "every man to his own." While we trust, we follow closely. When we give way to fear, we ungratefully forsake our Lord. May the Holy Spirit maintain our faith in full vigor that it may nourish all our other Graces! Faith being strong, no faculty of the inner man will languish, but if faith declines, the energy of our spiritual nature speedily decays. If you believe not, you shall not be established, but "the just shall live by faith" to the fullest force of life.

This being noted, our meditation shall now be fixed alone upon the Savior's loneliness and the measure in which the Believer is brought into the same condition.

I. THE LONELINESS OF THE SAVIOR.

Note *the fact of it.* He was left alone—alone just when most, as Man, He needed human sympathy. Solitude to Him, during His earthly life, was often the cause of strength. He was strong in public ministry because of the hours spent in secret wrestling with God on the lone mountainside. But when He came to the hour of His agony, His perfect Humanity pined after human sympathy, yet it was denied Him. He was alone in the Garden of Gethsemane though He took the eleven with Him. Yet must He leave eight of them outside at the garden gate—and the three, the choice, the *élite* of them all—though they were brought somewhat nearer to the scene of His passion, yet even they must remain at a stone's cast distance. None could enter into the inner circle of His sufferings where the furnace was heated seven times hotter than it was known to be heated. In the bloody sweat and the agony of Gethsemane, the Savior trod the winepress alone. [See Sermon #2567, Volume 44—THE SINGLE-HANDED CONQUEST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] His specially-favored disciples might have

watched with Him, wept with Him and prayed for Him—but they did not. They left His lone prayer to ascend to Heaven unattended by sympathetic cries.

He was alone, too, when put upon His trial. False witnesses were found to bear lying testimony against Him, but no man stood forward to attest the honesty, quietness and goodness of His life. Surely one of the many who had been healed by Him, or of the crowds that had been fed by His bountiful hands or, still likelier, some of those who had received the pardon of their sins and enlightenment of their minds by His teaching might have come forward to defend Him! But no, His coward followers are silent when their Lord is slandered. "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter" and no pitying voice entreats that He may be delivered. True, His judge's wife tries to persuade her husband to have nothing to do with Him and her vacillating husband offers to liberate Him if the mob will have it so—but none will raise the shout of "loose Him and let Him go." He was not literally alone upon the Cross, yet He was really so in a deep spiritual sense. Though a few loving ones gathered at the foot of the Cross, yet these could offer Him no assistance and probably dared not utter more than a tearful protest. Perhaps the boldest there was that dying thief who called Him, Lord, and expostulated with his brother-malefactor, saying, "This Man has done nothing amiss." [See Sermon #1881, Volume 32—THE DYING THIEF IN A NEW LIGHT —Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Few, indeed, were the voices that were lifted up on behalf of the Man of Sorrows. From the time when He bowed in agony amid the deep shades of the Mount of Olives, till the moment when He entered the thicker darkness of the valley of death-shade, He was left to suffer alone.

Here was the fact. What was *the reason for it?* We conclude that fear overcame the hearts of His disciples. It is natural that men should care for their lives, but these men pushed this instinct of self-preservation beyond its legitimate sphere. And when they found that the Master was taken and that probably the disciples might share His fate, they each one, in the panic of the moment, fled in haste! They were not all traitors, but they were all cowards for the time being. They meant not to desert their Lord—they even scorned the thought when it was put to them in calmer moments—but they were taken by surprise and, like a flock of sheep, they fled from the wolf. They rallied after a little while and mustered courage enough to follow Him from afar off. They did not quite forget Him—they watched Him to His latter end, they kept together after He was dead—they united to bury Him and they came together instinctively on the first day of the week. They had not altogether cast off their loyalty to their Lord and Master, for He was still keeping those whom the Father had given Him that none of them might be lost—yet fear had, for awhile, defeated their faith and they had left Him alone.

There was a deeper reason, however, for the Savior's loneliness. It was a condition of His sufferings that He should be forsaken. Desertion was a necessary ingredient in that cup of vicarious suffering which He had covenanted to drink for us. We deserved to be forsaken and, therefore, He must be. Since our sins against man, as well as our sins against God

deserved that we should be forsaken of men, He, bearing our sins against God and man, is forsaken. It cannot be that a sinner should enjoy true friendship. Sin is a separating thing and so, when Christ is made the Sin-Bearer, His friends must leave Him. Besides, this was one jewel in the crown of His Glory. It was said, in triumph, by the great hero of old who typified our Lord, "I have trodden the winepress alone and of the people there was none with me." To make that true in the severest sense, it was necessary that the Captain of our salvation should, by His single arm, defeat the whole of Hell's battalions! His are the sole laurels of the war, for, "His right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory."

Can you, for a moment, enter into *the sorrow of that loneliness?* There are men to whom it is a small matter to be friendless. Their coarse minds scorn the gentle joys of fellowship. Sterner virtues may tread beneath their iron heel the sweet flowers of friendship and men may be so defiantly self-reliant that, like lions, they are most at home amid congenial solitudes. Sympathy they scorn as womanish and fellowship as a superfluity. But our Savior was not like they—He was too perfect a Man to become isolated and misanthropical. His grand gentle Nature was full of sympathy towards others and, therefore, sought it in return. You hear the voice of grief at the loss of brotherly sympathy in the mournful accents of that gentle rebuke, "What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?" How could they sleep while He must sweat? How could they repose while His soul was "exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death"? He showed the greatness of His soul even in its depression when He lovingly excused them by saying, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

How sad to Him it was that they should desert Him! The brave Peter and all the rest of them, all taking to their heels! Worse still was it to receive the traitor's kiss with the word, "Hail, Master," as the son of perdition betrayed his Friend to win the blood-money! David lamented the villainy of Ahithophel, but the Savior, inasmuch as He was of a more tender spirit than the son of Jesse, even more keenly felt the treachery of Judas. For Peter to say that he knew Him not and, with cursing and swearing to deny Him three times in succession was terribly cruel. There was such an element of deliberation about that denial that it must have cut the Savior to the very quick. But where was John—John who leaned on His bosom—"that disciple whom Jesus loved"—where was John? Did not he say a word, nor even interject a single syllable for his dear Friend? Has Jonathan forgotten his David? The Master might have said to John, "Your love to Me was wonderful, passing the love of women," but, alas, John is gone with the rest! He has nothing to say for his Master! Though he remains at the foot of the Cross to the last, yet even he cannot defend Him! Jesus is all alone—all alone and none of us can fully fathom the sorrow of His lonely heart.

This is a painful meditation and, therefore, let us notice *the result of our Savior's loneliness.* Did it destroy Him? Did it overwhelm Him? It pained Him but it did not dismay Him. "You shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone," says He, "because the Father is with Me." The effect of

that solace in His soul was wonderful. Our Savior did not turn aside from the purpose of redeeming His people though they proved so unworthy of being redeemed. Might He not well have said, "You have forsaken Me, so I will forsake you"? It would have seemed but natural for Him to have exclaimed, "You are types of all My people, you care little enough for Me: I have come into this world to save you, but you do not try to rescue Me; you have deserted Me, so I leave you to your fate." But no, "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." And although they forsook Him, yet He fulfilled to each one of them His ancient promise, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." The Baptism wherewith He was to be baptized He would still accomplish and be immersed in the floods of death for their sake!

Nor did He merely exhibit constancy to His purpose. He displayed great courageousness of spirit. He was all alone, but yet how peaceful He was! The calmness of the Savior is amazing. When He was brought before Herod, He would not utter one hasty or complaining word. His perfect silence was the fittest eloquence and, therefore, He was majestically mute. Before Pilate, until it was necessary for Him to speak, not a syllable could be extorted from Him. All along He possessed His soul in patience. In the Garden and afterwards, He was quiet as a lamb, surrendering Himself to the Sacrifice without a struggle. His solemn, deliberate self-surrender, in His loneliness, has an awfulness of love in it—more fit for thought than words. His brave spirit was not to be cowed, though it stood at bay alone and all the dogs of Hell raged around Him!

Mark too not only the constancy and the courageousness of our Savior, but His matchless unselfishness, for, while His disciples forsook Him and fled, He forgave them in His inmost heart and cherished no resentment against them. When He rose again His conduct to these runaways was that of a loving shepherd or a tender friend—He fully forgave them all. If He did mention it, it was only in that gentle way in which He inquired of Peter, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?"—reminding him of his failure for his lasting improvement and benefit—and giving him an honorable commission as the token that it was all condoned.

Inquire awhile *the reason for this result.* Why was it that our Savior, in His loneliness, thus stood so constant, courageous and forgiving? Was it not because He fell back into the arms of His Father when He was forsaken by His friends? It was even so—"*The Father is with Me.*" Look carefully at that word. As the Savior uttered it, it was true that the Father's Presence was with Him, but I beg you to remember that it was not true, in every sense, all the way through His passion. The Father was not with Him on the Cross in the sense of manifested personal favor. His cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" shows that our Savior did not, at that time, derive comfort from any present revelation of the love of God to Him as Man. [See Sermon #2133, Volume 36—"MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The conscious Presence and display of love were taken away.

There is, therefore, another meaning in these words, "Because the Father is with Me" and surely it is this—*the Father was always with Him in His design.* The enterprise He had undertaken was the salvation of His people—and the Father was wholly and always with Him in that respect. In that sense He was with Him even where He deserted Him—it was but a form of the Father's being with Christ that He should be forsaken of God. I am not quite stating a paradox and if it should sound like one to any here, let me expound it. It was in pursuance of Their united great design that the Father forsook the Son. Both were resolved upon the same gracious purpose and, therefore, the Father must forsake the Son, that the Son's purpose and the Father's purpose in our redemption might be achieved! He was with Him when He forsook Him—with Him in design when He was not with Him in the smiles of His face.

Furthermore, *the Father was always with our Lord in His co-working.* When Jesus was in Gethsemane and the staves and lanterns were being prepared, the God of Providence was permitting or arranging it all. When Jesus was taken before Caiaphas, Herod, Pilate and Annas, God was allowing all this to be done—the Father was with Christ fulfilling the prophecies, answering the types and accomplishing their Covenant engagements. Through the whole sad chapter it might be said, "My Father works." Even amid the thick darkness and the dire suffering of Christ, the Father was with Christ, working those very sufferings in Him, for "it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief." Into this fact Christ sinks as into a sea of comfort—"The Father is with Me." "It is enough," He says, "My own chosen friends forsake Me and My dearest earthly friends leave me. Those whom I have purchased with My blood deny Me, but My Father is with Me." By a matchless exercise of faith, our Redeemer realized this and was sustained even in that dread hour!

II. We shall make practical use of our subject by considering THE CHRISTIAN IN HIS LONELINESS.

No Believer traverses all the road to Heaven in company. There must be lonely spots here and there, though the greater part of our heavenward pilgrimage is made cheerful by the society of fellow travelers. "They go from company to company; every one of them in Zion appears before God." Christ's sheep love to go in flocks. "They that feared the Lord spoke often one to another." We take sweet counsel together and walk to the House of God in company. Yet somewhere or other on the road, every Christian will find narrow paths and close places where pilgrims must march in single file.

Sometimes the child of God endures loneliness arising from *the absence of godly society.* It may be that in his early days as a Christian, he mixed much with gracious persons, was able to attend many of their meetings and to converse in private with the excellent of the earth. But now his lot is cast where he is as a sparrow alone on the housetop. No others in the family think as he does. He enjoys no familiar converse concerning his Lord and has no one to counsel or console him. He often wishes he could find friends to whom he could open his mind. He would rejoice to see a Christian minister or an advanced Believer but, like

Joseph in Egypt, he is a stranger in a strange land. This is a very great trial to the Christian, an ordeal of the most severe character. Even the strong may dread it and the weak are sorely shaken by it. To such lonely ones, our Lord's words, now before us, are commended with the prayer that they may make them their own—"I am alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me." When Jacob was alone at Bethel, he laid down to sleep and soon was in a region peopled by innumerable spirits, above whom was God Himself! That vision made the night at Bethel the least lonely season that Jacob ever spent! [See Sermon #402, Volume 7—JACOB'S WAKING EXCLAMATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Your meditations, O solitary ones, as you read the Bible in secret, and your prayer's, as you draw near to God in your lonely room, and your Savior Himself in His blessed Person, will be to you what the ladder was to Jacob! The words of God's Book, made living to you, shall be to your mind the angels and God Himself shall have fellowship with you! If you lament your loneliness, cure it by seeking heavenly company. If you have no companions below who are holy, seek all the more to commune with those who are in Heaven where Christ sits at the right hand of God!

God's people are frequently made lonely *through obedience to honest convictions.* It may happen that you live in the midst of professing Christians and you have received Light upon a part of God's Word which you had formerly neglected, either a Doctrine, or an ordinance, or some other matter—and having received that Light, if you are as you should be—you are at once obedient to it. It will frequently result, from this action on your part, that you will greatly vex many good people whom you love and respect, but to whose wishes you cannot yield. Your Master's will once known, father or mother may not stand in your way—you do not wish to be singular, or obstinate, or offensive—but you must do the Lord's will even if it should sever every fond connection! Perhaps, for a time, prejudiced persons may almost deny you Christian fellowship. Many a baptized Believer has been made to know what it means to be almost tabooed and shut out because he cannot see as others see, but is resolved to follow his conscience at all hazards. Under such circumstances, even in a godly household, a Christian who fully carries out his convictions may find himself treading a separated path. Be bold, my dear Brothers and Sisters, and do not flinch! Your Savior walked alone and you must do so too.

Perhaps this lone obedience is to be a test of your faith. Persevere! Yield not a particle of the Truth of God! These very friends who now turn their backs on you, if they are good for anything, will respect you all the more for having the courage to be honest—and perhaps the day will come when, through your example, they will be led in the same obedient way. At any rate, do not mar your testimony by hesitancy or wavering, but "follow the Lamb wherever He goes." Fall back upon this Truth of God—you may displease and alienate friends and be charged with bigotry, self-will and obstinacy, but you are not alone when you follow the path of obedience, for the Father is with you! If what you hold is God's Truth, God is with you in maintaining it. If the ordinance to which you submit

was ordained by Christ, Jesus is with you in it. Care not how either the Church or the world reviles you! Serve your Master and He will not desert you! With all due deference to others, pay yet greater deference to the Lord who bought you with His blood! Where He leads, follow without delay—the Father will be with you in so doing.

The solitary way is appointed to *Believers who rise to eminence of faith.* In these days the common run of Christians have but struggling faith. Should you sift the great mountain of visible Christianity very carefully, will you find so much as ten grains of faith in the whole? When the Son of Man comes, keen as His eyes are to discover faith, shall He find it on the earth? Here and there we meet a man to whom it is given to believe in God with mighty faith. As soon as such a man strikes out on a project and sets about a work which none but men of his mold would venture upon, straightway there arises a clamor, "The man is overzealous!" Or he will be charged with an innovating spirit, rashness, fanaticism, or absurdity. Should the work go on, the opposers whisper together, "Wait a little while and you'll see the end of all this wildfire." Have we not heard them criticize an earnest Evangelist by saying, "His preaching is mere excitement, the result of it is spasmodic"? At another time, "The enterprise which he carries out is Quixotic. His designs are Utopian"? What said the sober semi-faith of men to Luther? Luther had read this passage, "By the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight." He went to a venerable Divine about it and complained of the enormities of Rome. What was the good but weak brother's reply? "Go you to your cell and pray and study for yourself, and leave these weighty matters alone." Here it would have ended had the brave Reformer continued to consult with flesh and blood! But his faith enabled him to go alone, if none would accompany him! He nailed up his theses on the church door and showed that one man, at least, had faith in the Gospel and in its God! Then trouble came, but Luther minded it not because the Father was with him! We also must be prepared, if God gives us strong faith, to ride far ahead like spiritual Uhlans who bravely pioneer the way for the rank and file of the army. It were well if the Church of God had more sons swifter than eagles and bolder than lions in God's service—men who can do and dare alone—till laggards gain courage from them and follow in their track. These Valiant-for-Truths full often pursue a solitary path, but let them console themselves with this word of the solitary Savior, "Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me." If we can but believe in God, He will never desert us! If we can dare, God will do! If we can trust, God will never allow us to be confounded, world without end! It is sweet beyond expression to climb where only God can lead and plant the standard on the highest towers of the foe!

Another form of loneliness is the portion of *Christians when they come into deep soul-conflict.* My Brothers and Sisters, some of you understand what I mean by that. Our faith, at times, has to fight for very existence! The old Adam within us rages mightily and the new spirit within us, like a young lion, disdains to be vanquished and so these two mighty ones contend till our spirit is full of agony! Some of us know what it is to be

tempted with blasphemies we would not dare repeat, to be vexed with horrid temptations which we have grappled with and overcome, but which have almost cost us resistance unto blood. In such inward conflicts, saints must be alone. They cannot tell their feelings to others—they would not dare to do so. And if they did, their own brethren would despise or upbraid them, for the most of professors would not even know what they meant—and even those who have trodden other fiery ways would not be able to sympathize in all, but would answer them thus, "Those are points in which I cannot go with you." Christ alone was tempted in all points like as we are, though without sin. No one man is tempted in all points exactly like another man and each man has certain trials in which he must stand alone amid the rage of war, with not even a book to help him, or a biography to assist him—no man ever having gone that way before except that one Man whose trail reveals His nail-pierced feet. He alone knows all the devious paths of sorrow. Yet, even in such by-ways, the Father is with us, helping, sustaining and giving us Grace to conquer at the close.

We will not, however, dwell on this aspect of solitary walking, for we have three others to mention. Many dear Brothers and Sisters have to endure *the solitude of unnoticed labor.* They are serving God in a way which is exceedingly useful, but not at all noticeable. How very sweet to many workers are those little corners of the newspapers and magazines which describe their labors and successes. Yet some who are doing what God will think a great deal more of at the last never see their names in print. Yonder beloved Brother is plodding away in a little country village—nobody knows anything about him, but he is bringing souls to God. Unknown to fame, the angels are acquainted with him and a few precious ones whom he has led to Jesus know him well. Perhaps yonder Sister has a little class in the Sunday school. There is nothing striking in her or in her class. Now and then a little child ascends to Heaven to report her success and occasionally another comes into the Church—but nobody thinks of her as a very remarkable worker. She is a flower that blooms almost unseen, but she is none the less fragrant! Or shall we think of the humble City Missionary? The Superintendent of the District knows that he goes his regular rounds, but he has no idea of the earnest prayers and deep devotedness of that obscure lover of Jesus. The City Mission Magazine puts him down as trying to do his duty, but nobody knows what it costs him to cry and sigh over souls. There is a Bible-woman—she is mentioned in the Report as making so many visits a week, but nobody reports all that she is doing for the poor and needy and how many are saved in the Lord through her instrumentality. Hundreds of God's dear servants are serving Him without the encouragement of man's approving eye—yet God is with them!

Never mind *where* you work—care more about *how* you work! Never mind who sees or does not see you as long as God approves your efforts! If He smiles, be content. We cannot be always sure when we are most useful. A certain minister with very great difficulty reached a place where he had promised to preach. There was deep snow upon the ground,

therefore only one hearer came. However, he preached as zealously as if there had been a thousand! Years later, when he was travelling in that same part of the country, he met a man who had been the founder of a Church in the village and from it, scores of other Churches had been established. The man came to see him and said, "I have good reason to remember you, Sir, for I was once your only hearer. And what has been done here has been brought about instrumentally through my conversion under that sermon." We cannot estimate our success. One child in the Sunday school, converted, may turn out to be worth 500 others because he may be the means of bringing 10,000 to Christ! It is not the acreage you sow, it is the multiplication which *God gives* to the Seed which will make up the harvest! You have less to do with being successful than with being faithful! Your main comfort is that, in your labor, you are not alone, for God, the Eternal One, who guides the marches of the stars, is with you!

There is such a thing—I would that we might reach it—as *the solitude of elevated piety.* In the plain everything is in company, but the higher you ascend, the more lonely is the mountain path. At this moment there must be an awful solitude on the top of Mont Blanc. Where the stars look silently on the monarch of mountains, how deep the silence above the untrodden snows! How lonely is the summit of the Matterhorn, or the peak of Monte Rosa! When a man grows in Grace, he rises out of the fellowship of the many and draws nearer to God. Unless placed in very happy circumstances, he will find very few who understand the higher life and can thoroughly commune with him. But then the man will be as humble as he is high and he will fall back, necessarily and naturally, upon the eternal fellowship of God. As the mountain pierces the skies and offers its massive peak to be the footstool of the Throne of God, so the good man passes within the veil, unseen by mortal eyes, into the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High where he abides under the shadow of the Almighty.

The last solitude will come to us all *in the hour of death.* Down to the river's brink they may go with us, a weeping company—wife, children and friends. Their kind looks will mean the help they cannot give. To that river's brink they may go in fond companionship, but then, as with our Lord, the cloud received Him out of His disciples' sight, so must we be received out of sight of our beloved ones. The chariot of fire must take Elijah away from Elisha. We must ascend alone. Bunyan may picture Christian and Hopeful together in the stream, but it is not so—they pass, each one, alone through the river. Yet we shall not be alone, my Brothers and Sisters—we correct our speech—the Father will be with us! Jesus will be with us! The Eternal Comforter will be with us! The everlasting Godhead in the Trinity of Persons shall be with us! And the angels of God shall be our convoy. Let us go our way, rejoicing that when we shall be alone, we shall not be alone because the Father will be with us—as He is with us even now!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

JOHN 16:1-22.

Verse 1. *These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended.* "That you should not be scandalized when you see Me put to death, and when you miss My bodily Presence from your midst. I want to prepare you for the shame and death that lie before Me and also prepare you for all that lies before you, for many of you will have to drink of My cup and to be baptized with My Baptism." "These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended," or ashamed, or scandalized, or caused to stumble when they come to pass.

2. *They shall put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time comes that whoever kills you will think that he does God service.* That terrible "time" did come very soon—and the Jewish and other persecutors hunted down the Christians in almost every place where they could be found. Nothing would satisfy their cruel foes but the blood of multitudes of martyrs! And many of the persecutors actually thought that they were doing God service while they were putting His children to torture and death!

3, 4. *And these things will they do unto you because they have not known the Father, nor Me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, you may remember that I told you of them.* To be forewarned is to be forearmed, especially when the Lord Jesus Christ gives the forewarning. And His disciples were thus to be forearmed and braced up for the coming conflict.

4. *And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.* "I needed not, at the beginning of My ministry, to trouble you about these things. Even then you and I were hated by evil men, but I was with you, so I was able to protect you from them." The persecutors could not slay Christ's sheep, as they desired to do, as long as their Shepherd was still with them, so His warning words were not needed while He was in their midst. Christ does not teach us everything at once—if He did, we might be so confused that we should not learn anything! Perhaps we have sometimes wished that our ears could hear more than they now do, but it is most probable that if we could hear more, we would really understand less than we do now. Have you, at any time, had your hearing more than usually acute? If so, you must then have heard a thousand sounds which it would have been better for you not to have heard, for they so confused and confounded one another that you did not hear anything distinctly. It is just so with the mind—it is capable of receiving a certain quantity of the Truth of God, but if too much Truth is placed before it at once, it produces confusion in the mind's ears and in the mind's eyes and we really hear less, see less and understand less than we would do if less were set before us! The Master knew that His disciples were like narrow-necked bottles which must be gradually filled. So He only revealed the Truth to them as they were able to receive it.

5, 6. *But now I go My way to Him that sent Me; and none of you asks Me, Where are You going? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow has filled your heart.* Sorrow sometimes prevents us from learning

the lessons that Christ wishes to teach us. You remember that in the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ's disciples were "sleeping for sorrow," and so they lost some of the lessons that they might otherwise have learned. Those who are in great trouble are often in that dazed condition in which half-awakened persons are. And there is a measure of sleepiness about us all in times of sorrow. It was so with the disciples on this occasion and, therefore, they did not ask their Lord what they might have asked Him if sorrow had not filled their hearts—"None of you asks Me, Where are You going?"

7-9. *Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me.* Which is the head of all sin, the root of all sin, the sin which lies in front of the door of Mercy and blocks the sinner's way! Oh, that the Spirit of God would convince all here who are not Believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, that they are living in the greatest of all sins, "because they believe not on Christ"!

10. *Of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and you see Me no more.* Of course Christ would not have been received back by His Father if He had not completed the work of righteousness which His Father gave Him the commission to perform. The risen and glorified Savior is the great testimony to the righteousness both of Christ and of His Gospel!

11. *Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.* Christ has already judged the prince of the powers of evil, so you may depend upon it that He will also judge all those who are under the dominion of the traitor prince who has usurped his Master's position and authority. Christ has summoned the dread lord of evil to His bar and judged him. Think not, O you who are his servants, that any of you will be able to elude the vigilance of the great Judge of All! Judgment will assuredly come to the common soldiers of the Prince of Darkness since their captain, himself, has been judged and condemned!

12. *I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now.* Here again observe the reticence of the Savior for His disciples' good—still graciously keeping from them what they could not bear to hear. And are not you, Beloved, thankful that you do not, at this moment, know what is to happen to you in the future? It is wise for each one of us to say—

"My God, I would not wish to read
My fate with curious eyes—
What gloomy lines are writ for me,
Or what bright scenes arise."

It is best for you, at present, to know but little. Prize what you do know and be content to leave all that is not yet revealed, for "the secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever."

13. *Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all Truth.* All that you need to know and may know, He will teach you. If

you cannot find your way into the heart of any Truth of God, the Spirit of God has the clue to it, so ask Him to guide you into it. There is such a thing as seeing the outside of a Truth—that is good as far as it goes, but the blessedness lies in getting to the *inside* of the Truth of God—the very kernel and core of it.

13, 14. *For He shall not speak of Himself; but whatever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me.* That is the distinctive mark of the Spirit of God. If any man says that he speaks by the Spirit, you can test him in this way—does what he say glorify Christ? If not, away with him, for he is not speaking as the Holy Spirit speaks!

14-18. *For He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father has are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you. A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me, because I go to the Father. Then said some of His disciples among themselves, What is this that He says unto us, A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that He says, A little while? We cannot tell what He says.* These disciples of Christ were almost as ignorant as the rank outsiders were! Though they had been with Jesus for three years, they had not learned what is clear enough to every Sunday school child, today, and what is certainly perfectly understood by all who are taught of God! They said, "What is this that He says unto us, A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me: and, because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that He says, A little while? We cannot tell what He says."

19-22. *Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask Him, and said unto them, Do you inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail has sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And you now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man takes from you.*

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

JESUS CHRIST'S IDIOM
NO. 3053

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 15, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 19, 1873.

"Jesus answered, Verily, verily."
John 3:5.

THIS expression, "Verily, verily," seems to me to have been the peculiar idiom of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has absolutely forbidden His people ever to take an oath. His command upon that matter is most explicit, "I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by Heaven; for it is God's Throne: nor by the earth; for it is His footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King: neither shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yes, yes; No, no: for whatever is more than these comes of evil." My text was Jesus Christ's strongest form of affirmation—when He wished to speak most emphatically, He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." Every prominent public speaker has his own peculiar idioms and very much of the man's character will be found in the idioms that he uses. And I may add that the attention which the man deserves may sometimes be gauged by his idioms, for as his style of speaking will reveal to you the man, you will discover how far you ought to lend him your ears. If, from his speech, you judge that he is flippant, or insincere, or that there is something sinister in his motives, or that he is aiming at the display of himself rather than at the proclamation of the truth, you may straightway say, "Then there is no particular reason why I should listen to him." But if, from the very idiomatic force of the words which he uses, you feel that the man is true, sincere and earnest, then you say, "I shall be wise to give heed to his words and to let his thoughts operate upon my own."

There are three qualities which these words reveal to us in our Savior's teaching. First, there was *clearness*—"Verily, verily." Secondly, there was *certainty*—"Verily, verily, I say this and that unto you." Thirdly, there was *solemnity*—"Verily, verily, I say unto you." We must, therefore, give to Him, in return for clearness, the desire to understand Him. In return for certainty, the conviction of the Truth of what He says and, to His solemnity, we must respond with a deep sense of the importance of His teaching and act in accordance with what He says.

I. I am to speak, first, upon Christ's idiom, "Verily, verily," as denoting to US THE CLEARNESS OF WHAT THE SAVIOR SAID.

He knew what He meant when He spoke. Some people, when they speak, do not know what they mean and, when a man does not make

you understand what he means, it generally is because he does not know the meaning of what he says. Indistinct speaking is usually the result of indistinct thinking. If men think clouds, they will preach clouds, but the Savior never spoke in that style which, at one time, was so common in our pulpits—a style imported partly from Germany and which was excessively cloudy and smoky, though it was thought by some people to be wonderfully profound and to be the very trademark of intellect! But there was not a sentence of that kind in all Christ's teaching. *He was the clearest, most straightforward and most outspoken of all speakers.* He knew what He meant to say and He meant His hearers also to know. It is true that the Jews of His day did not comprehend some of His teaching, but that was because judicial blindness had fallen upon them. The fault was not in the light, but in their bleared eyes. Turn to His teaching and see if anyone else ever spoke as simply as He did. A child can comprehend His parables. There are, in them, hidden Truths of God which are a mystery even to Christ's deeply-taught disciples, but Christ never mystified His hearers—He talked to them like a child, as He was—God's "Holy Child Jesus." He never laid aside the simplicity of childhood though He had all the dignity of fully-developed Manhood. He wore His heart upon His sleeve and spoke out what was on His mind in such plain, clear language that the poorest of the poor and the lowest of the low were eager to listen to Him.

Now, Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, *if you wish to imitate your Master, speak with the same clearness.* Say to your hearers, "Verily, verily, I have to proclaim to you, in Christ's name, this simple yet sublime Truth of God which I have myself grasped, and which I would also have you grasp." Never affect profundity among the poor and never use a theological jargon among the uneducated anywhere! If you have, in speaking, to show the Savior to your hearers, show Him in His own dress—do not cover Him up with the tawdry vestments of your gaudy language, for He will count them only as filthy rags. Tell sinners, in simple words, first about their sins and then about the Savior who can wash away their sins in His most precious blood. But go not a-hunting after novelties, for they will be of no service to perishing souls. If you are to be like Jesus, your teaching must be clear!

But next I need to say to those of you who are still unconverted, *how necessary it is that you should clearly understand this clear teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ!* There are some Truths upon which He spoke with very wonderful clearness—as for instance, concerning what sin is—how a look may be a sin and how a longing may be as much a sin as an action or a word is. Christ has also told us very clearly that sin must and will be punished. There never was anyone else so kind in heart as He was, yet He clearly taught the dreadful Truth of God that sinners shall be punished in Hell forever! There never can be any question about the Savior's view of sin as being a very evil thing and of the punishment of sin as being a very terrible thing. How very plainly, too, He speaks about the new birth! He said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." And He was equally explicit concerning

the way of salvation. He tells us that just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness and every bitten Israelite who looked to it was healed, so He, Himself, was lifted up upon the Cross and every sinner who trusts Him is saved forever! The teachings of Christ and of His Apostles concerning sinners being saved through faith in Him are blessedly clear. The Gospels and Epistles tell us that a perfectly holy and Divine Substitute for sinners was required—and that Jesus was that Substitute and stood in the place of all His chosen people—and bore the punishment which was due for all their sins. If we are Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, all our liabilities to Infinite Justice are forever discharged, for Jesus bore all our sins in His own body on the tree—and bore them so completely away that they shall be remembered against us no more forever!

I want to ask you who have not yet believed in Jesus, whether you really understand this Truth of God of which I have been speaking. Lest there should be anyone here under a delusion upon this matter, let me say, once and for all, that *there is no salvation in any charm or ceremony invented or performed by men.* The common notion is that there is some kind of charm which operates upon a person, young or old, who is brought to a font—that some virtue or other goes through the fingers of the "priest" who sprinkles the water because at his "ordination" he received something or other, from somebody or other, who received that something or other from some other body and so on, and so on, and so on right up to the Apostles! All that is sheer superstition as base as the witchcraft for which old women were burned in the evil days of the past! [See Sermons #581, Volume 10—CHILDREN BROUGHT TO CHRIST, NOT TO THE FONT and #573, Volume 10—BAPTISMAL REGENERATION, the sermon by Mr. Spurgeon which has had a larger circulation than any other in the 3,052 published sermons to date—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] How I wish that all men, women and children could be undeceived concerning it! Then there is a notion that a piece of bread, or a drop of wine, "consecrated" and dispensed by properly-authorized persons, will, somehow or other, charm away evil from a dying person. That is another superstition not a whit better than the fetish of the pretended rainmakers of South Africa! Neither the water, nor the bread and wine can convey Divine Grace to an unbeliever! But if I am a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, my being buried with Him in Baptism [See Sermon #1627, Volume 27, BAPTISM—A BURIAL—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] reminds me that I am saved through His death and burial—and if I, as a Believer in Christ, eat the bread and drink the wine at the Communion Table, those suggestive symbols help me, as Paul says, to "show the Lord's death till He comes." That is all. There is no charm in the water, or the bread, or the wine in themselves, whatever incantations any so-called "priest" may have muttered over them!

Then, *never imagine that we cannot understand what the Gospel of Christ really is.* Someone perhaps says, "Well, you see, Sir, I am not learned. I am no scholar, so I cannot understand the Gospel." My dear Friend, there are many people who cannot understand the Gospel just because they *are* scholars! They know too much to understand it—they

have so much of what they think is knowledge that they are prejudiced against it! Knowledge may prejudice a person as much as ignorance does. What you need to know is simply this—that you are a sinner and that if you trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, He is your Savior. The result of believing in Him will be this—knowing that you are saved because God tells you that you are, you love God whom you dreaded before and, loving Him, you naturally ask, "What can I do to please Him?" So you give up your old sins and, led on by the impulse of love, which is the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart, you seek after holiness! The things that concern your soul's salvation are plain enough for a child to comprehend! If you are lost, it will not be a mystery that damns you—and if you are ever to be saved, it is the simplicity of the Gospel that will save you! The Truths of God that relate to your ruin through sin—and the only remedy for that ruin—through the Grace of God, are "as plain as a pikestaff," as our common proverb puts it.

"Still," says one, "I have often listened to the preaching of the Gospel, but I have failed to understand it." Then ask the Spirit of God to guide you into it! He is waiting to instruct sincere seekers. Let me ask you whether you have ever really tried to understand the Gospel. "Well, Sir, I have heard Dr. So-and-So and Mr. So-and-So." Yes, but perhaps they have only muddled you. Have you read the Bible itself? He who wishes to drink pure water had better go to the wellhead. He who wishes to find the Truth of God had better come to these sacred pages, for here he will find it pure and unalloyed. Have you imitated the Jews at Berea who "searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so"? There are many people who condemn the Scriptures, but no man who has read them in the right spirit ever condemns them. You may remember the story of the City Missionary who was arguing with a cobbler—a man who thought himself a very wise skeptic although he had never read the Bible. He said he never would do so, yet he knew it was a very bad book! So the missionary said to him, "I bought a pair of boots yesterday which cost me twelve and sixpence—do you think they were worth the money?" He replied, "Possibly they were, but I can't say positively without seeing them." The missionary said, "But, if you are a cobbler and understand your business, you can certainly tell me their value without seeing them." "Why you must consider me a fool to think that I can judge of a thing I never saw." "Yes," said the missionary, "I *did* think you were a fool because you have been judging and condemning the Bible which you have never studied." So I ask you, dear Friend—Have you read the Bible? Have you studied it? If you say that you cannot comprehend it, I ask—Have you ever tried to do so? Do not plead that you cannot understand the Gospel if you have never tried to understand it! But if you humbly ask the Holy Spirit to teach you its meaning as you read it, I believe the Light of the Truth of God will soon enter your soul.

Let me ask you another question—Have you put into practice what you really *do* understand of the Scriptures? You know that you are sinful—have you confessed your sinfulness to God? You know that there is a Savior from sin and that He is to be laid hold of by faith—have you

trusted Him to save you? With the Truth of God so clear there is no need for you to perish in the dark! I read in the paper, yesterday, the notice of a reward to be given to anyone who would furnish information concerning the injury done to a certain buoy off the coast. The buoy was described as being on such-and-such a sand and, as it was 20 feet in height, it must have been injured through sheer carelessness or willful wickedness. So, if you have rightly read the Scriptures, or have heard the Gospel plainly preached, it will be impossible for you to perish by accident—you will perish willfully and your blood will be upon your own head. When Christ brings the printed Gospel before your eyes, as it were, in capital letters—if you will not read it and understand it—you must perish as a spiritual suicide, which may God forbid!

II. The time flies so quickly that I must pass on to notice, in the next place, that THE EXPRESSION, "VERILY, VERILY," AS THE SPECIAL IDIOM OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, SIGNIFIED CERTAINTY.

He knew that what He said was true and, therefore, He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." Untold mischief has been done in our country by the kind of preaching which was very common at one time, namely, for the preacher to speak as if he *did not know* what the Truth of God is and must be pardoned for intruding his opinions! If a man does not know the Truth, let him hold his tongue until he does. "I believed, therefore have I spoken," said the Psalmist. And he alone has the right to speak who speaks that which he believes and, therefore, knows. The Lord Jesus never hesitates as to what He shall say, His language never halts! His "Verily, verily, I say unto you," is the utterance of One who knows the Truth of God and who speaks it as One who is assured that it is the Truth of God.

On our part, there should be a suitable response to Christ's certainty. If we believe Him to be the Son of God speaking the Truth of God to us with absolute certainty, let us receive with certainty what He says to us. "But," says one, "there are so many different opinions that I do not know which to believe." What have you to do with men's opinions? Supposing there are 10,000 "isms" in the world—what have they to do with you? If you are lost, it will not abate the flames of Hell if you say, "There were so many isms in the world I did not know which to choose." There was but one Truth, for Christ said, "I am the Truth." If you had believed Him you would have been saved by Him. There are, today, many persons who raise all sorts of questions—there always have been and there always will be such persons while this dispensation lasts—but what have you to do with them? Your business is to trust the Lord Jesus Christ and leave all those questions alone!

"But," says another, "even good men differ." I know they do, but if you go into a watchmaker's shop, you find that even good watches and clocks differ in some respects. Yet that fact does not affect Greenwich mean time which is the standard for all the watches and clocks in the country! So, supposing that one good man sees one side of a Truth and another sees another side of it—what good man ever asks you to trust in him? You have listened to my preaching—some of you for many years—did I

ever ask you to follow my guidance except just as far as the Scriptures prove the truth of what I preach to you? With God's Word in your hand as the map of the road to Heaven, ask His Spirit to guide you and He will guide you all the way!

All that Christ teaches is certainly true and *there are some things which He tells us which are absolutely essential for us to learn.* For instance, "You must be born-again." Or this, "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." There is no doubt that at the Last Great Day, Christ "will judge the world in righteousness." We must all stand before His Great White Throne to receive from Him the final sentence which shall fix our eternal destiny. If you are an unbeliever, you are condemned already—and if you live and die an unbeliever, you must be driven from His Presence into a hopeless eternity. All these things are certainties. There are many fictions in the world, but these things are not fictions—neither are they trifles. And I do pray you to believe these Truths of God and to draw the right practical inferences from them.

There are also some Truths about which Christ says, "Verily, verily," *which ought to be a great comfort to you.* For instance, it is certainly true that if you confess your sins to Him, He will forgive you. It is certainly true that if you trust in Jesus, He will give you rest and peace, and you shall be, "accepted in the Beloved." It is certainly true that if you commit your soul into Christ's hands you shall never perish, and no one shall ever be able to pluck you out of His hands. [See Sermon #726, Volume 12—LIFE ETERNAL and #2120, Volume 35—THE SECURITY OF BELIEVERS—OR, SHEEP WHO SHALL NEVER PERISH—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] There are many blessed assurances in the Word of God upon which you may surely rely. God help you to rely upon them now!

There are other Truths in God's Word which you will find to be sure if you test and try them. I might address myself to many a man here and say to him, "Brother, did you not put Christ's Word to the test in the time of trouble, and did you not prove it to be true?" And I know that the answer would be, "Yes, that I did!" I might pick out many a humble man and woman here who have had a heavy task to bring up their children as they have done and many stern struggles with poverty and affliction, and I might say to them, "My Brother, my Sister, has not Christ been precious to you?" And I know that the answer would be, "Yes! That He has! He has fulfilled every word of promise that He ever gave us to rely upon." There is no one who can ever convict Christ of a lie—there is not a friend or a foe who can truthfully say, "He deceived me." "Verily, verily," is stamped upon every promise, every precept and every threat—and He will prove all of them to be true to the end of time and throughout eternity!

Then, *as these things are certain, let us act upon them.* O Sirs, in a short time we shall have done with preaching and hearing the Gospel! I fear that many people come to our places of worship in the same spirit in which they go to places of amusement and that the main things of which they think are—how the preacher puts his message, whether he is fluent and eloquent and whether he interests them or not. Yes, but that is not the principal matter about which we should be concerned! You and I will

soon be before the bar of God! I shall have to prove that I faithfully preached what I believed to be the Truth of God—and you will have to prove whether you accepted it and acted upon it! And I charge you all, before the living God, at whose bar you must soon stand, not to treat the Gospel as if it were mere fiction. Go not away from this building as though you had been watching a play, or listening to an organ recital which might or might not mean anything to you. There is a real Hell—will you be shut up in it forever? There is a real Heaven—will you be shut *out* of it forever? There is a real Savior who died upon the Cross for sinners—will you despise and reject Him? And, above all, there sits a real God in whom we live, and move, and have our being—shall we continue to forget Him, break His Laws as if we had liberty to do what we would and despise Him as if He were a man like ourselves? Oh, by the "Verily, verily," of the Christ of God, I beseech you to lay to heart the certainty, the reality of His teachings and let them have their due weight upon your spirits! May the Spirit of God make it to be so!

III. The third point was to be that CHRIST'S "VERILY, VERILY" MEANT SOLEMNITY.

Christ was a very solemn Preacher, though He was by no means a dull Preacher. There are some speakers who confound dullness with solemnity, but Christ's discourses were always interesting. How He abounded in parables and metaphors! The children listened with pleasure to His teachings, yet how solemn it always was, and how forcibly the Master proved the solemnity of His speech by the solemnity of His life! Those nights of prayer that He spent on the lone mountainside show that His was no mock earnestness. And that life of untiring labor showed how real and intense was His zeal. And His death, as with blood-red seals proved that, "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." It was the same Christ who said, "Verily, verily," who died upon the Cross, rose again and went up into Glory to make intercession for the transgressors!

The solemnity of Christ's words and work should cause us to listen to His Gospel with a corresponding seriousness and solemnity. If you are worldly and earth-bound, you will not attach that importance to the Gospel of Christ that you should. To many of you, the Truth that you need to be saved does not seem to come home with power. If I were, in the middle of a sermon, to begin to talk about the way to get money, the attention of many of you would be far more intense than it is when I am speaking about the salvation of immortal souls. If I were to discuss the price of British bonds, many ears would be at once opened to catch every syllable! Whereas when I talk of the incalculable price that Jesus paid for the redemption of the souls of men, the Truth makes no more impression upon many men's minds than oil would upon a slab of marble! Your souls, the best part of your real selves, concern you not, O you foolish sons of men! You treat your souls as if they were dirt, yet you prize the things of time and sense as if they were all that you had! You have a notion that these things concern people a long way off—people who are very wicked and do not go to any place of worship, or other people in this

congregation who are somehow more fitted than you are to receive my message! But, Sir, the Gospel is *for you,* and God is speaking by His Word and by His servant, *to you!* I wish that you would end this folly of passing on to others the Gospel that is meant for yourself.

In closing, I must just mention one or two reflections concerning the solemnity of the Gospel message. First, remember that *the Gospel concerns our never-dying souls.* Most people think a great deal about that which concerns the body. There is much talk about an operation, wisely performed by an eminent surgeon upon the poor body which must soon become food for worms. Yet little or nothing is said about the *soul* which is so vastly more precious! The soul of an emperor or the soul of a beggar is of the same value in God's sight. "Where does it take its flight when its earthly cage is broken?" Is that a question which is never asked by some of you? If so, what arrant fools you must be! O blessed Spirit of God, teach us the solemnity of the Gospel which concerns the soul which must live forever in raptures or in woe!

This Gospel also concerns the never-ending eternity. We are not going into another time-state that shall come to an end, but into that eternity which shall know no close. I can make no meaning out of Christ's words if it is not so—and He said, concerning the wicked, "These shall go away into *everlasting* punishment; but the righteous into life *eternal.*" The word is the same in each case in the original. Oh, eternity, eternity, eternity, who can conceive what it is? A million millions of years would be less than a moment compared with eternity—and that sum multiplied by a million millions a million times told would be but as a drop in a bucket compared with that which is everlasting! O Sirs, as I know that I am to live forever in such a state as I shall die in, my first concern is to be ready for death that I may be ready for my eternal future! Is it not so with you also? Oh, I do implore you, trifle not with eternity and with your never-dying souls! Trifle not with the God who can cast you into Hell forever! Trifle not with Christ whose hands and feet were nailed to the accursed tree for sinners such as you! Trifle not with His precious blood for that is your only hope of redemption! Trifle not with the Holy Spirit for if He should leave you to perish, your case would be hopeless! Trifle not with your Sabbaths—you will wish to have them back again when you are near death. Trifle not with the Gospel—what would the lost in Hell not give to hear another proclamation of mercy? The devil does not trifle—he is very earnestly seeking your destruction! God, Christ and the Holy Spirit are not trifling with you—and we are not trifling with you! We long to preach the Gospel to you more earnestly, more fully and more faithfully than ever—and we pray to God to help us do so and lament when we fear that we have failed. Trifle not when everything around you seems to be in earnest and especially when the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking out of this chapter, says to you, "Verily, verily, I of the crown of thorns. I of the pierced hands and feet speak plainly, certainly and solemnly to you and bid you look unto Me that you may be saved."

I never go out of this pulpit feeling so utterly cast down as when I have been trying to deal with the consciences of the ungodly. I wish I could

grip each one of you by the hand and look you in the face, and say, "Man, Woman, are you going to die without a Savior? Oh, be not so foolish, so mad!" I would tell every young man here how, when I was myself a young man, I was led to look by faith to the Savior and I have found it a blessed thing to rest in Him ever since. And I would say to him, "Brother, come with me to the Cross of Calvary and rest in Jesus, and begin to live a holy and useful life—and you shall find yourself truly blessed among men." I cannot come round and speak personally to you all, but will you let me follow you to your bedside and, if you think of getting into bed tonight without a prayer for your soul's salvation, just imagine that you feel my hand upon your shoulder and hear me say to you, "What? No offering of a prayer to God?" I was about to say, "Stepping into your bed," but I thought that it might become your sepulcher, for you may die there! As many have done who went to bed as thoughtlessly and prayerless as you have often done. But if you trust in Jesus and then fall asleep for the last time on earth, you will wake up amid the splendors of eternal bliss!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 3:1-18.

If we were asked to read to a dying man who did not know the Gospel, we would probably select this chapter as the most suitable one for such an occasion. And what is good for dying men is good for us all, for that is what we are—and how soon we may actually be at the gates of death, none of us can tell.

Verses 1, 2. *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night.* We do not know the names of many other Pharisees, but we do know the name of this one because God had loved him with an everlasting love and, therefore, with loving kindness did He draw him to the Savior's feet! "The same came to Jesus by night." Possibly he was too busy to come during the day. Anyway, it was better to come to Jesus late at night than not to come to Him at all! From the fact that after our Lord's death, it is said that he was the man who "at the first came to Jesus by night," I gather that he did come then partly out of timidity and partly also out of candor. He wanted to know more about Christ before he committed himself, so he came privately to see and hear for himself. It does not matter if any of you also come to Christ by night if you like. Our Savior has a night-bell to His door and He is quite willing to be the Physician of your soul—even if you ring Him up at midnight!

2. *And said unto Him, Rabbi.* He begins very respectfully, and so far, so good. But then, Judas said, "Hail, Master," and kissed Christ when he went to Gethsemane to betray Him.

2. *We know that You are a Teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that You do, except God be with him.* Dear Friends, if any of you do not know all about Christ that you wish to know, or that can be known, make use of what you do know about Him. Nicodemus had

not yet learned the truth of Christ's Deity, but he knew that He was a teacher sent from God, and that God was with Him.

3. *Jesus answered and said unto Him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.* [See Sermon #130, Volume 3—REGENERATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Christ's formula, "Verily, verily, I say unto you," was a new style of speech for the Pharisees to hear, for they quoted Rabbi this, and Rabbi that—but Jesus gives Himself as His own sufficient authority, with an egoism which cannot be blamed and which no true disciple of His ever questions, for Christ is, Himself, the Truth, and whatever He says is to be humbly received by all His followers. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man is born-again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." He has no notion of what it really is. He cannot even see it, for he is blind to it until he is born-again. It is for this reason that our most lucid explanations of the Gospel are altogether lost upon unregenerate men and women. However bright a light God may make our ministry to be, bright light is of no use to blind men and they must be born-again before they can even *see* the Kingdom of God.

4. *Nicodemus said unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?* His questions proved that he could not see the Kingdom of God. He blundered over the letter of Christ's message. He misunderstood the metaphor that Christ used—but did Jesus therefore not give Nicodemus any further instruction? Oh, no! Listen.

5. *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.* There must be a purifying operation upon his heart and mind, he must be spiritually washed and cleansed, and the Spirit of God must create him anew. Otherwise he cannot possibly enter into the Kingdom of God.

6. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* So that the best child who was ever born, even though he were, like Saul of Tarsus, "of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews," yet even he, inasmuch as he "is born of the flesh, is flesh," and not "spirit." Everything which comes to us by our first birth can be nothing better than flesh—and what can you get out of flesh but flesh? The only "evolution" that can come of the flesh is corruption! There must be another birth if you are to get anything but flesh—"that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Fleshly things are understood by the flesh, and spiritual things must be spiritually discerned. Hence the absolute necessity of a second birth, a Spirit birth, that we may first see and then enter the spiritual Kingdom of God.

7. *Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born-again.* This ruler of the Jews was full of astonishment at this strange Doctrine, so Christ said to Him, "Marvel not."

8. *The wind blows.* That is, the Spirit blows.

8. *Where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell from where it comes, and where it goes: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.* This is a great mystery and our Savior connected it with the most mysterious thing in the whole realm of Nature—the wind—a thing which

has never been seen and which must remain a mystery to us, at least while we are upon the earth. Christ uses this mysterious force as an emblem of the Holy Spirit and of those who are "born of the Spirit."

9. *Nicodemus answered and said unto Him, How can these things be?* He was puzzled and perplexed, like a man in a maze. The Savior had given him something to think about—and I wish that when we preach to a congregation, or when we talk to individuals, we would not aim at dazzling them with our fine phrases, but would seek to set the Truth of God before their minds, that it might lie there to be studied, and thought of, and to be like seed which, in later days, would germinate and bring forth a harvest to God's praise and Glory! Our Savior is an example to all of us who preach and, in this instance, He shows us the wisdom of not keeping back the mysteries of the Kingdom of God! I am greatly afraid that many preachers would have begun by talking to Nicodemus of some point that was common to both Judaism and Christianity and that they would have gone on to apologize for the peculiar mysteries of Christianity, all of which would have been a waste of breath and worse than that. Do not so, my Brothers, but speak out the Truth boldly and leave the Eternal Spirit to make use of it as He pleases!

10-12. *Jesus answered and said unto Him, Are you a master of Israel, and know not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto you, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and you receive not Our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?* The Savior as good as told Nicodemus that He did not come to argue or to reason with him, but to bear witness to absolute certainties of which He Himself was absolutely sure. So He said to him, "If you do not receive Our witness concerning these things, which lie on the very threshold of the Kingdom"—yet, mark you, He had been speaking about regeneration, the great mystery of the new birth—"it is of no use going on to still higher themes." So it is evident that the Kingdom of Christ requires great faith—faith on the very threshold of it—to believe the wondrous mystery of the new birth and still greater faith as deeper Truths, the more heavenly things of the Kingdom are revealed to us.

13. *And no man has ascended up to Heaven, but He that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven.* Now Nicodemus must have been indeed puzzled! Here was a Man who had come down from Heaven, yet who had gone up to Heaven and was still there, although He was at that moment talking to Nicodemus! Without the Spirit of God to explain the mystery, he could not make heads or tails of it.

14, 15. *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.* [See Sermon #153, Volume 3—THE MYSTERIES OF THE BRONZE SERPENT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Mark, dear Friends, the blending of the different Truths of God in this wonderful chapter! There is no keeping back the necessity of the new birth and there is no cutting down of the glorious

Doctrine of Salvation by Faith in Jesus! He puts the whole matter as broadly as it could be put.

16, 17. *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.* If any one of you says, "I cannot cause myself to be born-again," that is quite true. Yet listen to this message in the same chapter which speaks of the new birth—"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

18. *He that believes on Him is not condemned.* [See Sermons #361, Volume 7—NONE BUT JESUS—FIRST PART and #362, Volume 7—NONE BUT JESUS—SECOND PART—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] That is a grand Truth of God!

18. *But He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* His not believing is the master-sin, the surest evidence of his being, in his heart, an enemy to God. If he refuses to trust Christ, the matchless gift of the Father's love, he must be desperately set on mischief and he "is condemned already." These two Truths of the necessity of the new birth and of the fact that everyone who believes on Christ is saved, are quite consistent and in perfect harmony with each other. God grant to us the Grace to know them both by experience! Never talk about "reconciling" them, for they have never fallen out with one another!. God grant that we may find them both true in our own lives, 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.

PARDON AND JUSTIFICATION
NO. 3054

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 22, 1907.

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

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." Psalm 32:1.

FEW men judge things correctly. Most people measure by appearances—few know the test of reality. We pronounce the man blessed who grasps the scepter or wears the crown, whereas perhaps no peasant in his dominion enjoys less happiness than he does. We pronounce that man blessed who has uninterrupted and perpetual health, but we know not the secret gnawing of the heart devoured by its own anguish and embittered by a sorrow that a stranger cannot perceive. We call the wise man happy because he understands all things—from the hyssop on the wall to the cedar of Lebanon—but he says, "Of making many books there is no end and much study is a weariness of the flesh." We are all for pronouncing our neighbor's lot happier than our own. As Young says of mortality, "All men think all men mortal but themselves." And we are apt to think all men happy but ourselves. But oh, if we could see things as they are. If we were not deceived by the masquerade of this poor life. If we were not so easily taken in by the masks and dresses of those who act in this great drama, be it comedy or tragedy—if we could but see what the men are behind the scenes, penetrate their hearts, watch their inner motions and discern their secret feelings—we should find but few who could bear the name of "blessed"! Indeed, there are none except those who come under the description of my text, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." He is blessed, thrice blessed, blessed forevermore, blessed of Heaven, blessed of earth, blessed for time, blessed for eternity! And the man whose sin is *not* forgiven is not blessed—the mouth of Jehovah has said it and God shall manifest that cursed is every man whose transgression is not forgiven, whose sin is not covered!

Dearly Beloved, we come to the consideration of that most excellent and choice blessing of God which bespeaks our pardon and justification—and we trust that we shall be able to show you its extreme value.

The blessedness of the person enjoying this mercy will appear if we consider, first, *the exceeding value of it in its nature and its characteristics.* Then, if we notice *the things that accompany it.* And, afterwards, if we muse upon *the state of heart which a sense of*

forgiveness would engender, we shall see that a man whose sin is covered and whose transgression is forgiven, must indeed be blessed!

I. Let us first look at THE BLESSING AS IT IS.

It is an unpurchasable blessing. No one could purchase the pardon of his sin. What though we should each offer a hecatomb to our God, the sacrifice would smoke in vain, for "Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering." If we could make rivers of oil as wide as the Amazon and as long as the Mississippi, we could not offer them to God as an acceptable present, for He would laugh at its value. We might bring money to Him in vain, for He says, "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine." No oblation can add to His wealth, for He says, "Every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills…If I were hungry, I would not tell you: for the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof." These are all God's own creatures, so we could only offer to Him what is already His! Nothing that man can present to God by way of sacrifice can ever purchase the blessing of forgiveness.

Next, consider *the utter difficulty of procuring the blessing in any human way.* Since it is not to be purchased, how can it be procured? Here is a man who has sinned against God and he makes the inquiry, "How can I be pardoned?" The first thought which starts up in his mind is this, "I will seek to amend my ways. In the virtue of the future I will endeavor to atone for the follies of the past—and I trust a merciful God will be disposed to forgive my sins and spare my guilty but penitent soul." He then turns to Scripture to see if his hopes are warranted and he reads there, "By the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight." He fancies that if he should reform and amend his life, he will be accepted, but there comes from the Throne of God a voice which says, "Having sinned, O man, I must inflict punishment for your sin." God is so inflexibly just that He has never forgiven and will never forgive the sinner without having exacted the punishment for his sin! He is so strictly true to His threats and so inexorably severe in His justice, that His holy Law never relaxes its hold upon the sinner till the penalty is paid to the utmost farthing.

"Well," says the sinner, "if I amend for the future, there is the dark catalog of past offenses still pursuing me. Even if I run up no other debts, there are the old accounts—how can I get *them* paid? How can I get my past sins forgiven? How can I find my way to Heaven." Then he thinks, "I will seek to humble myself before God. I will cry and lament and I hope, by deep penitence, heart-felt contrition and by perpetual floods of tears, God may be induced to pardon me." O man, your tears will not blot out a single sin! Your sins are engraved as in brass and your tears are not a liquid strong enough to burn out what God has thus inscribed—

"Could your tears forever flow,
Could your zeal no respite know,
All for sin could not atone.
Christ must save, and Christ alone."

You might weep till your very eyes were wept away and until your heart was all distilled in drops and yet not remove one single stain from the bronze tablet of the memory of Jehovah! There is no atonement in tears or repentance! God has not said, "I will forgive you for the sake of your penitence." What is there in your penitence that can make you deserve forgiveness? If you did deserve forgiveness, you would have a set-off against your guilt. This were to suppose some claim upon God and there would be no mercy in giving you what you could claim as a right. Repentance is not an atonement for sin!

What, then, can be done? Justice says, "Blood for blood, a stroke for every sin, punishment for every crime, for the Lord will by no means clear the guilty." The sinner feels within his heart that this judgment is just. Like the man to whom I talked some time ago, who said, "If God does not damn me, He ought to. I have been so great a sinner against His Laws that His equity would be sullied by my escape." The sinner, when convicted in his own conscience, must acknowledge the righteousness of God in His condemnation. He knows that he has been so wicked, he has sinned so much against Heaven, that God in justice must punish him. He feels that God cannot pass by his sin and his transgression. Then there must be an atonement in order to obtain pardon, he thinks, and he asks, "Who shall effect it?" Speed your way up to Heaven, for it is vain to seek it on earth! Go up there where cherubs fly around the Throne of God and ask those flaming spirits, "Can you offer an atonement? God has said that man must die and the sentence cannot be altered. God Himself cannot revise it, for it is like the laws of the Medes and Persians, irrevocable! Punishment must follow sin and damnation must be the effect of iniquity. But O you blazing seraphs, no satisfaction would be yielded to Infinite Justice even if you all should die! You angels, I have no hope from you! I must turn my eyes in another direction. Where shall I find help? Where shall I obtain deliverance?"

Man cannot help us. Angels cannot help us—the greatest archangel can do nothing for us. Where shall we find forgiveness? Where is the priceless prize? The mine has it not in its depths. Stars have it not in their brilliance. The floods cannot tell me as they lift up their voice—nor can the hurricane's blast discover to me the profound mystery! It is hidden in the sacred counsels of the Most High. Where it is I know not until, from the very Throne of God, I hear it said, "I am the Substitute." And looking up there, I see, sitting on the Throne, a God and yet a Man—a Man who once was slain! I see His scarred hands and His pierced side. But He is also God and, smiling benignantly, He says, "I have forgiveness, I have pardon—I purchased it with My heart's blood. This precious casket of Divinity was broken open for your souls. I had to die—'the Just for the unjust.' I had to suffer for your sake, excruciating agony, unutterable pains and woes such as you cannot comprehend." And can I say that this amazing Grace is mine? Has he enrolled my worthless name in the Covenant of His Grace? Do I see the blood-mark on the writ of my pardon? Do I know that He purchased it with such a price? And shall I

refuse to say, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered"? No! I must and will exult, for I have found this jewel before which earth's diadems do pale and lose their luster! I have found this "pearl of great price" and I must and will esteem all things but loss for Jesus' sake, for having found this indescribable blessing which could not be bought except with the precious blood of Jesus, I must shout again, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven."—

"Happy the man to whom his God
No more imputes his sin
But, washed in the Redeemer's blood,
Has made his garments clean!"

It would be well for you, Christian, if you would often review this mercy and see how it was purchased for you. If you would go to Gethsemane and see where the bloody clots lie thick upon the ground. If you would then take your journey across that bitter brook of Kedron and go to Gabbatha and see your Savior with His hair plucked by the persecutors, with His cheeks made moist with the spittle of His enemies, with His back lacerated by the deep furrows of knotted whips and Himself in agony, emaciated, tormented—then if you would stand at Calvary and watch Him dying, "the Just for the unjust"—and having seen these bitter torments, remember that these were but little compared with His inward soul-anguish, then you would come away and say, "Blessed, yes, *thrice blessed* is the man who has thus been loved of Jesus and purchased with His blood! 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.'"

Another thing concerning this blessing of justification is not only its immense value and its unpurchasableness, but *its coming to us instantaneously.* You know it is a Doctrine that has been taught by Divines long enough and taught in Scripture that justification is an instantaneous act. The moment God gives me faith, I become justified and, being justified by faith, I have peace with God! It takes no time to accomplish this miracle of mercy. Sanctification is a lifelong work, continuously effected by the Holy Spirit, but justification is done in an instant! It is as complete the moment a sinner believes as when he stands before the Eternal! Is it not a marvelous thing that one moment should make you clean? We love the physician who speedily heals. If you find a skillful physician who can heal you of a sad disease even in years, you go to him and are thankful. But suppose you hear of some wondrous man who, with a touch, could heal you—who, with the very glance of his eyes, could stanch that flow of blood, or cure that deadly disease and make you well at once? Would you not go to him and feel that he was, indeed, a great physician? So is it with Christ. There may be a man standing over there with all his sins upon his head, yet he may be justified—complete in Christ, without a sin—freed from its damning power, delivered from all his guilt and iniquity in one single instant! It is a marvelous thing beyond our power of comprehension! God pardons the man and he goes away that same instant perfectly justified—as the

publican did when he prayed, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," and received the mercy for which he prayed.

But one of the greatest blessings about this mercy is that *it is irreversible.* The irreversible nature of justification is that which makes it so lovely in the eyes of God's people. We are justified and pardoned, but then the mercy is that we can never be unpardoned—we can never again be condemned! Those who are opponents of this glorious Doctrine may say what they please, but we know better than to suppose that God ever pardons a man and then punishes him afterwards. We would not think the Queen would give a criminal a free and full pardon and then, in the course of a few years, have him executed. Oh, no! I thank God that I can say and that each of the Lord's believing people can say—

"Here's pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast!
And, O my Soul! With wonder view,
For sins to come here's pardon too!"

It is complete pardon that Jesus gives—for that which is to come, as well as for that which is past—

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

God never did anything by halves. He speaks a man into a justified condition and He will never speak him out of it again! Nor can that man ever be cast away. O God, do any persons teach that men can be quickened by the Spirit and yet that the quickening Spirit has not power enough to keep them alive? Do they teach that You first forgive and then condemn? Do they teach that Christ stands Surety for a man and yet that the man may afterwards be damned? Let them teach so if they will, but we "have not so learned Christ." We cannot use words so dishonorable to the blessed Savior, so derogatory to His Deity! We believe that if He stood as our Substitute, it was an actual, real, effectual deed and that we are positively delivered thereby. We believe that if He did pay the penalty for our sin, God cannot by any means exact it twice! We believe and teach that if He did discharge our debt, it is discharged! That if our sin was imputed to Christ, it cannot also be imputed to us. We say, before all men, that Heaven itself cannot accuse the sons of God of any sin! "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect," if God has justified and Christ has died? Ah, Christian! You may well stand and wonder at this mighty justification—to think that you are so pardoned that you never can be condemned! That all the powers in Hell cannot condemn you! That nothing which can happen can destroy you! That you have a pardon that you can plead in the Day of Judgment and that will stand as valid, then, as now! Oh, it is a glorious and gracious thing! Go, you who believe in another gospel and seek comfort in it if you will, but yours is not the justification of the blessed God! When He justifies, He justifies forever and nothing can separate us from His love!

II. This is the mercy itself. Now I turn to the second point. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered," BECAUSE THAT MERCY BRINGS EVERYTHING ELSE WITH IT.

When I know that I am pardoned, then I can say that all things are mine! I can look back to the dark past and all things there are mine. I can look at the present and all things here are mine. I can look into the deep future and all things there are mine. Back in eternity, I see God unrolling the mighty scroll of the Book of Life and lo, in that volume I read my name! It must be there, for I am pardoned—and whom He calls, He had first predestinated. And whom He pardons, He had first elected. When I see that Covenant roll, I say, "It is mine." And all the great books of God's eternal purposes and infinite decrees are mine. And what Christ did upon the Cross is mine. The past is mine! The revolutions of all past ages have worked for the good of myself and my Brothers and Sisters in Christ. Standing in the present, I see Divine Providence and that is mine. Its various circumstances are working together for the good of all the chosen people of God. Its very wheels—though high and wonderful—are working, wheel within wheel, to produce some great and grand effect which shall be for the general good of the Church of Christ! Afflictions are mine to sanctify me—a hot furnace where my dross is taken away. Prosperity is mine to comfort me—a sweet garden where I lie down to be refreshed in this weary journey. All the promises of God are mine. What though this Bible is the prince of books—what though each letter is a drop of honey and it is filled with sweetness—there is not a precious text here which is not mine if I am a Believer in Christ! There is not a promise which I may not say is my own, for all is mine! All these present things I may take without fear, for they are my Father's gift to me, a portion of my heritage.

I rejoice also to know that all the future is mine, whatever that future may be. I know that in the future there shall come an hour when, at God's command, the long pent-up fires of earth shall start up from between her brazen ribs—her mountains shall be dissolved and the earth shall pass away. But even this last great conflagration is mine! I know that on a certain day I shall stand before the judgment bar of Christ—but that Judgment Day is mine! I fear it not, I dread it not. I know that soon I must die, but the River of Death is mine! It is mine to wash me, that I may leave the dust of earth behind. It is a glorious river though its waters may be tinged with blackness, for it takes its rise in the mountains of love, hard by the Throne of God! And then after death there will come the resurrection and that resurrection is mine! In a perfect body, clear as the sun and fair as the moon, I shall live in Paradise! And then whatever there is in Heaven is mine! If there is a city with azure light and with jasper walls—it is mine. What though there are palaces there of crystal and of gold that sparkle so as to dim poor mortal eyes. What though there are delights above even the dream of the voluptuary. What though there are pleasures which heart and flesh cannot conceive and which even spirit itself cannot fully enjoy—the very intoxication of

bliss! What though there are sublimities unlawful for us to utter and wonders which mortal men cannot grasp. What though God in Heaven does unravel His Glory to make His people blessed—all is mine! The crown is bright and glorious, but it is mine, for I am pardoned! Though I may have been the chief of sinners and the vilest of the vile, if God shall justify me tonight, all things in Heaven are mine, however glorious, bright, majestic and sublime! Oh, is not this a wondrous mercy? Verily, as we consider what comes with the mercy, we must say, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

III. We would that time and bodily strength permitted us to dilate upon this wide subject, but we must pass on to the last point. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" BECAUSE IT MAKES HIM BLESSED BY THE EFFECTS IT HAS UPON HIS MIND.

What glorious *peace* it brings to a man when he first knows himself to be justified! The Apostle Paul said, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Some of you in this chapel do not know what peace means. You never had any real, satisfactory peace. "What?" you say, "never had any peace when we have been happy and merry and joyous?" Let me ask you, when the morning has appeared after your evening of mirth, could you look back upon it with joy? Could any one of you look back upon it and say, "I rejoice in these unbridled revellings. I always find such laughter productive of a sweet calm to my heart"? No, you could not unless you are utterly hardened in heart. I challenge you to tell me what fruit you have ever gathered from those things of which you are now ashamed. You know that you have not had any true peace. When alone in your chamber and a leaf fell, or some little insect buzzed in the furtherest corner, you trembled like the leaves of the aspen and thought perhaps the angel of death was there with a dreary omen! Or, passing from the haunts of fashion, you have walked along some lonely road in solitude and your disordered fancy has conjured up all sorts of demons. You had no peace and you have no peace now, for you are at war with the Omnipotent, you are lifting your puny hands against the Most High God, you are warring against the King of Heaven, rebels against His government and guilty of high treason against the Eternal Majesty! Oh, that you did but know what true peace is—"the peace of God which passes all understanding"!

I compare not the peaceful mind to a lake without a ripple—such a figure would be quite inadequate. The only comparison I can find is in that unbroken tranquility which seems to reign in the deep caverns and grottoes of the sea—far down where the sailor's body lies, where the seashells rest undisturbed, where there is nothing but darkness and where nothing can break the spell—for there are no currents there and all is still—that is somewhat like the Christian's soul when God speaks peace to him. There may be billows on the surface and by these he may be sometimes ruffled, but inside his heart there will be no ebb or flow. He will have a peace that is too deep to fathom, too perfect for the ungodly to conceive—for none but they who prove it know what it is. Such peace

that tonight you could lay your head down to sleep with the knowledge that you would never wake again in this world as calmly as you could if you knew your days were to be, like Hezekiah's, lengthened out for 15 years! When we have peace with God we can lie down and if an angel visited us to say, "Soul, your Master calls you," we could reply, "Tell my Master that I am ready." And if grim Death were to come stalking to our bedside and were to say, "The pitcher is about to be broken at the fountain, and the wheel to be broken at the cistern," we might answer, "We are quite prepared. We are not afraid. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have peace here and we are glad to go and have that peace consummated up yonder in the better world." Could you all say that? Some of you know that you could not. If I were to go round this building and ask you, you would have to say, "No. I am not at peace with God. I am afraid to die, for I do not know that my sins are blotted out." Well, poor Soul, at any rate you will say, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." You know that *he* is blessed, though you are not yourself blessed—and you feel that *you* would be blessed indeed if you could once get your sin covered and your transgression forgiven.

Justification not only gives peace, it also gives *joy.* And this is something even more blessed. Peace is the flowing of the brook, but joy is the dashing of the waterfall when the brook is filled, bursts its banks and rushes down the rocks! Joy is something that we can know and esteem—and justification brings us joy. Oh, have you ever seen the justified man when he is first justified? I have often told you what I myself felt when first I realized that I was pardoned through the blood of Christ. I had been sad and miserable for months and even years—but when I once received the message, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth," verily I could have leapt for joy of heart, for I felt then that I understood the meaning of that text, "The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."

I remember hearing Dr. Alexander Fletcher, when speaking to children, tell them a simple anecdote in order to illustrate the joy of a man when he gets delivered from sin. He said, "I saw on the pavement three or four little chimney-sweeps jumping about and throwing up their heels in great delight. And I asked them, 'My boys, why are you making all this demonstration?' 'Ah,' they said, 'if you had been locked up for three months, you would do the same when you once got out of prison.'" I thought it a good illustration and we cannot wonder that people are joyous and glad when, after being long shut up in the prison of the law, all sad and miserable, they have felt their bonds broken, seen the door of the jail opened and obtained a legal discharge! What cared they, then, about trials and troubles, or anything else? The heart seems scarcely big enough to hold their joy and it bursts out so that they hardly know what to do or to say! Thus it is at that wondrous hour which comes but once in a Christian's life—when he first feels himself delivered, when God for

the first time says to him, "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins." I verily think that hour is a fragment of eternity cut off and given us here! I am sure it is a foretaste of the happiness at God's right hand! It is a day of Heaven upon earth, that blessed day when God first gives us a knowledge of our own justification! Heaven's bliss itself can scarcely exceed it! We seem to drink of the very wine that saints in Glory quaff. We need nothing else—what more can we desire? "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered"—it gives him joy and it gives him peace.

Have you ever noticed one thing that I must mention here? If you have ever had a great trouble, you have found that it has swallowed up all little troubles. Suppose the captain of a ship finds something on deck that is not quite right? He fidgets and worries himself about this, that and the other. And soon a great storm arises. Big clouds appear and the winds begin to whistle through the cordage. The sails are torn and now the ship is driving before the wind over mountains and into valleys of water. He fears the ship will be wrecked and that he will be lost. What cares he now for the little things on deck, or the furniture of the cabin, or such things as those? "Never mind about those things," he says, "the ship is in danger of being lost." Suppose the cook should run up and say, "I am afraid, Sir, the dinner will be spoiled." What does he say? "The ship," he says, "may be lost, and that is of much more consequence than the dinner." So is it with you! If you once get into real trouble on account of your souls, you will not fret much about the little troubles you have here, for they will all be swallowed up by the one giant alarm. And if you get this everlasting joy into your souls, it will be much the same—it will consume all your smaller joys and griefs. That joy will be like Moses' rod which ate up all the serpents that the magicians produced before Pharaoh—it will eat up all other joys! It will be enough for you if you can say—

"I'm forgiven! I'm forgiven!
I'm a miracle of Grace!"

That is a nice little house of yours. Well, be thankful for it, but yet you can say, "If I had not got it, I should be a happy man." You have a certain property. Thank God for it, but yet you can say, "If I had not got it, I should be happy in my poverty." You remember what the poor slave said, "Ah, it's all very well for you freemen to find fault with your lot. Give me freedom and I would need nothing more! Give me freedom and I will gladly live on crusts and drink water—only let me know that I am free—that is all that I desire. Let me stand on God's free soil and feel that no man can say, from the crown of my head to the sole of my feet that I am his, and I will be happy." The slave says so, and so may you. If you can but feel yourself justified. If you know that you are delivered, that you are, indeed, pardoned, that you are beyond the clutches of the Law of God, you can rejoice that you know and feel the truth of the saying, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

Now let me ask, in conclusion, *How many such blessed men and women are there here tonight?* How long shall I give you to answer the question? I wish formal preaching were done away with and that we had a little more talking to one another. I wish to lay the formalities of the pulpit aside and talk to you as if you were in your own houses. That, I believe, is the true kind of preaching. Let me inquire, then, how many of you, my Friends, can claim the title of "blessed" because you are justified? Well, I think I can see one Brother who puts his hands together, and says—

"'A debtor to mercy alone,
Of covenant mercy I sing.'

"I know I am forgiven." My Brother, I rejoice to hear you speak thus confidently. But I come to another and I ask—What about you, my Friend? "Ah, Sir! I cannot say as much as that Brother did, but I hope I am justified." What ground have you for your hope? You know that we cannot properly hope unless we have some grounds for our hope—what are your grounds? Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? "Yes," you say, "I do believe on Him." Why, then, do you say, "I *hope* I am justified"? Dear Brother or Sister, you *know,* if you really believe on Christ! You have no need to talk about *hope* where you may be certain! And it is always better to use words of confidence when you can. Keep your head as high as you may, for you will find troubles enough to drag it down.

The next one replies—

"'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 have heard a great deal said against that hymn, but I have myself had occasion to sing it sometimes, so I cannot find much fault with it. That state of mind is all very well if it lasts a little while, though not if it lasts a long time and a man is always saying, "I long to know," or, "I am afraid." Paul says, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." You would not always have this anxiety if you were brought to realize your justification in the sight of God. You may have it sometimes, "when the eye of faith is dim," but I do not like to see people contenting themselves with any measure of faith short of that which apprehends full redemption! Do not let me distress the weak ones of the flock, for I often say—

"Thousands in the fold of Jesus,
This attainment can never boast—
To His name eternal praises,
None of them shall ever be lost."

Their names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life before the world was made! But if any of you are always in distress and doubt, if you never did at any time feel confident, you should begin to be apprehensive, for I think you should now and then get a little higher. You may pass through the Valley of the Shadow of Death sometimes but, surely, sometimes the Spirit of God will also carry you up to the top of the mountain that is called, "Clear." Yet, if you are still dwelling on this point, "I long to know,"

are you not anxious to settle the question? Suppose you do not belong to Christ? Put it in that way—for, in a doubtful case, it is best to look at the worst side—suppose you do not love the Lord? Nevertheless you are a sinner. You feel that you are a sinner, do you not? God has convinced you that you are a sinner. Well, as long as you can claim sinnership, you can go to His feet! If you cannot go as a saint, you can go as a sinner! What a mercy this is! It is enough to save us from despair. Even if our evidence of *saintship* seems clean gone, we have not lost our *sinnership*! And the Scripture still says, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." And while it says that, we will hang on it!

Another one says, "I don't know whether I am justified and I don't care much about it." Let me tell you, Sir, when you *will* care. When you come near your end, young man, you will care then! You may think you can live very well without Christ, but you cannot afford to *die* without Him! You can stand very securely at present, but death will shake your confidence. Your tree may be fair to look at now, but when the great testing wind comes, if it has not its roots in the Rock of Ages, down it must come! You may think your worldly pleasures good, but they will then turn bitter as wormwood to your taste—worse than gall shall be the daintiest of your drinks when you shall come to the bottom of your poisoned bowl!

But there is another who says, "I wish I were justified, but I feel that I am too great a sinner." Now I like to hear the first part of your speech, but the last is very bad. To say that you are bad is right—I know you are. You say you are vile and that is true enough and I hope you mean it. Do not be like some men of whom I have read. There was a monk who on a certain occasion described himself as being as great a hypocrite as Judas. And a gentleman at once said, "I knew it long ago! You are just the fellow I always thought you were." But up jumped the monk and said, "Don't you be saying such things as those about me." His humility was feigned, not felt. Thus people may make such a general confession as this, "We are all sinners," who would resist any special charge brought home to their consciences, however true it might be. Say to such an one, "You are a rogue," and he replies, "No, I'm not a rogue." "What are you, then? Are you a liar?" "Oh, no!" "Are you a Sabbath-breaker?" "No, nothing of the kind." And so, when you come to sift the matter, you find them sheltering themselves under the general term, sinner, not to make confession, but to evade it! This is very different from a real conviction of sin.

But if you feel yourself to be a real, actual sinner, remember that you are not too bad to be saved, because it is written in Scripture that Christ came to save sinners and that means that He came to save *you*, because you are a sinner! And I will preach it everywhere, without limitation, that if a man knows himself to be a sinner, Jesus Christ died for him, for that is the evidence that Christ came to save him! Let the sinner, then, believe on Jesus as his Savior! Let the "outcasts" come to Jesus, for the Psalmist

says, "He gathers together the outcasts of Israel." There is an outcast here tonight. There is a backslider over there who has been cut off from the Church years ago. Behold his sad plight. As Achish said of David, "He has made his people Israel utterly to abhor him: therefore he shall be my servant forever." But he escaped and you shall yet escape! The prey shall not be taken from the Mighty! The lawful captive shall not be taken from Jesus Christ! The Captain of our salvation conquered his soul once, and He will yet save it.

But another says, "I never was a member of a church and I am afraid I never shall be. I am a hardened sinner, a reprobate." Well, do you confess it? Then hear the word of the Lord—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." "He that believes"—that is, he that believes *on* Jesus and *in* Jesus. He that casts himself on Christ. Our hymn bids us "venture" on Christ, but that is not right—there is no venturing, it is all safe—he who trusts himself on Christ—throws himself flat on Sovereign Mercy—"He that believes"—notice what follows, "and is baptized." Baptism is to come afterwards, not for salvation, but as a profession of his faith—he that with his heart believes and with his mouth confesses—"He that believes and is baptized—shall be saved! And he that believes *not* shall be damned." I dare not leave any word out, whatever any of my Brothers may do. Whether a man is baptized or not, if he does not believe, he shall be damned. But the word, "baptized," is not put into the last sentence because the Holy Spirit saw there was no necessity for it, for He knew if the ordinance were correctly administered, no person who did not believe would be baptized! So it was the same thing as saying, "He that believes not shall be damned."

Oh, may God grant that you may never know the meaning of that last dreadful word, but may you know what it is to be saved by Divine Grace!

—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.

ACCOMPLICES IN SIN
NO. 3055

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 29, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 30, 1873.

"Neither be partaker of other men's sins."
1 Timothy 5:22.

WE have all abundant reason to look at home and see about our own sins. Nothing can be more absurd than for a man to take his hoe and weed everybody else's garden—and leave all the thorns and thistles to flourish on his own plot. The old parable of the man who carried two bags, one behind and one in front, and who put other people's faults into the one in front, and his own into the one at his back, is a very correct representation of the folly of those who have their eyes wide open to see the faults of their neighbors, but are totally blind to their own imperfections. If, as our proverb puts it, "Charity begins at home," so should criticism—and criticism concerning character had better stop there. There is so much dirty linen in our own house needing to be washed that none of us need to take in our neighbor's washing. "Mind your own business," is a command that might have been spoken by Solomon, himself, and the Apostle Paul was inspired to write to the Thessalonians, "Study to be quiet and to do your own business." And he and Peter very sternly condemned those who were "busybodies in other men's matters."

So it is not my intention to bid any of you to cease to look to your own affairs, but at the same time, I want to remind you that we cannot, in this world, live altogether to ourselves. He who is most bent upon minding his own business cannot help knowing that his next door neighbor has something to do with his garden. Even if he looks diligently after his own plot, thistle seeds from the left and the right may blow over into his garden and trouble will come to him from the very fact that he has neighbors! Our dwelling places in this life are not all detached—many of us have to live on streets and if our neighbor's house is on fire, it is not at all unlikely that the flames may spread to our dwelling. Let us never be so concerned about our own interest as to be selfish, for even if we try to be wholly wrapped up in ourselves, we shall be compelled to notice the actions of others with whom we are more or less intimately linked—whether we wish to do so, or not. Hence, the message of the text is necessary, not to take us away from our own duty, but to help us to make sure that we are not "partakers of other men's sins."

The connection in which this text stands must be noticed. Timothy was exhorted by Paul to "lay hands suddenly on no man." There were certain upstarts who wrongly thought that they could preach—and there were others who thought that they could rule in the churches. These persons probably gained a few or many partisans to support their claims. There were some of their relatives in the church who thought a great deal of their sons, or brothers, or uncles, or cousins, or there were friends who heard some man speak on a certain occasion with considerable fluency and, being unwise, they judged him to be man of master-mind and would have put him into the front rank of the army at once if the power to do so had rested with them! Paul tells Timothy, whom he had sent to exercise a general oversight over the officers and members of the church, not to be in a hurry to lay his hands upon these men, so as to endorse their claim, but to let them wait awhile until they were tried and tested—because if he allowed them to take office in the church and they committed faults or follies, he would be responsible for them and everybody would say, "We wonder that Timothy should have sent out such men as these." So he was bid to be cautious lest he should become, in any way, "a partaker of other men's sins." None of us are exactly in Timothy's position so we are not likely to fall into the fault against which Paul warned him—at least not in precisely the same form. Yet the text has a message to us and we may say to one another, "Be not partakers of other men's sins."

I. I shall first try to show you HOW WE CAN BE PARTAKERS OF OTHER MEN'S SINS and, in doing that, I am afraid that the various ways in which we can do this will seem to be very many. And that if I am not very careful, you will think that my sermon is like Ezekiel's valley of vision in which the bones were "very many" and "very dry." I will not be more wordy than I can help, but at the same time I must deal with the subject somewhat in detail.

As to how we can become accomplices in other people's sins—*the preacher must first say to himself that he will be such a man if he is not true to his trust.* If he shall teach false Doctrine, or if, teaching the true Doctrines, he shall teach them erroneously—if he shall keep back unpalatable Truths of God—if he shall allow sin to pass without reproof—if he shall see a great deficiency of spiritual life and service and not point it out—if, in brief, he shall be an unfaithful servant of Christ and his hearers shall thereby be kept in a low state of Divine Grace, inconsistent with their profession—and the unconverted shall be hindered from coming to Christ, he will become a partaker in other men's sins. Indeed, I know of no man who is more likely to fall into the fault indicated in the text than a minister of the Gospel is! Oh, what Grace we need and what help from on high lest if we fail in faithfulness to God and our hearers, the doom of souls should be laid at our door and we should be partakers of other men's sins! Brothers and Sisters, pray for us that this may not be our unhappy lot—

"'Tis not a cause of small import

The pastor's care demands,
But what might fill an angel's heart
And filled a Saviors hands!
They watch for souls for which the Lord
Did heavenly bliss forego,
For souls which must forever live
In raptures or in woe.
May they that Jesus, whom they preach,
Their own Redeemer see—
And watch YOU daily over their souls,
That they may watch for THEE."

That piece is especially intended for myself and my Brother ministers. The rest of my discourse will be for you as well as myself. So next I must remind you that we can, all of us, be partakers of other men's sins *by willfully joining with them in any act of sin and doing as they do*—like those sinners mentioned by Solomon in the Book of Proverbs, who said, "Cast in your lot among us; let us all have one purse." We must have nothing to do with such men! God forbid that we should! If we sin alone, it is bad enough, but if we sin in company, we have not only to answer for our own sins, but also for the sins of others, at least in part. If hand joins with hand in sin, there is a multiplication of its guilt, for each man who has helped to lead a fellow creature into iniquity will have his own transgression increased by the transgression of that other sinner. By their combination, the two will become capable of even greater guilt than they would have committed individually. God save us all from being accomplices in the sins of others by uniting with them in their sinful acts and deeds!

Further, we may be partakers in other men's sins *by tempting them to sin.* This is a most hateful thing and makes the man who practices it to become the devil's most devoted drudge, servant and slave. I have known such tempters of others—old men who, from their youth up, had sinned in such a shameful way that their very looks were full of lechery. There was a leer about their eyes that was almost enough to destroy all chastity that came beneath their glance. And their speech was full of the *double entendre,* insinuations and innuendoes which were almost worse than open profanity. I have known one such walking mass of putrefaction defile a whole parish—and when I have seen a boy walking with such a demon incarnate, or sitting down with him in the public-house, I knew that the boy's character would be ruined if that vile doctor in devilry could only instruct him in the vices with which he is, himself, so shamefully familiar. There are such fiends in London and we could almost wish to have them all buried straightaway, for they are Satan's servants spreading wickedness all around them! I do not suppose I am addressing one such dreadful creature, yet I know that some great sinners of that sort do come within these walls and they will, of course, be very angry because of my allusion to them. Yet I never knew a thief who was fond of a policemen and I do not expect or wish to secure the approval of scoundrels whose evil character I am exposing. If, Sir, I have

described you and you will not repent of your sin, I tell you that the hottest place in Hell is reserved for you, for you have led young men to the alehouse and taught them to drink the devil's drugs and to repeat your foul blasphemies and to imitate your scandalous lasciviousness! Yet before it is too late, I beseech you to repent of your sin, that it may be blotted out by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, which cleanses from all sin! But if not, "other men's sins" will cry out against you for judgment at the bar of the Almighty! I solemnly charge all of you who have not committed this iniquity, to never do so—take care that you never say a word which might stain the innocence of a child's mind and that you never let fall an expression which might, in any way, be the means of leading another person into sin—for it is an easy thing for us to become partakers of other men's sins by tempting them to commit iniquity.

If there is any evil worse than that, I think it is that of *employing others to sin.* It was one of the basest parts of David's great sin that when he wanted to have Uriah killed, he did not slay him, himself, but got Joab to expose him in a position where he was certain to be killed. It is horrible when a man is determined to be dishonest, yet gets someone else to commit the sin for him! It is a shameful thing that there are professedly "religious" employers who try to get their young men to say across the counter what they know is not according to truth. Are there not some of these so-called "Christian" employers who want young men who are not "too particular"? Do I not hear, every now and then, of young men who have been found to be too scrupulous and who have been told that they had better get situations somewhere else? They objected to describe the goods as their employer wanted them to do because they knew it would be a lie. They were told, "It is the custom in the trade and, therefore, must be so here." That is to say because other persons were liars and cheats, these young men must be knaves—and their master must make money by their lying to his customers! Now, if I meant to thieve or deceive, I would do it myself—I would not employ young men and women, or old ones either, to lie and cheat for me! If any of you have done so, I pray God that He may lead you to repent of such abominable wickedness, for the sin is not one-half theirs and the other half yours—it is partly theirs, but it is far more yours if they are doing wrong at your bidding! God save us all from being "partakers of other men's sins" in that way!

Some commit this great crime *by driving other men into sin* by the fears which they have inspired, or by oppressing them in their wages, or by setting them to do what must involve them in sin. I remember the case of a man who was employed where it was well known that some of the parcels which he collected on his way and carried to their destination would never be booked by him, but the price paid for the carriage would be secretly dropped into his own pocket. The man's wages were so small that nobody, unless an idiot, ever believed that he lived on them, so, tacitly, the understanding was that the man would be sure to pilfer on

his own account, so his wages were cut down below the point at which he could earn an honest living. I fear that there are many men who are dishonest for this reason—I will not excuse them, but I hope that if they are ever sent to prison for stealing, their masters will be sent with them, for they are equally guilty!

Yet again, we may become partakers of the sins of others *by a misuse of our position over them.* This is especially the case with parents. When a father is a man of loose habits, if his son follows his evil example, who is to blame? If a drunken father sees his child become a drunkard, whose fault is it? If he is a swearer and his son uses profane language, who taught the boy those oaths? Is not the guilt of that swearing largely the father's? "Oh!" some of you say, "we would not teach our children either drunkenness or profanity." Yet you are not, yourselves, Christians—you may be moral and truthful, and so on, but you are not Christians. And if your children are not converted, will they not say, "Our father was never converted, so why should we be?" "But we always take them to a place of worship." I know you do. And your children say, "Father goes to a place of worship, but he does not believe in Christ and he never prays." So if they grow up in the same way, who is to blame? You say that you trust they will not do so—then ask the Lord to make you a Christian, for then it will be more likely that your children will also be Christians. When you blame your children for wrongdoing, you ought to blame yourselves even more, for after all, what are they doing but what you yourself are doing?

Plato, the philosopher, one day saw a boy in the street behaving in a very shameful manner, so he walked straight into the house where the boy's father lived and began to beat him. When he said to Plato, "Why do you beat me?" the philosopher replied, "I found your boy doing wrong. I did not beat *him*, but I beat you, for he must have learned it from you, or else it was your fault because you did not exercise proper discipline upon him at home." Have you never felt, when you have seen the faults of your own children, that you ought to lay the rod on your own back because, in some way or other, you were an accomplice in your children's sins? How much of the ruin of many children's souls lies at their parents' door! How sad it is that in many cases the influence of the mother and father is damning to their children! Men and women who have boys and girls at home who are very dear to you—can you bear the thought that you may, one day, have to say, "Our unchristian example has ruined our own children"?

"Oh, but we are members of the Church," say some. Yes, I know you are, yet I speak to you as well as to others, for there are some of you who are bringing up your children in an improper manner. I do not see how they can be expected to love religion when they see your own household ordered so badly, or not ordered at all. The professor of religion who does not live consistently with his profession does more injury to the cause of Christ than a non-professor does! There are some who hang out the sign of, "The Angel," but the devil keeps the inn! Someone has truly said that many a man's house is like Noah's ark in that it is pitched within and

without with pitch. There is pitch in the dining-room—gluttony and drunkenness. And pitch in the bed-chamber—lasciviousness and wantonness. Pitch in the drawing-room—talk which is not even fit for the stables. And pitch in the shop, for much that is "dirty" goes on there. How can anyone expect good children to come out of such a house as that? May none of us, like Eli, be accomplices in our children's sins through neglecting to rebuke them, or like David, through our evil example leading them into sin! On the contrary, let us pray for them, as Abraham cried to the Lord, "O that Ishmael might live before You!" I like to present to God the petitions and pleas which are so well worded in that hymn in "*Our Own Hymn Book*" which is attributed to Rowland Hill—

"You, who a tender Parent are,
Regard a parent's plea—
Our offspring, with an anxious heart,
We now commend to Thee.
Our children are our greatest care,
A charge which You have given—
In all Your Graces let them share,
And all the joys of Heaven.
If a centurion could succeed,
Who for his servant cried,
Will You refuse to hear us plead
For those so near allied?
On us You have bestowed Your Grace,
Be to our children kind—
Among Your saints give them a place,
And leave not one behind."

The injunction of the text of course applies, in a measure, to the teacher of a class as well as to the parent of a family. If the teacher is inconsistent and his scholars imitate him, the guilt of their wrong-doing will, at least in part, rest upon the teacher. The same principle applies to all persons who are in positions of influence in the land. If I were preaching to the House of Commons and the House of Lords, I would probably have to say some things which they would not wish to hear again. Certain "honorable gentlemen" and "noble lords" talk very glibly about the necessity for the nation to be religious, yet their lives are not remarkably religious, so their talk is all hypocritical and great sin lies at their door! God will certainly punish princes and so-called "nobles" if their example is not such as the common people can safely follow.

But even though we may not be of royal or exalted rank, all of us will become "partakers of other men's sins" *if we set them bad examples.* If they can quote us as having done certain wrong things which they have imitated, we must share in the guilt of their sin. Yet it is always a bad thing to follow a bad example. If I see anyone's example to be bad, it ought not to be a temptation to me—and I am a partaker of that man's sins if, knowing that he has done amiss—I also do amiss simply because he has done so first. If I know that his course is wrong, I ought to shun the rock on which his boat has been wrecked.

We can also be "partakers of other men's sins" *by countenancing them* and there are many ways in which that may be done—for instance, by associating with ungodly men as though we did not think there was much harm in them. And worst of all, by laughing at and with them when their mirth is not pure fun. I fear that many a wicked man has been hardened in his sin because a professing Christian has laughed at his filthy jests.

We may also be "partakers of other men's sins" *by joining a church that holds unscriptural doctrines, or that does not act according to Apostolic precedent.* Some people say, "We belong to such-and-such a church, but we don't approve of its teaching or its practice." What? You belong to it and yet you do not approve of its principles? Out of your own mouth you are condemned! If I unite with a church whose creed and catechism I do not believe, and whose ordinances I do not practice, I am guilty of my own share in all the error that is there! It is no use for me to say, "I am trying to undo the mischief"—I have no business to be there! If I join a pirate's crew, I shall be responsible for all that is done by the whole crew. I have no business to be on that vessel at all and I must get off it at the first opportunity, or even fling myself into the sea rather than have a share in the pirates' wrongdoing!

But supposing you have joined a church whose doctrines are Scriptural, you may be "partakers of other men's sins" if the discipline of the church is not carried out as it should be. If we know that members are living in gross sin and do not deal with them either by way of censure or excommunication in accordance with the teaching of Christ and His Apostles, we become accomplices in their sin. I often tremble about this matter, for it is no easy task where we count our members by the thousands. But may we never wink at sin, either in ourselves or in others! May you all, Beloved, exercise a jealous oversight over one another and so help to keep one another right! And let each one pray Charles Wesley's prayer which we have often sung—

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

Further, we may be "partakers of other men's sins" *by not rebuking them for sinning* if it is our duty to do so, or *by not doing all we can towards their conversion.* For instance, by living in a certain neighborhood and never trying to bring the Gospel to the people in that neighborhood, or by not maintaining our consistent Christian walk as the separated people of God. In brief, let each one sing, from the heart, the rest of that hymn from which I began to quote just now—

"I need a principle within
Of jealous godly fear.
A sensibility of sin,
A pain to feel it near!
I need the first approach to feel
Of pride, or fond desire

To catch the wandering of my will,
And quench the kindling fire.
That I from You no more may part,
No more Your goodness grieve—
The filial awe, the fleshy heart,
The tender conscience give.
If to the right or left I stray,
That moment, Lord, reprove
And let me weep my life away,
For having grieved Your love.
Oh may the least omission pain
My well-instructed soul
And drive me to the blood again,
Which makes the wounded whole!"

II. I must not say more upon this part of the subject lest I should weary you. So I pass on to ask, in the second place, WHY SHOULD WE SEEK TO AVOID BEING PARTAKERS OF OTHER MEN'S SINS?

This will be a sufficient answer—*Because we have more than enough sins of our own and cannot also carry other people's. And also because if we are partakers in their sins, we shall also partake in their plagues.* And *because we do other men an injury by being accomplices with them—we steel and harden them in their sins.* The weightiest reason of all is this—we should not be "partakers of other men's sins" *because, by so doing, we should grieve our holy and gracious God*—and no true lover of Christ ought ever to do that! Remember what Paul wrote to the saints at Ephesus, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption."

III. My next question is—HOW CAN WE AVOID BEING PARTAKERS IN OTHER MEN'S SINS?

And I reply—Only by the help of God's Spirit! First, *be very jealous about other men's sins.* I wish all parents acted as wisely as Job did concerning his children. They went to one another's houses and feasted, so Job "rose up early in the morning and 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." O parents, do likewise, for that is the way to keep yourselves from participation in your children's sins!

Next to being thus jealous with a holy jealousy, *be always on the watch lest you should be "partakers in other men's sins."* The man who wants to avoid certain diseases will take care not to go to an infected house. So, go not where sinners go, lest you should catch the infection of their sin. Remember how careful Abraham was not to take anything from the King of Sodom, "from a thread even to a shoelace," even though it was his lawful share of the spoils of war. Be you equally careful concerning even the least sin.

The next way to keep from being an accomplice in sin is *by prayer.* Augustine used to offer a short prayer which I commend to you all, "O Lord, save me from my other men's sins!" Put this down among your other confessions, "O Lord, I confess unto you my other men's sins! I

mourn over my other men's sins, I repent of my other men's sins, I grieve on account of my participation in other men's sins." This will be a good way of keeping from committing them.

I think I had better close by saying that I do not think we have, any of us, escaped from the meshes of this sermon. If we have done so, it is either my fault or the fault of our own consciences. I have tried to fire red-hot shot in all directions, not omitting myself—and most of us have felt that there was a shot specially meant for us. What had we better do then? I will call to your minds a verse which we often sing and which we will again sing almost immediately—

"There is a Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins—
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains!"

We are all stained with at least splashes from other men's sins as well as our own, so let us all go to the Fountain and wash. Let us renew our faith in the precious blood of Jesus, for if we never had any faith in it before, may God graciously grant it to us now! If we had rebelled against the Queen and had been at last subdued by force—and if there had been an Act of Oblivion passed for all who wished to claim an interest in it—perhaps some would say to themselves, "We do not know that we took any great part in the rebellion, yet it may be that we did—and the safest thing for us all to do is to put down our names and so secure the benefit of the Act of Oblivion." So I, as one of the guilty ones, confessing that it is so, desire to say to the great King, "My Lord, I am guilty of sins of my own, sins of my children, sins of my servants, sins of my neighbors, sins of my Church and sins of my congregation—but You have said, 'I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.' You have promised to blot out all sin from those who believe in Jesus Christ, Your Son. Lord, I believe in Him, so I claim the benefit of that Act of Oblivion."

Dear Hearer, will not you say the same? Will you not now obey that Divine command, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth"? Though you have gone to the ends of the earth, yet God says to you, "Look unto Me, and be you saved." Look! *Look!* LOOK! It is little that you have to do! Indeed, it is nothing that *you* have to do, for God gives you Grace to do all that He requires of you. So trust in Him, rest in Him—the Lord help you to do so and then, whatever your sins may have been, though they may have been "as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." Though they may have been "red like crimson, they shall be as wool." God bless you and save you, for His name's sake! Amen.

Now let us all sing the verse that I quoted just now—

"There is a Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins—
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains"—

and let all who can sing it from the heart join in the well-known chorus—

"I do believe, I will believe,

That Jesus died for me!
That, on the Cross, He shed His blood
From sin to set me free!"

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 73.

You may have noticed that the 73rd Psalm and the 37th Psalm are on the same subject. It will help you to recall this fact if you remember that the figures are the same, only reversed.

Verse 1. *Truly God is good to Israel.* Settle that matter in your hearts. Whatever doubts may distress or disturb your mind, fix this point as certain— "Truly God is good to Israel."

1, 2. *Even to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well near slipped.* He was a good man, one of the leaders in Israel, yet he had to make this confession, "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well near slipped."

3, 4. *For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm.* Many of them have so stifled conscience that it does not trouble them even in that last dread hour—and they pass into eternity with blinded eyes, self-deluded to the last.

5. *They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.* They are not the children of God—and that is why they escape the rod of God. The rod is not for strangers, but for the children of the family. Yet the Psalmist began to envy these people because, said he, "they are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men."

6. *Therefore pride compasses them about as a chain.* They wear it gladly and think it to be an ornament.

6-9. *Violence covers them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens.* As though they would blow them down, as the wind blows the clouds that are full of rain.

9. *And their tongue walks through the earth.* Like the ravening lion of the pit, seeking characters that they may destroy or devour. There is no end to the mischief that such people can do. If they are not in trouble, they make much trouble for other people and while they set themselves on so high a pinnacle, they are mean enough to slander the characters of the good.

10. *Therefore his people return here: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them.* They have to drink of the bitter cup again and again—it seems to them to be always full. And the wicked have their full cup—filled, as it seems, with the juice from the very finest fruit!

11. *And they say, How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?* They admit that there is a God, but they ask, "What does He know, and how does He know?"

12-14. *Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.* It was one of his greatest sorrows that the more holy he was, the more troubled he seemed to be—and the more closely he endeavored to follow his God, the more it seemed as if God only frowned upon him. Yet the Psalmist's was no exceptional case, of which there is only one in all history—there have been many such and there are many such to this day!

15. *If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of your children.* You know that some people have made up a kind of proverb like this, "If you think it, you may as well speak it." But it is not so. Bad thoughts should never be spoken! If a man has a bottle of whisky in his house, or in his pocket, that is bad enough, but if the cork is never taken out, it will do no very great hurt to anybody. So if a man has evil thoughts but does not utter them, the mischief will not be so great as if he were to make them known to others.

16. *When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me.* He could not bear the thought of offending God's children, but at the same time, the problem itself, concerning the righteous and the wicked, until he could solve it, was too painful for him.

17. *Until I went into the sanctuary of God.* When he went into God's holy place—when he began to understand God's purposes and plans and looked beyond the present life into the dreadful future of the ungodly, he could say.

17. *Then I understood their end.* And understanding their end, his difficulty ceased, his puzzling problem was solved!

18. *Surely You did set them in slippery places.* As if they stood upon a ridge of ice from which they must slip down—who wishes to be lifted up upon an Alp of prosperity from which he may be dashed down at any moment? If you knew that there was a man standing on the top of the Cross of St. Paul's at this moment, I do not suppose that any of you would envy him—certainly I would not. Let him have a patent for standing there and let nobody else ever attempt it. And an ungodly man, in the elevated places of prosperity, is in such a perilous position that we need not envy him.

18. *You cast them down into destruction.* Down they go! If not in this life, yet in the next, and who will envy them then?

19, 20. *How they are brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awakes, so, O Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image.* When a man wakes up, the image that was before his mind, in his dream, is gone. And when God wakes up to judgment, these wicked men who were but as images in a night dream, shall pass away.

21. *Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins.* In the most tender and most vital parts of his being, he felt an inward and terrible pain.

22. *So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You.* Judging as the beast judges that can only see the little grass around itself, and fattens itself, knowing nothing of the shambles and of the butcher's knife that is being sharpened to kill it there. "So," says the Psalmist, "I was like that, I forgot about the future, I did not judge as an immortal being should judge concerning the infinite and the eternal, but I judged things as a beast might judge by the narrow compass of its little grazing ground.

23. *Nevertheless.* This phrase is most delightful, coming in connection with his previous confession, "I was as a beast before you. Nevertheless."

23. *I am continually with You: You have held me by my right hand.* That is your portion also, Christian! However few your pounds, however short your supplies, you are continually with God and He holds you by your right hand. Will you envy the ungodly after that?

24. *You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory.* There is where your chief possession lies, locked up in that which is marked, "Afterward." Not today, possibly not tomorrow, but, "afterward," is your inheritance! "Afterward You will receive me to Glory."

25. *Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You.* Here is the Christian's heavenly and earthly portion and treasure. He has his God, both here and hereafter—and this is better than all that can fall to the lot of the worldling!

26, 27. *My flesh and my heart fails; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. For, lo, they that are far from You shall perish: You have destroyed all them that go a whoring from You.* That is, setting their hearts on unlovely things and forgetting to love God.

28. *But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all Your works.* The Psalm ends jubilantly, as it began, though part of it had been in a minor key.

—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 GUILT AND THE CLEANSING
NO. 3056

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 8, 1865.

"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean:
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."
Psalm 51:7.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon on the same text is #1937, Volume 32—A MINGLED STRAIN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

You know how David had sinned. To the sin of adultery he had added that of murder. David felt like one who was shut out from God and was unworthy to approach Him. He could not be content to remain in such a condition. He longed to be reconciled to God and he remembered that he had sometimes seen a man who had the leprosy put out of the city as an unclean person, or he had seen one who had defiled himself by touching a corpse shut out for a time from all communion with those who drew near to worship God. "Ah," he thought, "that is just as I am—I am unworthy to appear before God, for I am spiritually unclean."

But David had also seen the priest take a basin full of blood and dip hyssop in it—and when the bunch of hyssop had soaked up the blood, he had seen the priest sprinkle the unclean person therewith and then say to him, "You are clean. You have admittance now to the worship of God. You can mingle with the great congregation—I pronounce you clean through the sprinkled blood." And David's faith, acting upon the telescopic principle, looked far down the ages and he saw the great atoning Sacrifice offered upon Calvary. And as he saw the Son of God bleeding for sins which were not His own, he desired that the blood of Christ might be applied to his conscience, feeling that it would take away his defilement and admit him into the courts of God's House and into the love of God's heart. And so he prayed this prayer, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean."

He felt, too, that sin was a very great defilement—that he was black and filthy—but he knew how he had often, when hunted like a wild goat among the mountains, stooped down to a cooling brook and washed away the dust and stain of travel in the running water and his face and hands had been clean again. And so, bowing down before God he sees, in the Sacrifice of Christ, a cleansing flood and his desire is expressed in these words, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." The words do not require any exposition—they require *application*. They do not need to be explained—they need to be offered up to God in prayer by broken-hearted suppliants!

There are two things I shall try to talk about, as God shall help me. The one is *that sin is a very foul thing*—David says, "Purge me." "Wash me." The other is *that the cleansing must be very great*—this process of sprinkling hyssop and of washing must be very potent, for he says, "I shall be clean." "I shall be whiter than snow."

I. First, then, a little about THE DEFILEMENT.

Sometimes it has been asked by unconverted men, "Why do you talk so much about Atonement? Why could not God be generous and forgive sin outright? Why should He require the shedding of blood and the endurance of great suffering?" Sinner, if you had a right sense of sin you would never ask such a question! In asking that question you speak upon the supposition that God is such an One as yourself. But He hates sin. He sees in sin such loathsomeness as you have never dreamed of! There is, to Him, such horrible abomination, such a heinousness, such a detestableness and uncleanness about sin that He could not pass it by. If He did, He would bring upon His own Character the suspicion that He was not holy. Had God passed by human sin without a substitutionary Sacrifice, the seraphim would have Suspended their song, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts." The judge who winks at sin is the abettor of sin. If the supreme Ruler does not punish sin, He becomes Himself the patron of all guilt and sin may take its rest beneath the shadow of His wings! But it is not so and, Sinner, God would have you know, and have angels know—and have devils know that however lightly any of His creatures may think of sin—and however foolishly simple man may toy with it—He knows what a vile thing it is and He will have no patience with it! "He will by no means spare the guilty."

I have heard it said by persons looking at the subject from another point of view, that the preaching of full forgiveness through the Savior's blood, to the very chief of sinners, is apt to make men think lightly of sin—that, when we tell them—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One,
There is life at this moment"—

for every soul that looks at Christ, we do, in effect, find a plaster for men's wounded consciences which, when thus healed, will only aid and abet them in going to sin again. How untrue this is! A moment's reflection will show you. We tell the sinner that God never does gratuitously pass by a single sin and that pardon never could have come to one man of Adam's race had it not been procured by the tremendous griefs of the Savior who stood in men's place. Our own belief is that all the proclamations of the Law of God and all the threats of judgment that were ever thundered forth by the most Boanerges-like of ministers, never did show man so much the vileness of sin as the preaching of this one great Truth of God—"The Lord has caused to meet on Him the iniquity of us all. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." That is the great condemnation of sin—the Savior's death! Never

is God dressed in such resplendent robes of glorious holiness as when He is smiting sin as it is laid upon His only-begotten Son! Having lifted it from sinners and laid it upon Christ, He does not spare it because of the worthiness of the Person to whom it is imputed. He smites and crushes it with His full force and fury till the oppressed Victim cries out, "Behold, and see if there is any sorrow like unto My sorrow which is done unto Me when Jehovah has afflicted Me in the day of His fierce anger."

Let us now turn this subject over a little—the *guilt* of sin. We think that the Atonement sets forth that guilt most thoroughly—let this Truth of God reach the ears of every unpardoned man and woman here. It appears that there is nothing but blood that will ever wash your sin away—the blood of Christ, the blood of God's dear Son—this cleanses us from all sin, but nothing ease can. The blackness of your sin will appear, then, if you recollect that *all the creatures in the universe could not have taken one of your sins away.* If all the holy angels in Heaven had performed the best service that they could render, they could not have taken away even one of your sins! If the great archangel had left his station near the Throne of God's Glory and had been led into a deep abyss of suffering, all that he could have done would not have been a drop in the bucket compared with what would be required to take away one single sin, for sin is such an enormous evil that no created being could remove it! And even if all the saints on earth could have ceased to sin and could unceasingly have praised God day and night, yet there is not merit enough in all their songs to blot out one single offense of one single sinner! No, let me go further. Could your tears and the tears of all created intelligences, "no respite know." Could the briny drops—

"Forever flow—
All for sin could not atone."

No, I will go a step lower. The pains of the damned in Hell are no atonement for sin! They suffer in *consequence* of sin, but no atonement has been made by them, for all they have suffered has not lessened what they have to suffer. And when ten thousand times ten thousand years shall have rolled over their poor accursed heads, they will be just as far off having satisfied Divine Justice as they are now, for sin is such a dreadful thing that even Tophet cannot burn it up, though "the pile thereof is fire and much wood," and though "the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, does kindle it." Sin is cast into its flames and men suffer there—but all the burnings of Gehenna never did consume a single sin—and never could! Think of that! Earth, Heaven and Hell could never take away a single sin from a single soul!

None but Christ could do it and even Christ Himself could not do it unless He became a Man. It was absolutely necessary that the Substitute for human sin should be of the same nature as the offender. Christ must therefore be born of Mary that He might become Man. Man must suffer, for man had sinned. As in Adam all died, so in another Adam must all be made alive if they were ever to be made alive at all. They fell by one man, so they must rise by another Man, or else never rise. *But even the Man Christ Jesus, in association with the Godhead, could not have taken away*

your sins unless He had died. I never read in Scripture that all that He did in His life could take away sin. The Savior's life is the robe of righteousness with which His people are covered, but that is not the bath in which they are washed. The whole life of Christ—all His preaching upon the mountains, all His fasting in the wilderness, all His travail in birth for souls, yes, all His bloody sweat, all His scourging, all the shame and the spitting that He endured could not have saved your soul, or take away one sin, for it is written, "Without shedding of blood is no remission" of sin. Think of this, Sinner! To take out that one sin of yours, if you had only one sin, the Infinite must become an Infant and the Immortal must yoke Himself with mortality! And then, in that position, and in that condition, He must become "obedient unto death," or else not one sin on your part could ever be removed from your soul!

But I want you to go with me further than this. Christ Himself, in His death, could not have taken away one sin if it had not been for *the peculiar form of death which He endured.* He had to be crucified and then Paul could write, "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. Christ must, therefore, hang upon a tree that He might be cursed—and there is no man who ever lived who can tell what is meant by that expression—that Christ was cursed. If all the mighty orators who have moved the Christian Church at once to tears and to joy, could stand here, I would defy them to weigh this burden of the Lord, or estimate its tremendous meaning, "Christ was made a curse for us." Christ a curse! Jehovah-Tsidkenu a curse! Jesus, the darling of the Father, made a curse! He, who "counted it not robbery to be equal with God," a curse! O angels, you may well marvel at this mystery, for its astounding depths you cannot fathom! Yet so it is. "He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

And this leads me to mention what I think is surely the climax here, that although Christ died the death of the Cross, even then *He could not have taken any sin away unless it had been expressly ordained and settled that He therein did Himself take our sin as well as our curse*—and did therein stand before God, though in Himself personally innocent—as if He had been a sinner and there suffer, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." There is that black, that hideous, that damning, that everlasting soul-destroying thing called sin! Jehovah-Jesus sees it on His people. He knows that they can never be with Him where He is while that sin rests on them and He also knows that there is no way by which they can be freed from it except by His taking it. Can you picture the scene? He takes that terrible, that cursed, that Hell-kindling, that Hell-feeding thing—that fuel of the eternal Pit, that object of eternal Wrath—He takes that sin upon Himself and now what does sin seem to say? It is imputed to Christ and it seems to hide itself behind Christ—and it says to God, "O God, You hate me, but You cannot reach me here. Here I am! I am Your enemy, but there is between us an impassable barrier." Now, what will become of sin? Hear this, you sinners who still

have your sins resting upon you! What will become of sin? God says, "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, says the Lord of Hosts: smite the Shepherd." And the sword did smite Him, so that Christ cried out, "All Your waves and Your billows are gone over Me." And He uttered that dreadful shriek, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" in unutterable depths of anguish because God had turned away His face and smitten Him in His fierce anger, pounded Him as in a mortar, trampled on Him as in the wine-press, crushed Him as in the olive-press, broke Him between the upper and the nether millstones of His awful wrath made Him to drink the whole cup dry and caused Him to suffer—

"All that Incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, but none to spare."

So you see that before even one sin can be pardoned, Christ must suffer what that sin deserves, or something tantamount thereunto by which Divine Holiness shall be cleared of all stain. Then what an awfully evil thing sin must be! Yet you will see her standing at the corner of the street, with a smiling face, trying to allure you. But shake your head at her and say, "No, no! The Savior bled because of you!" And you will see sin sparkling in the wine-cup, but look not on it when it is red, and moves itself aright, but say unto it, "O Sin, I loathe you, for you did open my Savior's veins and cause His precious blood to flow!" It is easy to get black by sin, but remember that it is so hard to get clean that only God's Omnipotence, in the Person of Christ, could provide a Cleanser for your sins!

And now, Sinner, I say this word to you, yet some will go and mock it. I cannot make you see the filthiness of sin. You think it a mere trifling thing. God Almighty, you say, is very merciful, forgetting how tremendously just He is. But though I cannot make you see sin, yet I can leave this Truth with you—you will one day feel what sin means unless you repent of it, for He that spared not His own Son will not spare you! If the Judge upon the Throne of God smote Christ, who had no sin of His own—smote Him so sternly for other men's sins—what will He do with you? If He spared not His Beloved Son, what will He do with His enemies? If the fire burned up Christ, how will it burn up you? O you who are out of Christ—without God and without hope—what will you do? What will you do when God shall put on His robe of thunder and come forth to deal with you in His wrath? Beware, beware, you that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you! "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little."

I want you to take this prayer now. I have tried to bring out the meaning of it. You are thus black, so pray to God, "Purge me with blood: apply it by Your Holy Spirit, as the priest applied to the leper the blood upon the bunch of hyssop. 'Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.'"

II. And now we shall have a few words upon THE POWER OF THE CLEANSING.

Whom can it cleanse? That is the first question. David answers it, for he says, "It can cleanse *me*." He meant himself. I would not exaggerate David's sin, but it was a very frightful one. What could be more dreadful than for a man so highly-favored, who had so much of the Light of God, so much communion with God and who stood so high as a light in the midst of the nation to commit two crimes so accursed as those which we must lay at his door—adultery and murder? While my blood runs chill at the very thought of his having committed them, yet in my soul I am glad that the Holy Spirit ever permitted such a black case to stand on record! What an encouragement to seek pardon it has been to many who have sinned as foully as David did! If you can bend your knees and pray David's prayer, you shall get David's answer! "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean." What if you have even defiled your neighbor's wife? What if you have even struck your neighbor to his heart and left him dead upon the earth? These two crimes will damn you to all eternity unless you shall find pardon for them through the blood of Jesus—and there is pardon for them there! If you look up to where that blood is streaming from the hands and feet and side of Jesus. If you trust your broken spirit in His hands, there is pardon for your crimson sins to be had right now! Is there a harlot here? O poor fallen woman, I pray that Christ may so forgive you that you will wash His feet with your tears and wipe them with the hairs of your head! Is there a thief here? Men say that you will never be reclaimed, but I pray the same Eternal Mercy which saved the dying thief to save the living thief! Have I any here who have cursed God to His face a thousand times? Return unto your God, for He comes to meet you! Say to Him, "Father, I have sinned." Bury your head in His bosom! Receive His kiss of forgiveness, for God delights to pardon and to blot out transgression. Now that He has smitten Christ, He will not smite any sinner who comes to Him through Christ. His wrath is gone and He can now say, "Fury is not in Me." Here, then, is a great wonder—that Christ's precious blood can cleanse the vilest of the vile and you may now pray the prayer of the text, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean."

From what can it cleanse? I dare not mention every kind of sin, but there is no sin from which it cannot cleanse. What a precious Truth of God that is, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." During this last week I have been with Brother Offord conducting Prayer Meetings. And he told, one evening, a tale which I made him tell every evening afterwards, for I thought it so good. He said there was a poor man living in Dartmoor who had been employed during the summer in looking after horses, cows and so on, that were turned out on the moor. He was a perfect heathen and never went to a place of worship, perhaps, since he was a child. For him there was no Sabbath. After a time, he grew very ill. He was over 60 years of age and, having nothing to live upon, he went into the workhouse. While he was there, it pleased the mysterious Spirit to make him uneasy as to his soul. He felt that he must die and the old man had just enough Light of God to let him see that if he *did* die, all was wrong with regard to a future state. He had a

little grandchild who lived in a neighboring town—Plymouth, I think it was—and he asked leave for his grandchild to come in to see him every day. As he was very ill and near death, that was allowed. She came in and he said to her, "Read the Bible to me, Dear." She complied and the more she read, the more wretched the old man grew. "Read again," he said. The more she read, the more dark his mind seemed to be with a sense of guilt.

At last, one day, she came to that passage in the first Epistle of John—you know it—"The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." "Is that there?" he asked. "Yes, Grandfather," replied the little girl, "that is there." "*Is* that there?" "Oh, yes, Grandfather, it is there." "Then read it again! Read it again!" She again read, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." "My Dear, are you sure it is just like that?" "Yes, Grandfather." "Then read it again, Dear." "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." "Then," he said, "take my finger and put it on that verse. Is it on that text, Child?—is my finger on that blessed text?" "Yes, Grandfather." "Then," he said, "tell them," (alluding to his friends) "that I die in the faith of that!"—and he closed his eyes and doubtless entered into eternal rest. And *I* will die in the faith of that Truth of God, by the Grace of God—and so will you, I trust, Brothers and Sisters, die with your finger on that text, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses *us* from *all* sin." Oh, it is sweet living and it is sweet dying if you can rest there! Now we see, then, that whatever your sins may have been, they are all included in those little words, "*all sin*"—therefore be of good comfort, poor Sinner—if you believe in Jesus Christ, you are born of God and His blood cleanses you from all sin!

Another question is, *When will it cleanse?* It will cleanse *now.* It will cleanse at this moment! You remember that it is in the present tense, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, *cleanses*"—that is to say, just at this particular moment, some three or four minutes to eight o'clock—there is efficacy in the precious blood of Jesus to cleanse *now.* You need not stop till you get home to pray. He who trusts Christ is saved the moment that he trusts! His sin is blotted out the instant that he accepts Christ as his Substitute and justifies God in smiting sin in the Person of the Savior. There is efficacy in the blood now! Perhaps there has strayed in here one who says, "It is too late." Who told you that? Sir, it was the devil—and he was a liar from the beginning! "Ah," says another, "but you do not know that I have sinned against the Light of God and knowledge." My dear Friend, I do not know how much you have sinned, but I do know that it is written, "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." And I know that you have not gone beyond the uttermost, so I conclude that He is able to save *you*—right now, just as you are, standing in yonder crowd, or sitting here in these pews!

Once more—*In what way is Christ able thus to cleanse?* I answer—In a perfect and complete way! David says, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." We do not see snow very often, now, but when we did see it

last time, what a dazzling whiteness there was upon it! You took a sheet of paper and laid it upon the snow and you were perfectly surprised to see the clean, white paper turned yellow or brown in comparison with the snow's dazzling whiteness! But David says, "I shall be whiter than snow." You see, snow is only earthly whiteness, only *created* whiteness, but the whiteness which Christ gives us when He washes us in His blood, is Divine whiteness! The whiteness is the righteousness of God Himself! Besides, snow soon melts and then where is the whiteness? The snow and the whiteness run away together, but there is no power in temptation, no power in sin which is able to stain the whiteness which God gives to a pardoned sinner! And then snow, especially here in this, our smoky city, soon gets brown or black—but this righteousness never will—

"No age can change its glorious hue—
The robe of Christ is always new!"

"And is this perfect whiteness for *me*?" asks one. Yes, for you, if you believe in Jesus! If you were as black as the devil himself, if you did but believe in Jesus, you should be as white as an angel in a moment because, by believing, you accept God's way of saving souls—and to do this is the greatest thing that can be done! The Pharisees came to Christ and they said, making a great fuss about their zeal, "Here is our money. Here is our talent. Here is our time—'what shall we do, that we might work the works of God?'" They opened their ears for His answer and they thought He would say, "Give tithing of mint, anise and cummin. Be careful to wash your hands every time you eat. Give your money to the poor. Endow a row of almshouses. Become monks. Lacerate your backs. Tear your flesh," and so on. But Jesus said nothing of the kind! They wondered, I have no doubt, what He was going to say and they seemed to be all on tiptoes. "Now He is going to tell us the greatest work that a creature can do." "What shall we do that we might work the works of God." He answers them thus—"This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent." Ah, then they went away, directly, for no such simple thing, no such humbling thing as this would they do! Perhaps there are some of you who say, "Why don't you preach morality?" "Talk of morality!" Says Cowper—

"O You bleeding Lamb,
The best morality is love of You"—

and so, indeed, it is! If I were to tell you that I was commissioned by God to say that if you walked from here to John o'Groat's House in the cold and wet, bare-footed and ate nothing on the way but dry bread and drank nothing but water, you would inherit eternal life, you would all be on the road tomorrow morning, if not tonight! But when I say just this, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," what do you do, then? Are you such a fool as to be damned because the way to be saved is too simple? My anger waxes hot against you, that you should play the fool with your own soul and be damned because it is too easy! Think of a man who has a disease that is killing him and he will not take the medicine because it is too simple. He will not apply to the physician because his terms are too cheap. He will not apply such-and-such a

remedy because it is too simple! Then when that man dies, who can pity him? Did he not reject the remedy from the worst and emptiest of all motives?

"Oh!" says one, "but, simple as it is, it seems too hard for me—I cannot believe!" Sinner, what can you not believe? Can you not believe that if Jesus Christ took human sin and was punished for it, God can be just in forgiving it? Why, you *can* surely believe *that*! You say that you cannot believe, that is, you cannot *trust* Christ! Why, poor Soul, I should find it the hardest work in the world if I were to try *not* to trust Him, for He is such a precious Savior, such a mighty Savior that I can say with John Hyatt that I would not only trust Him with my one soul, but with a million souls if I had them! Yet it may be that you do not understand what believing is. It is not *doing* anything! It is leaving off doing. It is just believing that Christ did it all—

"Nothing, either great or small,
Nothing, Sinner, no—
Jesus did it, did it all
Long, long ago!"

Christ is worthy of being trusted. Rely upon Him! God give you the Grace to do so and you are saved! Remember what we said the other night—there is all the difference in the world between the religion that is made up of, "Do, do," and that other religion that is spelt "D-o-n-e, done." He who has the religion of, "It is all done," loves God out of *gratitude* and serves Him because he is saved. But he who has the religion of "Do" is always a slave, never gets salvation, but perishes in his doings—as they deserve to do who will look to themselves instead of looking to Christ! May the Lord now command His own blessing for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 51.

May God graciously grant to all of us the Grace which shall enable us to enter into the penitential spirit which is so remarkable in this Psalm!

Verse 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God.* David breaks the silence at last and he does so by crying to God for mercy! Before he says anything else, he appeals to this attribute of mercy which is so glorious a trait in the Character of Jehovah. And he casts himself, all guilty as he is, upon the absolute mercy of God. "Have mercy upon me, O God."

1. *According to Your loving kindness: according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.* David talks as if the Lord had said to him, "What is the measure of the mercy that you need?" And he knows of nothing by which he can measure it except the boundless and infinite loving kindness of the Lord. "O God!" he seems to say, "deal out mercy to me according to the measure of Your own boundless Nature. Let Your mercy be the only judge of the mercy that I need."

2. *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity.* The forgiveness of sin is not enough for the true penitent. He needs the defilement which he has incurred through sin to also be removed. If washing will not suffice, he

asks the Lord to try any other method that will accomplish the desired end.

2. *And cleanse me from my sin.* "If fire is needed to purify me, use fire, O Lord, only 'cleanse me from my sin.'"

3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is always before me.* David felt that there was a multitude of transgressions recorded against him in God's unerring register, yet he especially realized the guilt of that one sin which Master Trapp calls the devil's nest-egg, to which so many other sins were added. That first sin was a peculiarly foul one, but he added lying, deception and murder to it in order to try to cover it—and thus he made it even greater than it was at first. It was well that he confessed that great sin which was *always* before him.

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.* "The essence, the virus, the climax of my sin consists in its assault upon You, my God. Therefore, O God, if You condemn me, You will be just! There is nothing that can be said against the severest verdict of Your Infallible Justice. Yet, O God, I still appeal to Your mercy and pray You to forgive me and to put away all my sin!"

5. *Behold.* David is full of astonishment and amazement! His one great sin has opened his eyes to see the sinfulness of his whole nature.

5. *I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.* "I was 'shaped in iniquity' when I was shaped, and conceived in sin when I was conceived." He sees that the sin is in *himself* and that it does not happen to him as an accident, but flows from him as naturally as foul water runs from a polluted spring!

6. *Behold.* Here are more wonders.

6. *You desire truth in the inward parts.* First he wondered when he saw how sinful he was. Now he wonders as he sees the purity which God demands—"You desire truth in the inward parts."

6, 7. *And in the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop.* "O Lord, You have ordained means by which leprous sinners may be cleansed. The outward sign is the bunch of hyssop dipped in sacrificial blood. O Lord, give me in very deed what that sign means! Give me the cleansing influence of the blood of the great Sacrifice. 'Purge me with hyssop.'"

7. *And I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* I cannot help once more remarking, though I have often before made the same observation, that we have here the evidence of wonderful faith on David's part. He has a very real consciousness of the blackness of his sin, yet he also has a triumphant conviction that God can put that sin away and can make even his defiled nature to become clean and pure—"Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

8. *Make me to hear joy and gladness.* How late in the Psalm that prayer comes! He writes seven verses before he dares to pray for joy and gladness. And those seven verses are all either confessions of sin or petitions for deliverance from sin and, my sinful Friend, you must not first seek to get rid of your sorrow, but rather be thankful for your sorrow

for sin and pray that you may never lose that sorrow until you lose the sin that causes it. "Make me to hear joy and gladness."

8. *That the bones which You have broken may rejoice.* If God's children fall into sin, the Lord does not wink at their sin—He chastises them so severely that He sometimes even breaks their bones! But God's pardoning mercy can set those bones and make each broken and mended bone to become a mouth for holy song—"that the bones which You have broken may rejoice."

9. *Hide Your face from my sins.* "Do not look at them, O Lord! Even take pains to put them out of Your sight."

9. *And blot out all my iniquities.* "Obliterate them as though they had been written upon tablets of wax and You did, with a hot iron, put the whole record of them away—'blot out all my iniquities.'"

10. *Create in me a clean heart, O God.* He feels that he needs his Creator to again perform His great creating work. David knows that he needs a clean heart, but he does not ask the Lord to make his heart clean—he knows better than to present that request. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," so David's cry to God is, " 'Create in me a clean heart'—let it be a *new creation*—give me a new heart and a clean heart."

10. *And renew a right spirit within me.* There was once a right spirit in man, but through sin, it has lost its beauty, its tenderness, its delicacy, its sensitiveness, its holiness. So each one of us needs to pray, "O God, renew a right spirit within me!"

11. *Cast me not away from Your Presence.* "I cannot bear to be away from Your Presence. I must see Your face or I cannot live."

11-13. *And take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; and uphold me with Your free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto You.* One of our proverbs says, "A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind." And he who knows by bitter experience what sin is, talks tenderly and sympathetically to his fellow sinners—and God is sure to bless such earnest personal testimony—and so sinners will be constrained to turn unto Him.

14. *Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, You God of my salvation.* He called his sin by its right name. He knew that he had really been the murderer of Uriah, so he confesses his guilt in all its hideousness. "Deliver me from bloods (see marginal reading), O God, You God of my salvation." It is remarkable that when David confesses his sin in the strongest language that he can use, he at the same time lays hold upon God with the boldest faith that he can exercise. So, the deeper the sense of sin in us is, the stronger can the Grace of God make our faith to be!

14. *And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.* Should not David have said, "My tongue shall sing aloud of Your *mercy*"? That would have been quite right, yet David knew that God had a way of bestowing His mercy in complete consistency with His righteousness—and this being the more amazing part of Divine forgiveness, the most astonishing

wonder of all, he selects that and says, "My tongue shall sing aloud of Your *righteousness.*"

15. *O Lord, open You my lips.* In the eighth verse, he had prayed, "Make me to hear," and now he does as good as say, "Make me to speak." Sin puts all the organs of the human body out of order and Grace is needed to put them all right again. "O Lord, open You my lips."

15, 16. *And my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You desire not sacrifice.* The offering of bulls, lambs and rams amid the pomp of priestly ritual. "You desire not sacrifice."

16, 17. *Else would I give it: You delight not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit.* This is all sacrifices put into one and the man who brings a bleeding heart to God is accepted when the one who brings a bleeding bull is rejected! But he who brings a bleeding Savior brings the best Sacrifice of all!

17, 18. *A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. Do good in Your good pleasure unto Zion.* David seems to say, "Whatever You do with me, O God, do bless Your people!"

18. *Build You the walls of Jerusalem.* "My sin has helped to pull them down and so has done great mischief, but, O Lord, will You not undo the mischief that I have done and build again the walls of Your Zion?"

19. *Then shall You be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bulls upon Your altar.* Never do men give so freely to the cause of God as when they are rejoicing over pardoned sin! Keep a deep sense of your indebtedness to God alive in your soul and you will feel that you can never do enough for Him who has forgiven you so much!

—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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FOLLOWING CHRIST
NO. 3057

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1907.

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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 11, 1873.

"What is that to you? You follow Me."
John 21:22.

[Other sermons by Mr. Spurgeon on FOLLOWING CHRIST are as follows—#403, Volume 7—THE BROKEN COLUMN; #1530, Volume 26—FOLLOWING THE RISEN CHRIST; #2273, Volume 38—FICKLE FOLLOWERS and #2324, Volume 39—THE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB—
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ONLY a moment or two before, our Lord had said to Peter, "Follow Me," yet He found it necessary to repeat that command from which it is clear that the Lord Jesus, Himself, might be here and might speak to us in the most plain terms and yet His words might not make the impression upon our hearts that we sometimes think they would. Yet even though Jesus Christ Himself should speak to us, we should not feel the full force of His words unless the Spirit of God applied them to our hearts. This reflection may teach us not to indulge in idle regrets that Jesus is not here now in bodily Presence, or to say, "I wish that I had been living on the earth in Christ's day." The fact is, if the Holy Spirit shall bless the word that is spoken to you by the humblest Christian alive, it may be quite as useful to your soul as though the Master, Himself, had been here and the Truth of God had fallen upon your ears direct from His own lips!

Peter's mind seems to have been distracted from the command to follow the Savior by a very simple incident. "Turning about," it is said, he saw John following—and the sight of his fellow disciple awakened his curiosity and he put to the Master the speculative inquiry as to John's future, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" To which the Master replied, in the words of my text, "What is that to you? You follow Me." This teaches us that the presence of even the holiest man may sometimes call us off from following our Master. It is certain that thousands of serious impressions have been lost through idle chit-chat after sermons. The Sabbath's services lose many of their benefits to us through the common habit of talking on the way home from a place of worship about anything and everything rather than the one subject that ought to engross our minds. Some of the best people in the world may, involuntarily, turn our minds from that line of thought in which the Savior would have them run, so let us constantly pray, "O Lord, keep our eyes, keep our ears, keep our hearts from wandering away from You for, if not, we shall soon forget the sound even of Your own voice and the impressions which may have been made upon us!"

I think we have greater reason to ask the Lord to impress more deeply upon us the Truth of God we have received than to ask Him to give us more Truth, for what we already know might suffice us if we did but know it better. And if we kept in mind the things which we have already heard, we might almost be satisfied even if we heard no more. One sermon a Sunday, really cut into the soul as with the point of a diamond, would be of more real, permanent value to us than two sermons which we hear, but speedily forget because we happen to meet an acquaintance on our way home, or have our thoughts diverted by some other simple means.

Dear Friends, do not let our thoughts be thus diverted at this time, but let us come to the principal point and keep to it. And that point is this—that *the main business of our life is to follow Jesus.* And, secondly, *to effect this, we had better avoid all idle speculations*—and indeed, questions not altogether idle had better be left alone that we may keep to the one main business of our life. *The reasons for doing this* are very clear—and with them I shall close my discourse.

I. First, then, THE MAIN BUSINESS OF OUR LIFE IS TO FOLLOW THE LORD.

I can truly say to every one of you that the main thing you have to do in this world is first to follow Christ until you find Him as your Savior or, in other words, the first thing for you to do is to look to Him, to trust in Him. We live in vain if we do not live unto God and if we do not live by faith in Jesus Christ, the one and only Savior. "Live in vain," did I say? It were better for you, dear Hearers, and for me, that we had never been born if we should live and die without faith in Jesus Christ! You may neglect your business, you may neglect what you will—but do not neglect your souls. First, *first,* FIRST—beyond and before everything else—must be the matter of your own personal salvation! On board a vessel that is going down, a man may forget his luggage and many precious treasures that he has with him. It is for his life that he is concerned. Even Satan spoke the truth for once when he said, "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life." Let it be so with you in the highest sense. Make your soul your first care, for what shall it profit you if you gain the whole world and lose your own soul? So the first thing for you to do is to follow Christ for life, for salvation—looking to Him by faith, in obedience to the Apostolic command, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

Procrastination often comes in to cause the solemnities of the Gospel to seem less serious. "There is plenty of time," we say. "We are quite young as yet and we have many years in which to think of these things." Where the sere and yellow leaf is beginning to fall, there is something else to put away thoughts of eternity. There is another daughter to be married, so a few more hundreds of pounds must be saved up for her. And then when you have retired to your country house, you will think about "making your peace with God"—as if it were nothing to you that you are "condemned already" because you have "not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God," and as if it were a matter of no importance to be an enemy of God and to be unsaved for 50 or 60 years

of sin—as if it were a small thing to have the leprosy of sin still eating into your immortal spirits! Why, if there were no Hell, sin would be, to a right-minded man, such a vile thing that he would long to escape from it and dread it as he now dreads the pains of Hell. Oh, that all here had even half such a sense as Christ had of the solemnity of the things of which I am speaking! That would drive us to our knees and we would not dare to go out of this house unsaved—and all through this building we would hear the cry that arose on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Keeping more closely to my text, I have to say that *after we are saved, the main business of our life is still to follow Christ.* When sin is pardoned and the eternal safety of the soul is ensured, the next thing is to seek the purity of the soul and to secure a character that shall be worth having throughout eternity. There is no character which is worth having which is not fashioned according to the Character of Christ. He is absolute perfection! In Him is nothing redundant and from Him nothing is omitted which ought to be there. To be perfect, we must be like Jesus. "Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith," we are to conquer this sin and to overcome that passion and, in the power of God's Spirit, to cultivate this tender Grace and that other bolder virtue! The one thing we are to aim at is to tread in Christ's footsteps, to do what He did and, as far as He is imitable by us, to do it as He did it and to be as He was in the midst of the sons and daughters of men. If I am a Christian, I am not to be following Calvin, or Arminius, or any other earthly leader—I am to mold my doctrinal opinions, my thoughts, words, character and acts after the model of Christ's!

The same Law applies to the whole of our life-service. If we would do what we were created to do—if, being trees of God's planting, we are to bear the fruit He meant us to bear, we must follow Jesus Christ! We are sent into the world, under Him, upon the great errand of seeking the lost—

"'Tis all our business here below
To cry, 'Behold the Lamb!'"

—some from the pulpit, but every Christian from some place or other. To each individual Believer, Christ has given a position which nobody else can so well occupy and from that position he can influence some other person or persons whom God will bless through him. I do not believe that any Christian was created merely to keep a shop—he was created to serve God in his trading. Notwithstanding all man's sin, a man is such a noble work of God that he cannot have been intended merely to measure off yards of silk, or to weigh pounds of sugar, or to sweep street crossings, or to put on crowns, robes and diamonds. There is something grander than that for man to do! The little birds are made to sing God's praises and I, who am of more value than many sparrows, must be meant to sing God's praises too! This is especially true concerning us who profess to have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ and to have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Our life has an outlook towards the Infinite—there are windows in our life that look towards God. Look out of them, O Christian! With your windows open towards

God, live in the light of His Countenance and seek in all things to please and honor Him! It is your life-work to honor God, to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, to be the instrument by which God shall illustrate His almighty power—the black foil from which He shall display the brightness of His Grace. You are to be the means of spreading abroad in this world the savor of Christ's name—but you cannot do this unless you follow Christ.

And, mark you, for each one of us there is a special vocation in which we can follow Christ. I do not believe that all of you would be following Christ if you were to attempt to preach. Even Christ never attempted to do what His Father did not intend Him to do. A man once asked Him to officiate as a lawyer or a judge, but He replied, "Who made Me a judge or a divider over you?" One beauty of Christ's life was that He kept to His calling and did not go beyond His commission. And you will be wise if you do the same. If you are a servant, you can follow Christ by ministering to the comfort of all who are in the house. If you are a mother, you can follow Christ by training up your children for Him. Every man has his own particular calling and every Christian's calling should be especially for God. One is called to the foreign mission field—let him go, in God's name, to the regions beyond—let him not stay at home. Another is called to go from house to house to visit the sick, to care for the poor and so on—Bible-woman, City Missionary, I greet you in Christ's name and bid you keep to your own work and never run away from it! One is called to teach an infant class and another to care for the lads or the lasses—and all are fitted for the work to which they are called by God. And to each one the Master says, "Follow Me and keep to the work which My Father has given you to do, even as I pleased not Myself by selecting My own work, but did that which My Father had appointed for Me."

II. Now secondly, IN ORDER TO FOLLOW CHRIST IT WILL BE A WISE THING TO LET A GREAT MANY OTHER THINGS ALONE.

Peter wanted to know about John—"What shall this man do?" But Jesus said, "What is that to you? You follow Me." From this answer of Christ, we learn that *we are not to be curious as to what God is going to do with other people.* I will tell you what thoughts have been passing through the minds of some of us. One has said, "I am a poor humble believer in Jesus. I have to struggle with poverty and need, yet God graciously helps me and I can tell of many instances of His delivering mercy." Well, dear Friend, God is greatly glorified by this testimony! But when you go on to ask about those rich people who have everything that heart can wish, "What is God going to do with them?" I can only reply, "What is that to you? Follow you Christ and be not curious about others." It is equally wrong if a rich man says, "There are those poor people who are converted, but who cannot give much to the cause of God and who need education to enable them to teach others—what will the Lord do with them?" That is nothing to do with you, my Brother. You have to follow the Lord, yourself, and to mind your own business! Someone else says, "There's such-and-such a man—really, I can't see any ability in him! He tried to preach the other day and I was glad when

he stopped, for it was very poor talk." I must confess that I have sometimes felt like that when I have listened to a friend, but I have said to myself, "What is that to me? God knows His own servants better than we do and He knows where to place them, and how to use them to the best advantage." Possibly, someone says, concerning a fine orator, "A man who blazes away at that rate thinks too much of himself for God to bless him." But Christ says, "What is that to you? You follow Me." God has all sorts of stones in His Temple and some of them are of such a strange shape that I am glad the placing of them is not left to me, for I could not do it! I am thankful that God never sent me into the world to make people perfect, but to use them as I find them. And I believe that He also uses them as He finds them and gradually prepares them for higher uses and for the place which He means them to occupy in His Temple above. So do not say, "I am wondering what this man will do and what that man will do, and what others around me will do"—but do what you can for Christ and, as for others—leave them to the Master!

Further, *this rule also applies to the character of others.* How much some people are concerned because a certain man is so purse proud! It seems to be a sort of consolation to them to think how much better they are than he is. Another is very frivolous and they frequently bring his character into their conversation, apparently as a means of showing how superior in sobriety they are. To everyone of that stamp, Christ seems to me to say, "'What is that to you? You follow Me,' and then the imperfections of your neighbor will not lie so near to your heart." I have heard of a minister who, wishing to bring the Truth of God home to the hearts and consciences of his people, said that he should like to pass a Reform Act—that everybody should reform one person and then all would be reformed. He meant that they should all reform *themselves*, but one man said, "The minister is quite right! Everybody is to reform one and I am going home to reform our Mary." That is often our idea—that we must reform *somebody else*—but if we could bring ourselves to feel that weeding our own garden, watering our own plants and fulfilling our own vocation is what God requires of us, how much better it would be for the entire Church of Christ!

I think the same rule applies, to a large extent, to *remarks concerning the general condition of Christian Churches.* There are some of my Brothers who assure me that these are the most terrible times through which the world has ever passed. They cannot discover any ground for congratulation—everything seems to wear to them a most gloomy aspect. It may be so, yet I think I can see much reason for thankfulness as well as much cause for sorrow and regret. We are constantly told that this is a crisis, but I recollect that when I first came to London, 20 years ago, [1853] I was told that it was a crisis and it seems to have been a crisis every few weeks since! Some people appear to imagine that the future of the universe depends upon a meeting which they propose to hold in a month or so—yet so far God has managed the affairs of the universe without any help from them and He still reigns as universal King and Lord notwithstanding all the efforts of the Pope, the Devil and *Essays*

and Reviews! I have come to the conclusion that instead of trying to set all my Master's servants right at once, my first and most important work is to follow my Lord—and I think, my Brothers, that it will be wise for you to come to the same conclusion!

Suppose a man is set by his master to plow a field? His main business is to go up and down that field until he has plowed it all. But suppose that, instead of doing so, he gets into a comfortable corner under the hedge and tells his fellow plowman that the whole system of farming adopted by his master is a mistake, that this field is being sown with the wrong sort of seed, that his master does not understand the best manure to use and that if he were make me his manager, the whole farm would pay much better that it now does? If his master comes while he is talking like this and asks, "John, what have you been doing?" and he replies, "I have been expounding to William a better plan of farming than you have adopted," his master would probably say to him, "I shall have to discharge you unless you give up these speculations. Get on with your plowing at once and leave the management of the farm to me." And I would say that to many Christians—Get on with your plowing! Get to your own proper work! Teach that class in the Sunday school. Speak to sinners about Christ whenever you can and try to win them for Him—but leave those greater and deeper things to your Master. Go on following Him with all your heart and serving Him with all your might. He has His special servants whom He calls to great works of reform, those whom He uses as His speaking trumpets to proclaim the Truth upon the solemn matters with which the most of us have not so much to do.

The same rule applies to many theological questions. For instance, the puzzling problem concerning the origin of evil. I am not so much troubled about how evil came into the world as about helping to get it out! Practical common-sense seems to say, "If there is a thief in the house, let us catch him, or else get him out. And after that we will try to find out how he got in." Our Lord Jesus Christ did not come into the world to tell us how sin was brought here, but He came to show us the only way in which sin can be taken out of the world—and that is by the door which He opened in His own side. It is by His death that sin is to be expelled from the earth!

Then there is that great and weighty question concerning the relation between Divine Sovereignty and human responsibility. You may go to one place of worship and you will hear about very little except Divine Sovereignty. And you may go to another place and you will hear about little except human responsibility. Or you may have heard me preach about both Truths of God [See Sermon #77, Volume 2—DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY; #194, Volume 4—HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY and #207, Volume 4—SOVEREIGN GRACE AND MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] without any attempt to "reconcile" them, as I believe that they have never been at enmity against one another and, therefore, there is no need for any reconciliation! It has been a great temptation to many good men to get to fighting about these Truths when they would have been better employed in preaching the Atoning Sacrifice of Christ. I believe that before the foundation of the world, God chose in Christ all those whom He will eternally save. And I equally believe that

whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be eternally saved, that salvation is all of Grace and damnation is all of man's sin—that God will have the glory of every soul that is saved—and that every lost soul will be responsible for its own ruin.

I think my text also applies to those prophetical studies in which so many seem to lose their way. I am not much encouraged to follow their example when I see how the students of prophecy denounce each other and disprove each other's theories. There are some prophetic Truths that ought to be constantly preached, as for instance that the Lord will surely come again and that there will be a Final Judgment when the righteous shall have the full glories of Heaven, and the wicked shall know the woes of Hell. But as to the dates of the various events foretold in the prophecies that are still unfulfilled, I think I have something better to do than to puzzle my brains over them. "Oh!" say some, "but we now have the right theory." So others thought 20 years ago! But it did not prove to be right, nor did the theory that was held a hundred years ago, or 200 years ago, or even more! Yet men go on building up their card house of speculation and Time comes and pushes it all over with his finger! I advise you to study Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—and to preach the crucified Savior of which the Gospels and Epistles will tell you! And when you get to the Revelation, keep it in its proper place and ask the Holy Spirit to teach you the meaning of its mysteries. May God save this generation from the follies of some of the generations that have preceded it—and may we be most of all concerned about being born-again, about faith in Jesus, about preaching His Gospel and following Him all the days of our life!

III. Now, lastly, THERE ARE MANY REASONS WHY WE SHOULD CONFINE OUR LIFE-WORK TO THE FOLLOWING OF CHRIST. And those reasons are these.

First, *our powers are limited.* Mine are, I know, and I should like to use what powers I have in the work of following Christ in preaching the Gospel and seeking to bring others to follow Him.

Next, *our time is limited.* We may all of us live but a very short time. And at the longest it will be but a brief life. I have heard of a minister who used to say that he would be thankful, in his last hours, that he had been enabled, by God's Grace, to spend the greater part of his time in inviting sinners to the Savior. And I should like to live—and I should like you, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, to live in such a way that when we come to die, we may be able to say, "There, that is the kind of life I would like to have lived, now that I am at the end of it." Suppose anyone should live to fight for the Baptist denomination? When he dies, men would say, "Well, he was a thorough Baptist and he fought well for his denomination." But that would be a poor wreath to lay on his coffin! Would you care to have a long Latin inscription on your tombstone recording the fact that you were always hammering away at some important Doctrine? Or would you wish to have it said, "There lies a man who charmed a few Christian people with the deep spirituality of his teaching, but that was all he did"?

I covet and I think I am right in doing so, the honor of having it said of me, "That man lived to snatch sinners like brands from the burning." I hope some of you will have it said when you are gone, "That woman lived to bring her children to Christ. That girl lived to talk to those she met with about the dear Savior who had been so precious to her that she wished all others to enjoy the same blessing." Oh, that each one of us might live to glorify God! To be like an arrow shot from Christ's bow by His own pierced hand! To feel an impetus given to us to bear us right on to the center of the target of the Glory of God, nothing turning us aside, either to be thought good, or to be thought great, or to be thought learned, or to desire to gain honor or esteem among our fellow men—but just to glorify God by the conversion of sinners through the Holy Spirit's blessing resting upon our labors!

Having but little strength, it is best for us to use it all in one direction. Some men know too much to be powerful for anything. They are like water that is spread over the meadows and not like the stream that runs along in a narrow channel and, therefore, concentrates its energy and renders real service to mankind. "This one thing I do," is a good motto for any man, if he does that one thing well. And the one thing that I will seek to do shall be to glorify God by following Jesus and doing the work He has given me to do! For, my Brothers and Sisters, suppose that you and I should make out the mystery of predestination? Suppose we should become adepts at prophecy? Suppose we should become exceedingly learned in a thousand subjects and yet should go down to our graves without having ever glorified God? We should find no apology for our neglect in all that we had done! Nobody will be lost, as far as I know, through my getting a wrong theory of prophecy, but thousands may be saved if I know the Truth concerning Christ and Him Crucified and preach Him with all my might! I do not know that I shall love the Savior any the less if I make a mistake about some of the great mysteries of the Kingdom, but I do know that if I give myself up wholly to His service and am the means of bringing others to do the same, I shall have no regrets compared with those I should have felt if I had neglected this all-important matter. I charge all of you, men and women, in these evil days to keep close to Jesus! Follow Him with the utmost care, reverence and love. Follow Him with intense ardor and with all your heart, soul and strength—and make that the one thing for which you live! Do not let anything divert you from the straight path of obedience to your Lord, for to that you are called above everything else! If men come to you talking about mental culture and modern thought, stand firm to this—that you will follow Christ wherever He leads you!

I wonder what God would have each of us here do? You may think I am falling into Peter's error if I press this point upon you. I wonder what there is for us to do as a Church? Do you think, dear Friends, that we are doing all that we ought to do for this neighborhood? We have heard about what our missionaries have been doing in foreign lands and most of us have something to do with that. But I think the principal point for us is—What is to be done in Newington? What is to be done for Christ all around this region? You tract-distributors, are you earnestly attending to

your work? You Sunday school teachers, are you faithfully doing your work for God? I will not bid you forget the foreign field, but still, our first concern must be our own class, our own immediate neighborhood. Many of you have come from different parts of London—what are you doing for the district where you live? Every Christian should first seek the good of those nearest to his own door. Some of you have come from the country—what are you doing in your own village? You say that you have been hearing a man of God preach the Truth. That is quite right, but is that working for God? There is a young man over there who professes to be a follower of Christ and who often speaks at the debating club. Do you, My Friend, ever preach in the street, or teach in the Sunday school? Then I am ashamed of you! Or rather, are you not ashamed of yourself? There is a man over there who is making money. I do not say that he is doing wrong, but My Friend, have you ever consecrated to God the part which belongs to Him? If you keep it for yourself, it will canker all the rest!

I might say to someone here, "You ought to be taking a Bible class for young women." I might say to others, "You ought to be teaching in the Sunday school. You come here twice on the Lord's day, but you have no business to come here twice—you ought, once at *least*, to go to work for Christ." I am pleased with some whose consciences prick them so that they say, "Dear Pastor, do not imagine that we are forsaking you! We would be glad to be here, but we have been down at the lodging-houses, or down in Golden Lane, or over at Bethnal Green." That is right and I am glad when I see somebody else in their seats! With four or five thousand members in the Church, if they all come here at each service, where are our converts to come from? Am I to cast the Gospel net into the midst of the fish that are already caught? If you stay away to let a sinner come here in your place and if you are, yourself, seeking to bring sinners to Christ, you are doing two good things! I want everyone of you to be living to do good to your fellow men and seeking to save souls for the Glory of God! The enemies of the faith are very busy and very earnest—and they seem to use up all their material. The moment a man gets into the Church of Rome, there is sure to be something found for him to do and I want to see all of you used to the utmost of your power. You are free men and women and, therefore, not to be controlled by me. I do not prescribe what you are to do, but cannot you, as independent men and women, obey the sacred dictates of the Spirit of God and each of you drop into your proper place?

Give up all speculating, I beseech you—give up reading books merely for the sake of curiosity, and, in God's name, get to work for Him! The graves are filling, our cemeteries are filling, and Hell is filling too! Meanwhile, the dupes of Satan are compassing sea and land to do all the mischief that they can. If you really are what you say you are, the servant of Him who wept over Jerusalem—if you are bought with the blood He shed on Calvary's Cross—I charge you to consecrate yourself, this very hour, to that form of Christian work to which your Master calls you and follow Him through evil report and good report! Follow Him in

the path of duty and let nothing turn you aside from your life-work of glorifying God! May God bless you all, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 21.

Verse 1. *After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise showed He Himself.* Jesus loved to show Himself to His people. Of old, His delights were with the sons of men. So now that He had risen from the dead, He was not ashamed to visit His brethren and He did not disdain to make Himself known to them—and He will still show Himself to us after a spiritual fashion, if we sincerely desire to see Him.

2. *There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of His disciples.* As John was the writer of this record, he did not put his own name there, but merely mentioned "the sons of Zebedee."

3. *Simon Peter said unto them, I am going fishing. They said unto him, We will also go with you.* Men who are in a right state of heart cannot willingly be idle. So, if these Apostles cannot preach for a time, they will go back to their old employment and seek to catch fish.

3. *They went forth and immediately entered into a boat and that night they caught nothing.* Brothers and Sisters, without Christ's Presence, that is what always happens—"they caught nothing." But notice what the next verse says.

4. *But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.* We must remember that a great change had taken place in Him and that the disciples were at some distance from the shore. They saw a person standing there, but they were not sure who it was.

5. *Then Jesus said unto them, Children, have you any food?* This is not an exact translation of our Savior's words. He might too readily have revealed His identity if He had spoken like that. His question was more like a common fisherman's salutation, "Lads, have you any food?"

5. *They answered Him, No.* Jesus likes us to admit that we do not possess anything of our own before He gives us the blessing He is waiting to bestow. He lets us see that the table is bare before He loads it with His bounty so that He may have all the praise and glory for what He gives us.

6. *And He said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you shall find some. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.* This is another proof of the difference between Christ's Presence and Christ's absence.

7. *Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved* (again John does not mention his own name) *said to Peter, It is the Lord.* "It is only He who could spy out the fish and only He who could fill the net with them. It is just His way of acting. 'It is the Lord.'" The eyes of true love are very quick. Peter was not the first to recognize Jesus—John was—for He loved Him most.

7. *Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had taken it off) and did cast himself into the sea.* He had such reverence for his Master that he would not appear before Him without a sufficient covering, yet he was in a hurry to get to Him. Peter always was in a hurry—yet he was grandly impetuous as a rule. I wish that some "slowpokes" had a little of his pace!

8, 9. *And the other disciples came in the little boat, (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits) dragging the net with fishes. As soon as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there and fish laid thereon, and bread.* How that fire must have reminded Peter of his denial of his Lord! He saw his Master by the light of the charcoal fire—and that is how he saw Him on the night when he denied Him.

10, 11. *Jesus said unto them, Bring of the fish which you have now caught. Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty-three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.* On the previous occasion when Peter's net was miraculously filled by Christ, we read that the net broke. That was Peter's own net, but this time I suppose it was not Peter's, but one that he had borrowed and probably he had no time to mend it, so the Master took care that it should not break. He always has His own ways of working—and they always fit the circumstances of the case and show His thoughtful care of His people.

12. *Jesus said unto them, Come and dine.* The Revised Version is more correct—"Come and break your fast"—"Come and have your breakfast." [See Sermon #2072, Volume 35—BREAKFAST WITH JESUS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

12-15. *And none of the disciples dared ask Him, Who are You? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. This is now the third time that Jesus showed Himself to His disciples, after that He was risen from the dead. So when they had dined.* When they had broken their fast—but not until then, for Christ does not talk to men when their hunger might make them inattentive.

15. *Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, Do you love Me more than these?* He had talked as if he did—"Although all shall be offended, yet will not I."

15. *He said unto Him, Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.* He was wise in not measuring his love in comparison with that of his fellow disciples, or in speaking of the quantity of it, but he affirmed that even Christ knew that he did really love Him.

15-17. *He said unto him, Feed My lambs. He said to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, Do you love Me? He said unto Him, Yes, Lord; You know that I love You. He said unto Him, Feed My sheep. He said unto Him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, Do you love Me?* Here is a lesson for all who would be pastors of Christ's flock. The first necessity of a true pastor is love to Christ. The second necessity of a true pastor is love to Christ. And the third necessity of a true pastor is love to Christ. A man who does not love the Great Shepherd cannot properly feed either His sheep or lambs. If his own heart is not right towards the Divine

Owner of the sheep, he cannot be a true under-shepherd to Christ's flock.

17-19. *Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Do you love Me? And he said unto Him, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You. Jesus said unto him, Feed My sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto you, When you were young, you gird yourself, and walked where you would: but when you shall be old, you shall stretch forth your hands, and another shall gird you, and carry you where you would not. This spoke He, signifying by what death he should glorify God.* Peter was to stretch out his hands and be nailed to a cross as his Lord was.

19. *And when He had spoken this, He said unto him, Follow Me.* "That is to be your rule, whether you feed My sheep or lambs, or whether you stretch out your hands upon a cross and die as a martyr—'Follow Me.'" That is also the rule for all of us who love the Lord. O Lord, help us to obey it!

20-25. *Then Peter, turning about, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on His breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrays You? Peter seeing him, said to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus said unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, he shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to you? This is the disciple which testifies of these things, and wrote these things. And we know that His testimony is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. 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 JOY OF HARVEST
NO. 3058

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1865.

[Other sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon harvest subjects are as follows: #2896, Volume 50—HARVEST TIME (the first of his sermons ever *published).* Number 2265, Volume 38—HARVEST JOY; #1127, Volume 19—HARVEST MEN WANTED; #1562, Volume 26—HARVEST PAST, SUMMER ENDED and MEN UNSAVED (double number); #705, Volume 12—FIELDS WHITE FOR HARVEST And #880, Volume 15—THE FORMER AND THE LATTER RAIN—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

"They joy before You according to the joy in harvest."
Isaiah 9:3.

HARVEST crowns the year with God's goodness. When the harvest is abundant, there is universal joy. Everybody rejoices. The owner of the land is glad because he sees the recompense of reward. The laborers are glad for they see the fruit of their toil. Even those to whom not a single ear may belong, nevertheless sympathize in the common joy because a rich harvest is a gift to all the nation. It is a joyous sight to see the last loaded wagon come creaking down the village road, to note the youngsters who shout so loudly yet know so little what they are shouting about, to mark the peasant on the top of the wagon as he waves his hat and gives vent to some gleeful exclamation—and to see them taking it all to the stack or barn. There is joy throughout the village! There is joy throughout the land when the harvest time comes! They that divide the spoil shout loudly, their joyous clamor reaches the heavens!

A better joy than this, however, greets the more auspicious season when a sinner finds his Savior, when the prayers that he has sown, like handfuls of seed, come up and the good yellow ears of confidence in his Savior are brought to maturity. The joy of those who have found the Savior is greater than harvest time—they can say with the Psalmist, "You are more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey." Burst, you barns! Overflow, you wine vats! But you cannot give such joy to your possessors as Christ, really grasped and laid hold upon, can give to a soul that feels its need of Him! The joy of harvest is far exceeded by the joy of simple faith!

We, as a Church, like Christian Churches in all ages, have had times of ingathering when we have rejoiced before God as with the joy of harvest. And there comes even a brighter day than has ever dawned upon this poor misty earth—the day of the coming of the Son of Man, when the Sun of Righteousness shall arise, when Christ shall thrust in His golden sickle and shall reap the harvest of this world! And then shall the righteous rejoice before Him with a greater joy than ten thousand harvest years have ever known!

I. Let us talk, then, of our own joy at the present time as the joy of harvest. The joy of receiving as members of the Church these converts from the world is THE JOY OF REALIZATION and, therefore, is like the joy of harvest!

Faith realizes what she sought and expected. It is an act of faith, in some sort, when the farmer casts his good seed into the earth to die. He loses sight of it for a long time. It must rot and decay under the clods. It is not quickened unless it dies. But he believes that it will be ultimately to his gain to sustain a loss of those golden handfuls. When he sees the harvest, his faith is honored and proved to be sound sense. Thus, too, his cherished hopes are fulfilled. When he first saw the green blade appearing above the soil, he had hope of golden ears. When the whole field grew green and looked like his own pastures, then he thought full sure that harvest time would come and each day, as he has walked across his field, or round about it—as he has seen first the blade, and then the ear—he has hoped to see the full corn in the ear. And now his hopes are all fulfilled in the harvest before him! His labor is all repaid. Many a time have his workmen plodded to and fro over that ground. It was toilsome drudgery—to plow, to harrow, to sow—then there was much weeding, the hoe had to be in frequent use. But now he grudges no labor that has been spent—he has a good return for all his outgoing in the incoming of his harvest! Harvest is the realization of faith, of hope and of labor.

So is it with the conversion of souls. We sow the Word of God in faith. How often have I preached the Gospel here and I have felt that there was no power whatever in it, of itself, to convert souls, and no power whatever in souls to make it converting to them! Yet I felt and knew that God would honor His own Truth and make it quickening to those whom He had ordained unto eternal life. And you, sitting in these pews and offering your silent prayers, have hoped that it would be so, too. You have anticipated it. Your faith has been exercised with my faith, expecting that God's Word would not return unto Him void. And I know that many of you, earnest men and women, have looked out for results—you have had a quick ear to catch a hopeful word from your own children. You have had a quick eye to notice the tears of any who sat in the same pew with you. And sometimes your hopes rose very high—and sometimes sank very low. But now that you have seen many of these in whom you have been interested, brought in and added to the Church, you seem to go beyond hope and you bless God that His Word has been honored and that souls have been saved!

I cannot tell how many of you have labored for those particular persons who are to be added to us. I know that some of you have, but I venture to say that you who have prayed the most, will rejoice the most. You who have spoken most to souls. You who have labored most to bring them to Christ will have the greatest part in the present joy of harvest! As for you loiterers, who do nothing but look on—as for you who are ready at meal-time to come in and dip your bread into our vinegar, but have nothing to do with the labor, you who have not toiled with us side by side—you will have little joy. You will perhaps stand by and be suspicious concerning the results. Like the elder brother, you will be

angry and not come in while we have music and dancing over the Brother who was lost and is now found—who was dead and is alive! But you who have believed the most, you who have hoped the most, you who have worked the most—you shall keep the feast and rejoice before God with the joy of harvest! Glory be unto God! He has not failed us! His Word has not returned unto Him void! He has heard the cry of His children! He has given to us to sow in tears and to reap in joy!

II. Change the note a little and observe that the joy of harvest is THE JOY OF CONGRATULATION.

I think I may congratulate you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, on the ingathering of converts into the Church. There is a time for rebuke and there is a time for expressing our mutual comfort in one another. Let us congratulate one another *that the Spirit of God is with us as a people and with us in no mean measure.* Oh, what would other churches give to have such an increase as we have had year by year? God has been pleased to add to us, year by year, pretty nearly after the rate of four hundred members in a year till our numbers have been swollen beyond our most sanguine hopes. Oh, how greatly has He multiplied the people and increased our joy! Surely the Spirit of God is with us! Every month we have testimony that the Word has been made useful. I do not think there has been a sermon preached here which God has not blessed. Ought we to restrain the expression of our gratitude through any fear of trespassing on humility, when we can say, from positive facts, that there have been those who have come to us and professed either that they have found the Savior, or that they were led to tremble under a sense of sin through the Word every time it has been preached? Surely, the Spirit of God is manifestly with us! Shall we not recognize His Presence? Must we not now adoringly bless Him, that though we are not worthy that He should come under our roof, He does deign to abide with us and make the place of His feet glorious?

Let us congratulate one another that *our prayers, notwithstanding all the faults that mar them and the infirmities that cleave to them, are being heard!* They are penetrating Heaven, they are entering the pearly gate, they are going up before the Throne of the Most High! Through Jesus' blood, which they use as their great prevailing weapon, they are moving the arm which moves the world! Blessings are coming down upon our sons and daughters, upon our kinsfolk and acquaintances in answer to our wrestling, believing prayers! Let us congratulate one another. If we were depressed, if we were like a wilderness, we would console one another. Let us now felicitate one another, interchange our cheerful smiles and our thankful greetings! Let us take the right hand of fellowship over again and, looking back upon the past, vow for the future, in God's name, that if He will but strengthen us, nothing shall daunt our courage, nothing shall restrain our zeal! What He has done shall make us aspire to more! What has been accomplished by us, as a people, shall be but a steppingstone to more daring attempts, to more zealous adventures, to more arduous labors for the promotion of His Kingdom and the extension of His sway! Let us, then, have the joy of congratulation! As the farmer congratulates the men, and as the men

congratulate the master, as the one says, "Blessed be you in the name of the Lord," and the others reply, "We wish you a blessing in God's name," so now let us congratulate each other upon God's mercy which we have received!

III. And is not the joy of harvest particularly A JOY OF GRATITUDE?

I envy not the man who can see the Church increased and yet not feel a sacred, grateful joy. I know some little narrow souls, so compressed within their own selfishness, that to feed their own souls and cherish their own feelings seems to them the only aim and end of Gospel ministry. Whether souls, other than their own, are lost or saved, they care not. It has been the lot of some of us to be, at times, cast among a narrow-minded class of people who say, with a supine satisfaction, "There are very few that shall be saved." And the fewer the number in their fellowship, the more confident they grow of their own election! The appearance of a candidate for Baptism or church membership is the signal for all of them to put on their spectacles and look him through and through to see if he is not a hypocrite. I do not know that their churches are so particularly pure, but I do know that it is particularly difficult to get into them! I do not know that they are worth getting into, but I do know that they *ought* to be worth it, considering the time it takes before one can possibly be received into their enclosure! You must be summered and wintered and tried this way and that before you can be received—and when you are received, the members are sure to rub their hands together and say, "Well, it's a serious thing to receive members." And they are about as glad as I suppose a poor man might be who had 19 children, when there is another coming to eat of the scanty loaf! They seem to think that the addition of so many new members would make the whole of the old members so much the poorer. For my part—and I think I can speak for all here—we greatly rejoice when new converts are welcomed into the Church—and the more there are brought into the Christian family, the more joyful we shall be! We will bless our God—without ceasing will we bless His name, that He does add to us, for this is His work! Jesus sees of the fruit of His passion. The Spirit sees the result of His operation. The Divine Father sees His own children returning to His own board and herein we do rejoice, yes, and we will rejoice with the joy of gratitude!

IV. I have been trying to think over the various causes for joy we may have concerning those who are just now added to us, but I do not think I can sum them all up. THE JOY OF SYMPATHY, however, cannot be lacking.

In many cases you may not know the persons admitted, yet you may enter into the fellowship of their circumstances. A parent's joy may kindle some fellow-feeling. There are fathers and mothers here who feel the tears rising in their eyes because a dear boy or a dear girl has been before the Church and borne witness to faith in Jesus—and is now to be publicly received with the right hand of fellowship into communion with that Church of which the parents have long been members. Estimate the prayers uttered or unexpressed, the sighs that have gone up to Heaven, the many fears, the motherly pangs, the fatherly cares—and now share the joy of the parents while they say to you, "Magnify the Lord with us,

and let us exalt His name together!" Here, too, are wives who see their husbands saved and there is much joy occasioned thereby. There will be a happy household now. Here are sisters and brothers who have watched over brothers and sisters with the most sedulous attention and importunate prayer and, at last, they see them relent the stubbornness they once indulged and confess the Savior whom once they despised!

But, oh, pardon me when I entreat you to sympathize with me and to share my joy, for it is a joy that overflows just now, and would gladly call kinsfolk and friends to rejoice with me! What a mercy to be the means of saving a soul from death and hiding a multitude of sins! How precious is that promise, "they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever." As I sight that constellation in the Scriptural heavens, my heart beats with grateful emotion. But I do not ask you to share only my joy, but to share the joy of earnest teachers and other workers in this Church! Need I mention names? You know the persons without my breathing their names. The men, the women who love the souls of sinners and have been blessed in our midst in bringing them to Jesus are entitled to your sympathetic greetings! Rejoice with them! They have reaped their golden sheaves and they are rejoicing with the joy of harvest! I pray you to share their joy and to increase their joy! Sunday school teachers— God blesses you so that out of our school there come many additions to the Church. You who conduct our catechumen classes, God blesses you—and we have additions from your midst. Young men who preach in the street, you missionaries who toil in your little rooms and serve God by speaking a word of exhortation—you have all been honored this month—there has been some fruit from every department of service! Therefore let us join in sympathy with the laborers whom God has thus honored, in thanking God for their success in souls saved!

And may I not ask you to rejoice because there is One who loves souls better than I do, better than you do and who rejoices more than any of us? It is the Man who bought them with the wounds in His hands, and feet, and side! He looks down upon those who have come up to Him from the wilderness and are looking to Him alone for salvation. Their eyes that were once red with weeping, now flash with hallowed joy! His eyes, that were full of pity, beam with satisfaction and unfeigned delight sits upon the Savior's brow! I cannot see Him with these dim mortal eyes, but I know by an inward consciousness that He is here. Each soul that has trusted Him has been another jewel for His crown, another flush of pleasure in return for His pangs of grief. Come, then, let us rejoice with Him! Jesus, Companion of our sorrow, Captain of our salvation, when You are glad we are exceedingly refreshed!

Nor is this all, for in yonder skies there are those who wait upon our Master, who once waited on Him on earth, and are now glad to hymn His praise before His Throne. Oh, could you hear their songs, you would find that they are just now louder and sweeter than is ever known. "Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah," always rolls up to the Throne of God and the Lamb. But now it is deeper, its volume is more mighty and its note more sweet as they sing over the ingathering of souls into God's

Church. Christ Himself said, "I say unto you, there is joy in the Presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents." How much more joy is there when, by scores and even by hundreds, repenting sinners find the Savior!

Think what might have been the lot of those who profess now to have been saved. You have need of an inspired Prophet to tell you that. Some of them might still have been where they once were—upon the ale-house bench, with the drunkard. Yes, and where some of *them* were who have been washed and cleansed—with the harlot in her midnight sin. There are young ones to be added to this Church who have never gone into open sin, but if they had not been called by Grace, little do we know what might have been the career of vice before them. Temptation might have led to sin, sin might have ripened into habit, habit might have gathered force until they became ringleaders in mischief—but they are washed, they are cleansed! And O Satan, what a harvest you have lost! What soldiers have been taken from your ranks! How much mischief might they have done which now they shall scrupulously avoid, for Grace has turned them in another road and filled their mouths with another song!

Think, too, of what they now shall be through Divine Grace. I cannot depict to you each case. I know that there are some here upon whom we look with the hope that they will be teachers of others. We have, especially, holy mothers bringing up their children in God's fear and holy fathers seeking the conversion of their little ones. Their seed, as a generation which the Lord has blessed, shall become, in later years—some of them—pillars of the Church, honored and honorable! They shall serve their Master in this life, they shall bear testimony to His faithfulness in death and they shall sing His praise forever!

Still, with all this joy of harvest, there is one mortifying reflection. I would not say much about it lest it should dampen your joy. It is this. *Out of those who are added to the Church, there are always some who are not saved.* Let us judge carefully and watch earnestly. Some come like Judas with a lie in their right hand and put on Christ by profession who are not followers of Christ in spirit and in truth. Search yourselves, Brothers and Sisters, and if you are not Christ's, do not dishonor His name by venturing to be called by it!

And there is another grievous thought. *While so many are gathered in, there are many who are left out.* Some of you have been with us in our best days and I am afraid I shall have to ring that text again in your ears, as I have done before—"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, but you are not saved, you are not saved." Your sister is saved, but you are not saved! Your wife is saved, but you are not! Two of you sleep in one bed—one has been taken and the other left. Two of you grind at one mill in your daily work—one has been taken and the other left. You are not saved, you are not saved! And when the time comes for you to die, these will be sad words to ring in your ears with a more doleful sound than death-knell ever knew, "Not saved! Not saved!" Amidst the joy of harvest, let us not forget to pray for those who are still wandering in the paths of sin or pandering to the vanities of the world.

Another harvest is coming when Christ shall gather together His people. There will be, first of all, the ingathering of the righteous. Do not

make a mistake about the Day of Judgment, as though the righteous and the wicked were to be judged together, for remember that first of all there will come the day when the righteous shall be gathered. If you read the 14th Chapter of the Book of Revelation, you will find that the harvest precedes the vintage. [See Sermon #2910, Volume 50—THE HARVEST AND THE VINTAGE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The righteous are gathered as the harvest of the earth and afterwards the vintage of the world is gathered—that is, the wicked. The harvest is gathered into the garner of God—and the vintage "into the great winepress of the Wrath of God"—and there the grapes are trodden under foot till the blood flows out, even up to the horses' bridles! Well, there is to come a harvest of the righteous and what joy there will be when you see the countless number that swells the ranks of the blessed! O you angels, you had need to be twice ten thousand times ten thousand when, at the ingathering of sheaves that no man can number, you welcome the multitudes of the redeemed! What shouts there will be when millions upon millions mount to the upper skies! It was a time of great joy when all Israel passed through the Red Sea, but how much greater joy will there be when ten thousand times ten thousand, even myriads of myriads, shall enter into their eternal rest!

There will be joy in the persons saved—each one will have a separate song or make a distinct note in the one song. What joy over Magdalene and the dying thief! What joy over Manasseh and Saul of Tarsus! Each separate case shall stand out clear and bright, as though it were better than another and yet each one shall claim that his is the choicest exhibition of Divine Love and Faithfulness. What joy when, all together, the Lord's jewels shall be put into His casket!

Think of where they shall be gathered from—from poverty, from sickness, from beds of dust and silent clay. They shall be gathered from slander and rebuke, from persecution and from suffering, from the lion's jaws and from the flames—they shall be gathered, ten thousand times ten thousand of them—from sin and suffering, to sin and suffer no more!

To where will they be gathered? Gathered to their Savior, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born whose names are written in Heaven! Remember that they will all be gathered, not one will be absent and everyone will be gathered in a perfect state, not one unripe for Heaven, not one green ear, not one child of God unfit for his heavenly heritage, but all ready and prepared through the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit! Oh, that my eyes could see the glorious day! The pearly gates stand wide open and first comes the Savior up the eternal hills, leading the van fresh from the battlefields of Armageddon, where, for the last time, He has fought and triumphed over all His foes! And here comes the noble army of martyrs waving the palm branches and then the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, the great assembly of the ministers and preachers of the Word, and the hosts of those who have come through great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! Listen how Hell gnashes her teeth! How the infernal lake is stirred to envious burning while the fiends see these brands plucked from the fire as they ascend to Heaven! Listen to the

symphonious harpings of the myriads of spirits as from the battlements of Heaven they look on with wonder and gaze upon the new inhabitants of Jerusalem who are coming to people it and make it even more glorious than it was before! Listen how they begin the song, "Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory." And listen how the multitude of the redeemed join in the chorus, "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!"

And they sing again and yet again, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns." May you and I be partakers of the joy of harvest and not be yonder with those among whom there is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth because they would not trust the Lamb, because they would not come to Him that they might have life—but chose their own delusion and followed out their own corruptions till they met with the due dessert of their evil deeds! God bless you, dear Friends, every one of you, and make you partakers of the present joy and the everlasting felicity of the saints, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 9:35-38; 10:1; 13:3-8; 18-23.

Matthew 9:35. *And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.* This was His answer to the blasphemous slanders of the Pharisees. A glorious reply it was! Let us answer calumny by greater zeal in doing good! Small places were not despised by our Lord—He went about the *villages* as well as the *cities.* Village piety is of the utmost importance and has a close relation to city life. Jesus turned old institutions to good account—the "*synagogues*" became His seminaries. Three-fold was His ministry—expounding the old, proclaiming the new, healing the diseased. Observe the repetition of the word, "*every,*" as showing the breadth of His healing power. All this stood in relation to His royalty, for it was "*the Gospel of the Kingdom*" which He proclaimed. Our Lord was " the Great Itinerant"—*Jesus went about preaching and healing.* His was a Medical Mission as well as an evangelistic tour. Happy people who have Jesus among them! Oh, that we might now see more of His working among our own people!

36. *But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.* A great crowd is a demand upon compassion, for it suggests so much sin and need. In this case the great need was instruction—*"they fainted"* for lack of comfort. They *"were scattered abroad"* for lack of guidance. They were eager to learn, but they had no fit teachers. *"Sheep having no shepherd"* are in an ill plight. Unfed, unfolded, unguarded—what will become of them? Our Lord was stirred with a feeling which agitated His inmost soul. "*He was moved with compassion.*" What He saw affected not only His eyes, but His heart. He was overcome by pity. His whole frame was stirred with an emotion which put every faculty into forceful movement. He is even now affected

towards our people in the same manner. *He* is moved with compassion if *we* are not.

37, 38. *Then He said unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray you therefore the Lord of the Harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest.* His heavy heart sought solace among *"His disciples"* and He spoke to them. He mourned the scantiness of workers. Pretenders were many, but real *"laborers"* in the harvest were few. The sheaves were spoiling. The crowds were ready to be taught, even as ripe wheat is ready for the sickle; but there were few to instruct them and where could more teaching men be found? God only can thrust out, or "*send forth laborers.*" Man-made ministers are useless! Still are the fields encumbered with gentlemen who cannot use the sickle. Still the real ingatherers are few and far between. Where are the instructive, soul-winning ministries? Where are those who travail in birth for their hearers' salvation? Let us plead with the Lord of the Harvest to care for His own harvest and send out His own men. May many a true heart be moved by the question, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" to answer, "Here am I! Send me."

Matthew 10:1. *And when He had called unto Him His twelve disciples, He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.* See the way of making Apostles! They were first *disciples* and afterwards teachers of others—they were specially *His,* and then they were given to be a blessing to men. They were *"called unto Him"* and thus their higher call came to them. In the Presence of their Lord they received their equipment—"*He gave them power.*" Is that so with us in our own special office? Let us come to Him that we may be clothed with His authority and girded with His strength! Their power was miraculous, but it was an imitation of their Lord's—and the words applied to it are very much the same as we have seen in use about His miracles of healing. The 12 were made to represent their Lord. We, too, may be enabled to do what Jesus did among men. Oh, for such an endowment!

Matthew 13:3. *And He spoke many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow.* He had much instruction to give and He chose to convey it *in parables.* What wonderful pictures they were! What a world of meaning they have for us as well as for those who heard them! This parable of the sower is a mine of teaching concerning the Kingdom of God, for the seed was "the word of the Kingdom." (See verse 19). *"Behold"*—every word is worthy of attention. Maybe the Preacher pointed to a farmer on the shore who was beginning to sow one of the terraces. "*A sower*," read, "*The* Sower." Jesus, our Lord, has taken up this business of the Sower at His Father's bidding. The Sower "*went forth.*" See Him leaving the Father's house with this one design upon His heart—"*to sow.*"

4. *And when He sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up. When HE sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside*—even when the Chief Sower is at work, some seed fails. We know He sows the best of seed and in the best manner, but some of it falls on the trodden path and so lies uncovered and unaccepted of the

soil. That soil was hard and beaten down with traffic. There, too, on the wayside, we meet with dust to blind, settlements of mud to foul and birds to pilfer—it is not a good place for good seed. No wonder, as the seeds lay all exposed, that the *fowls came and devoured them up.* If the Truth of God does not enter the *heart*, evil influences soon remove it.

5, 6. *Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.* Among the rocks or on the shallow soil with the unbroken rock-pan underneath, the seed fell—for if the sower had altogether avoided such places he might have missed some of the good ground. In these *stony places* the seed speedily *sprang up* because the rock gave it all the heat that fell on it, and so hastened its germination. But, soon up, soon down. When the time came for the sun to put forth its force, the rootless plants instantly pined and died. *They had no deepness of earth* and "*no root.*" What could they do but *wither* quite *away?* Everything was hurried with them—the seeds had no time to root themselves and so in hot haste the speedy growth met with speedy death. No trace remained.

7. *And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them.* The ground was originally a thorn-brake and had been cleared by *the thorns* being cut down. But speedily the old roots sent out new shoots and other weeds came up with them—and the tangled beds of thistles, thorns, nettles, and what not, strangled the feeble shoots of the wheat. The native plants *choked* the poor stranger. They would not permit the intrusive corn to share the field with them—evil claims a monopoly of our nature. Thus we have seen three sets of seed come to an untimely end.

8. *But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.* This would repay all losses, especially at the highest rate of increase here quoted. To the bird, the weather and the weeds, three sets of seeds have gone. Yet, happily, one remains to increase and fill the barn. The sowing of good seed can never be a total failure—"*other fell into good ground.*" The harvest was not equally great on every spot of fertile soil. It varied from *an hundredfold to thirtyfold.* All good ground is not alike good and, besides, the situation may differ. Harvests are not all alike in the same farm, in the same season and under the same farmer—and yet each field may yield a fairly good harvest. Lord, if I cannot reach to a hundredfold, let me at least prove to be good ground by bearing thirtyfold.

18. *Hear you therefore the parable of the sower.* Because you see behind the curtain and have Grace given to discern the inner meaning through the outer metaphor, come and *hear* the explanation of *the parable of the sower.*

19. *When anyone hears the word of the Kingdom, and understands it not, then comes the Wicked One, and catches away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the wayside.* The Gospel is "*the word of the Kingdom.*" It has royal authority in it . It proclaims and reveals King Jesus and it leads men to obedience to His sway. To hear but not to understand is to leave the good seed on the outside of your nature and not to take it into yourself. Nothing can come of such

hearing to anyone. Satan is always on the watch to hinder the Word—"*Then comes the Wicked One,*" even at the moment when the seed fell. He is always afraid to leave the Truth of God even in hard and dry contact with a mind and so he *catches it away* at once and it is forgotten, or even disbelieved. It is gone, at any rate. And we have not in our hearer's mind a cornfield, but a highway, hard and much frequented. The man was not an opposer. He "*received seed"* but he received the Truth as he was, without the soil of his nature being changed—and the seed remained as it was till the foul bird of Hell took it off the place and there was an end of it. So far as the Truth *was sown in his heart,* it was in his natural, unrenewed heart and, therefore, it took no living hold. How many such hearers we have! To these we preach in vain, for what they learn, they unlearn, and what they receive they reject almost as soon as it comes to them! Lord, suffer none of us to be impervious to Your royal Word, but whenever the smallest seed of Your Truth falls on us, may You open our soul to it!

20, 21. *But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that hears the Word, and with joy receives it; yet has he not root in himself, but endures for awhile: but when tribulation or persecution arises because of the Word, by-and-by he is offended.* Here the seed was the same and the sower the same, but the result somewhat different. In this case there was earth enough to cover the seed and heat enough to make it grow quickly. The convert was attentive and easily persuaded. He seemed glad to accept the Gospel at once. He was even eager and enthusiastic, joyful and demonstrative. *He hears the Word and with joy receives it.* Surely this looked very promising! But the soft was essentially evil, hard, barren, superficial. The man had no living entrance into the mystery of the Gospel, no root in himself, no principle, no hold of the Truth of God with a renewed heart. And so he flourished hurriedly and showily for a season but only for a season. It is tersely put, "*He endures for awhile."* That "*awhile"* may be longer or shorter according to circumstances. When matters grow hot with Christians, either through affliction from the Lord, or persecution from the world, the temporary Believer is so sapless, so rootless, so deficient in moisture of Grace, that he dries up and his profession withers. Thus, again, the sower's hopes are disappointed and his labor is lost. Till stony hearts are changed it must always be so. We meet with many who are soon hot and as soon cold. They receive the Gospel "*anon"* and leave it "*by-and-by."* Everything is on the surface and, therefore, is hasty and unreal. May we all have broken hearts and prepared minds, that when the Truth of God comes to us it may take root in us and abide.

22. *He also that received seed among the thorns is he that hears the Word and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the Word, and he becomes unfruitful.* This class of hearers we know by personal acquaintance in this busy age. They *hear the Word,* they are affected by the Gospel, they take it *as seed* into their minds and it grows well for a season. But the heart cannot belong to two absorbing objects at the same time and, therefore, these men cannot long yield themselves up to the world and Christ, too. Care to get money, covetousness,

trickery and sins which come from desires to be rich, or else pride, luxury, oppression and other sins which come of having obtained wealth, prevent the man from being useful in religious matters, or even sincere to himself—*"he becomes unfruitful."* He keeps his profession. He occupies his place, but his religion does not grow. In fact, it shows sad signs of being choked and checked by worldliness. The leaf of outward religiousness is there, but there is no dew on it. The ear of promised fruit is there, but there are no kernels in it. The weeds have outgrown the wheat and smothered it! We cannot grow thorn and corn at the same time—the attempt is fatal to a harvest for Jesus. See how wealth is here associated with *care, deceitfulness* and *unfruitfulness.* It is a thing to be handled with care. Why are men so eager to make their thorn-brake more dense with briars? Would not a good farmer root out the thorns and brambles? Should we not, as much as possible, keep free from the care to get, to preserve, to increase and to hoard worldly riches? Our heavenly Father will see that we have enough—why do we fret about earthly things? We cannot give our minds to these things and also to the Kingdom of God.

23. *But he that received seed into the good ground is he that hears the Word and understands it; which also bears fruit, and brings forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.* Here is the story of the Word's success. This fourth piece of land will repay all charges. Of course no one parable teaches all the Truth of God and, therefore, we have no mention here of the plowing which always precedes a fruitful harvest. No heart of man is good by nature—the good Lord had made this plot into "*good ground."* In this case, both thought and heart are engaged about the heavenly message and the man "*hears the Word and understands it."* By being lovingly understood, the Truth gets into the man and then it roots, it grows, it fruits, it rewards the sower. We must aim at the inward apprehension and comprehension of the Word of God for only in this way can we be made fruitful by it. Be it ours to aim to be among those who would bear fruit *an hundredfold!* Ah, we would give our Lord ten-thousand fold if we could! For every sermon we hear we should endeavor to do a hundred gracious, charitable, or self-denying acts. Our Divine Sower, with such heavenly seed, deserves to be rewarded with a glorious harvest!

—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 POOR MAN'S FRIEND
NO. 3059

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 8, 1873.

"The poor commits himself unto You."
Psalm 10:14.

GOD is the poor man's Friend. The poor man, in his helplessness and despair, leaves his case in the hands of God and God undertakes to care for him. In the days of David—and I suppose, in this respect, the world has but little improved—the poor man was the victim of almost everybody's cruelty and sometimes he was very shamefully oppressed. If he sought redress for his wrongs, he generally only increased them, for he was regarded as a rebel against the existing order of things. And when he asked for even a part of what was his by right, the very magistrates and rulers of the land became the instruments of his oppressors and made the yoke of his bondage to be yet heavier than it was before. Tens of thousands of eyes, full of tears, have been turned to Jehovah and He has been invoked to interpose between the oppressor and the oppressed, for God is the ultimate resort of the helpless. The Lord executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed—He undertakes the cause of all those that are downtrodden.

If the history of the world is rightly read, it will be found that no case of oppression has been allowed to go long unpunished. The Assyrian empire was a very cruel one, but what is now left of Nineveh and Babylon? Go to the heaps of ruins by the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates and see what will become of an empire which is made to be only an instrument of oppression in the hands of an emperor and the great men under him. It has ceased to be more than a name—its power has vanished and its palaces have been destroyed. In later times there sprang up the mighty empire of Rome and even now, wherever we wander, we see traces of its greatness and splendor. How came it to fall? Many reasons have been assigned, but you may rest assured that at the bottom of them all was the cruelty practiced towards the slaves and other poor people who were absolutely in the power of the aristocracy and oligarchy who formed the dominant party in the empire. There is a fatal flaw in the foundations of any throne that does not execute justice—and it matters not though the empire seems to stand high as Heaven and to raise its pinnacles to the skies—down it must come if it is not founded upon right. When ten thousand slaves have cried to God, apparently in vain, it has not really been in vain, for He has registered their cries and in due season has avenged their wrongs! And when the poor toilers who

have reaped the rich man's fields have been deprived of their harshly-earned wages and have cast their complaints into the court of Heaven, they have been registered there and God has, at the right time, taken up their cause and punished their oppressors!

For many years the Negro slaves cried to God to deliver them and, at last, deliverance came to the joy of the emancipated multitudes, yet not without suffering to all the nations that had been concerned in that great wrong. And here, too, if the employers of labor refuse to give to the agricultural laborer his just wage, God will surely visit them in His wrath. At this very day we have serfs in England who, with sternest toil, cannot earn enough to keep body and soul together and to maintain their families as they ought to be maintained. And where masters are thus refusing to their laborers a fair remuneration for their work, let them know that whoever may excuse them and whatever may be said of the laws of political economy, God does not judge the world by political economy! He judges the world by this rule, that men are bound to do that which is just and right to their fellow men—and it can never be right that a man should work like a slave, be housed worse than a horse and have food scarcely fit for a dog! But if the poor commit their case to God, He will undertake it and I, as one of God's ministers, will never cease to speak on behalf of the rights of the poor. The whole question has two sides—the rights of the employers and the rights of the men. Let not the men do as some workmen do, ask more than they ought—yet, on the other hand, let not the employers domineer over their men, but remember that God is the Master of us all and He will see that right is done to all. Let us all act rightly towards one another, or we shall feel the weight of His hand and the force of His anger.

Now, having thus given the literal meaning of my text, I am going to spiritualize it, which I should have no right to do if I had not first explained the primary reference of David's words, "The poor commits himself unto You."

I. THERE ARE SPIRITUALLY POOR MEN and these do what other poor men have done in temporal things—they commit their case into the hands of God.

Let me try to define the spiritually poor. They are, first, *those who have no merits of their own.* There are some people in the world who are, according to their own estimate, very rich in good works. They think that they began well and that they have gone on well—they hope to continue to do well right to the end of their lives. They do confess, sometimes, that they are miserable sinners, but that is merely because that expression is in the Prayer Book. They are half sorry it is there, but they suppose that it must have been meant for other people, not for themselves. So far as they know, they have kept all the Commandments from their youth up. They have been just in their dealings with their fellow men and they do not feel that they are under any very serious obligations even to God, Himself. I have nothing to say to such people except to remind them that the Lord Jesus Christ 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." Christ came to bring healing to those who are spiritually sick—you say that you are perfectly well, so you must go your own way and Christ will go in another direction—towards sinners.

Further, the poor people of whom I am speaking are not only totally without anything like merit, absolutely bankrupt of any goodness and devoid of anything of which they could boast, but they are also *without strength to perform any such good works in the future.* They are so poor, spiritually, that they cannot even pray as they would—and they do not even feel their poverty as they would like to feel it. After having read this Bible, they wish they could re-read it with greater profit. And when they weep oven sin, they feel their sin in their very tears and need to weep in penitence over their tears. They are such poor people that they can do absolutely nothing without Christ and so poor that in them, that is, in their flesh, there dwells no good thing. They did once think that there might be something good in them, but they have searched their nature through most painfully and they have discovered that unless Divine Grace shall do everything for them, where God is they can never come.

Perhaps some of you say, "These must be very bad people." Well, they are no better that they should be, yet I may tell you another thing concerning them—they are no worse than many of those who think themselves a great deal better. They have this lowly opinion of themselves because the Grace of God has taught them to think rightly and truthfully about themselves in relation to God. They are, in outward appearance, and as far as we can judge, quite as good as others and better than some. In certain respects, they might be held up as examples to others. This is what we say of them, but they have not a good word to say of themselves. Rather, they put their finger upon their lips and blush at the remembrance of what they feel themselves to be. Or if they must speak of themselves at all, they say, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned, every one, to his own way."

II. That brings me to notice, secondly, WHAT THESE POOR PEOPLE DO. They commit themselves unto God. This is a very blessed description of what true faith does. The poor in spirit feel that their case is so desperate that they cannot keep it in their own charge and, therefore, they commit it to God. I will try to show you how they do that.

First, *they commit their case to God as a debtor commits his case to a surety.* The man is so deeply in debt that he cannot pay his creditors even a farthing in the pound. But here is someone who can pay everything that the debtor owes and he says to him, "I will stand as security for you. I will be bondsman for you. I will give full satisfaction to all your creditors and discharge all your debts." There is no person who is deeply in debt who would not be glad to know of such a surety, both able and willing to stand in his place and to discharge all his responsibilities! If the surety said to this poor debtor, "Will you turn over all your liabilities to me? Will you sign this document, empowering me to take all your debts upon myself and to be responsible for you? Will you let me be your bondsman and surety?" "Ah," the poor man would reply, "that I will, most gladly!" That is just what spiritually poor men have

done to the Lord Jesus Christ—committed their case with all their debts and liabilities into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ—and He has undertaken all the responsibility for them!

I think I hear someone say, "But will Christ really stand in the sinner's place in such a way as that?" Oh, yes, for He did stand, in anticipation, in the sinner's place before the foundation of the world and He actually stood there when He died upon the accursed tree. By His death He obtained a full discharge of the debts of all those whose Surety He had become. [See Sermons #694, Volume 12—SIN LAID ON JESUS and #925, Volume 16—INDIVIDUAL SIN LAID ON JESUS—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Dear Soul, will you not commit all your affairs into His hands? Are you not willing to let Him stand as your Surety, to clear you of all your liabilities? "Willing?" you say! "Ah, that I am and not only willing, but right glad shall I be for Him to take my place and relieve me of the burden that is crushing me to the dust." Then it is done for you and so done that it can never be undone! Suppose that one of you had taken all my debts upon you and that you were quite able and willing to pay them? I would not go home and fret about my debts. I would rejoice to think that you had taken them upon yourself and that, therefore, they would no longer be mine! If Christ has taken your sins upon Himself—and He has done so if you have truly trusted Him—your sins have ceased to be! They are blotted out forever! Christ nailed to His Cross the record of everything that was against us and now every poor sinner who is indebted to God's Law and who trusts in Christ, may know that his debt is cancelled and that he is clear of all liability for it forever!

Next, *we commit our case to Christ as a client does to a solicitor and advocate.* [See Sermon #515, Volume 9—THE SINNER'S ADVOCATE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] You know that when a man has a suit at law, (I hope that none of you may ever have such a suit), if he has an advocate to plead his cause, he does not plead for himself. He will probably get into trouble if he does. It is said that when Erskine was pleading for a man who was being tried for murder, his client, being dissatisfied with the way in which his defense was being conducted, wrote on a slip of paper, "I'll be hanged if I don't plead for myself." Erskine wrote in reply, "You'll be hanged if you do!" It is very much like that with us—if we attempt to plead for ourselves, we shall be sure to go wrong. We must have the Divine Advocate who alone can defend us against the suits of Satan and speak with authority on our behalf even before the bar of God. We must commit our case to Him, that He may plead for us—and then it will go rightly enough.

Remember also that any man who has committed his case to an advocate, must not interfere with it himself. If anybody from the other side should wait upon him and say, "I wish to speak to you about that suit," he must reply, "I cannot go into the matter with you. I must refer you to my solicitor." "But I want to reason about it. I need to ask you a few questions about the case." "No," he says, "I cannot listen to what you have to say—you must go to my solicitor." How much trouble Christians would save themselves if when they have committed their case into the hands of Jesus, they would leave it there and not attempt to deal with it

on their own account! I say to the devil, when he comes to tempt me to doubt and fear, "I have committed my soul to Jesus Christ and He will keep it in safety. You must bring your accusations to Him, not to me. I am His client and He is my Counselor. Why should I have such an Advocate as He is, and then plead for myself?" John does not say, "If any man sins, let him be his own advocate"—he says, "If any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." Dear Brothers and Sisters, leave your case with Christ—He can handle it wisely—you cannot! Remember that if the devil and you get into an argument, he is much older than you are and far more clever than you are—and he knows a great many points of Law that you do not know. You should always refer him to the Savior, who is older than he is and knows much more about Law and everything else than he does—and who will answer him so effectually as to silence him forever! So, poor tried and tempted Soul, commit your case to the Great Advocate and He will plead for you before the Court of King's Bench in Heaven—and your suit will be sure to succeed through His advocacy!

Further, *sinners commit their case to Christ as a patient commits his case to the physician.* We, poor sin-sick Sinners, put our case into the hands of Jesus that He may heal us of all our depravities, evil tendencies and infirmities. If anyone asks, "Will He undertake my case if I come to Him?" I answer—Yes, He came to be the Physician of souls, to heal all who trust Him. There never was a case in which He could not heal, for He has a wonderful remedy, a catholicon, a cure for all diseases. If you put your case into His hands, the Holy Spirit will shed abroad His love in your heart—and there is no spiritual disease that can withstand that wondrous remedy! Are you predisposed to quickness of temper? He can cure that! Are you inclined to be indolent? Is there a sluggish spirit within you? He can cure that! Are you proud, or are your tendencies towards covetousness, worldliness, lust or ambition? Christ can cure all those evils! When He was on this earth, He had all manner of patients brought to Him, yet He never was baffled by one case. And your case, whatever it may be, will be quite an easy one to Him if you only go and commit it into His hands! This building seems to me like a great hospital [See Sermon #2260, Volume 38—CHRIST'S HOSPITAL—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] full of sin-sick souls and I pray the Great Physician to come here and heal them all! No, I must correct myself, for He *is* here and as He walks through these aisles, and around these galleries, I beseech you to say to Him, "Good Master, I commit myself to You. I take You to be my Savior. O save me from my constitutional temperament, my besetting sins and everything else that is contrary to Your holy will!" He will hear you, for He has never yet refused to heed the cry of a poor sin-sick soul. Do not let Him go by you without praying to Him, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Come, Lord, and lay Your hands upon each one of us and we shall be made perfectly whole!

As to the future, the spiritually poor commit themselves to Christ in the same way in which the pilgrims described in *The Pilgrim's Progress* commit themselves to the charge of Mr. Greatheart, that He might fight

all their battles for them and conduct them safely to the Celestial City. In the old war times, when the captains of merchant vessels wanted to go to foreign countries and they were afraid of being captured by the privateers of other nations, they generally went in company under the convoy of a man-of-war to protect them. And that is the way you and I must go to Heaven. Satan's privateers will try to capture us, but we commit ourselves to the protection of Jesus, the Lord High Admiral of all the seas! And we poor little vessels, by His Grace, sail safely under His convoy! When any enemy seeks to attack us, we need not be afraid. He can blow them all out of the water if He pleases, but He will never suffer one of them to injure a solitary vessel that is entrusted to His charge. Sinner, give yourself up to the charge of Jesus to be convoyed to Heaven! And you over-anxious children of God, lay down all your anxieties at the feet of Jesus and rest in His Infinite Power and Love which will never let you be lost!

I might thus multiply figures and illustrations of how we commit ourselves to Christ. We do it very much in the way in which our blind friends, sitting under the pulpit, got here this evening—*they came by committing themselves to the care of guides.* Some of them can walk a good long way without a guide, but others could not have found their way here tonight without some friend upon whose arm they could lean. That is the way to get to Heaven, by leaning upon Jesus! Do not expect to see Him, but trust yourself to Him and lean hard upon Him. He loves to be trusted and faith has a wonderful charm for Him. I was once near the Mansion House and as I stood there, a poor blind man, who wished to cross over to the bank, said to me, "Please, Sir, lead me across. I know you will, for I am blind." I was not sure that I could do so, for it is not an easy task to lead a blind man across that part where so many cabs and omnibuses are constantly passing, but I managed it as best I could. I do not think I could have done it if the poor man had not said to me, "I know you will," for then I thought that I must. And if you come to Christ and say, "Lord Jesus, will You lead me to Heaven?" and tell Him that you are sure that He will never let a poor blind soul miss its way, that you are sure you can trust Him, that He is such a kind-hearted Savior that He will never thrust away a guilty sinner who thus commits himself into His hands—I am sure that He will be glad to save you and that He will rejoice over you as He leads you safely home to Heaven! If any of you can see with your natural eyes and yet are spiritually blind, be glad that there is a blessed Guide to whom you can commit yourself! Christ leads the blind by a way that they know not and He will continue to lead them until He brings them to the land where they will open their eyes and see with rapture and surprise the splendors of Paradise and rejoice that they are all their own forever!

Is not this work of the poor committing themselves to Christ a very easy task? It is a very easy thing for a debtor to commit his debts to his surety, for anyone to commit his case to his advocate, for a patient to trust himself to his physician, for a pilgrim to feel safe under a powerful convoy and for a blind man to trust in his guide—all this is very simple

and easy. It does not need much explanation—and faith in Jesus is just as simple and just as easy as that! Why is it that we sometimes find that faith is difficult? It is because we are too proud to believe in Jesus. If we did but see ourselves as we really are, we would be willing enough to trust the Savior—but we do not like going to Heaven like blind people who need a guide, or like debtors who cannot pay a farthing in the pound. We want to have a finger in the pie. We want to do something towards our own salvation. We want to have some of the praise and glory of it. God save us from this evil spirit!

While it is a very simple thing for the spiritually poor to commit themselves to Christ, let me also say that it is an act which greatly glorifies God. Christ is honored when any soul trusts in Him—it is a joy to His heart to be trusted. When the feeble cling to Him, He feels such joy as mothers feel when their little ones cling to them. Christ is glad when poor sin-sick souls come and trust Him. It was for this very purpose that He came into the world—to meet the needs of guilty sinners. So this plan, while it is easy for us, is glorifying to Him.

And I will add that it is a plan that never fails any who trust to it. There never was a single soul that committed its case to Christ and then found Him fail—and there never shall be such a soul so long as the earth endures! He that believes in Christ shall not be ashamed or confounded, world without end! "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life," and everlasting life can never be taken away from one who has received it!

I close by asking a question—If the spiritually poor commit themselves unto God, what comes of it? Why, it makes them very happy! But are they not sinful? Oh, yes, but they commit themselves to God's Grace and His Grace blots out all their sins forever! Are they not feeble? Oh, yes, but their feebleness leads them to commit themselves to His Omnipotence—and His strength is made perfect in their weakness. Are they not needy? Oh, yes, but then they bring their needs to Him and they receive out of His fullness, "Grace for Grace." But are they not often in danger? Oh, yes, in a thousand dangers! But they come and hide beneath the shadow of God's wings and He covers them with His feathers and there they rest in perfect security! His Truth becomes their shield and buckler so that they need not fear any foe. But are they not apt to slip? Oh, yes, but they commit themselves to Him who gives His angels charge over them—to keep them in all their ways and to bear them up in their hands, lest they should dash their feet against a stone. But are they not very fickle and changeable? Oh, yes, but they commit themselves to Him who says, "I am Jehovah, I change not." But are they not unworthy? Oh, yes, in themselves they are utterly unworthy! But they commit themselves to Him who is called The Lord Their Righteousness—and when they are clothed in His Righteousness, they are looked upon by God as being "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." But have they no sickness? Yes, but they commit themselves to Jehovah-Rophi, the Lord the Healer—and He either heals their sickness, or gives them the Grace to endure it. Are they not poor? Yes, many of them are extremely so! But they commit themselves to the faithful Promiser and so bread is

given them and their water is sure. But don't they expect to die? Oh, yes, unless the Lord should first come, but they are not afraid to die! This is the point, above all others, in which the spiritually poor commit themselves unto God. They have learned that sweet prayer of David so well that it is often on their tongues, "Into Your hands I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth." They committed their spirit into God's hands years ago and He has kept them until now—and they know that He will not fail them in their dying hour.

In conclusion, I pray every spiritually poor heart to commit itself to God. I like to do this every morning. Satan often comes and says, "You are no Christian! All your supposed Christian experience is false." Very well, suppose it has been false? Then I will start afresh—saint or no saint! I will begin over again by trusting Christ to be my Savior. When you, dear Friend, wake tomorrow morning, let this be the first thing that you do—commit yourself to Jesus Christ for the whole of the day. Say, "My Lord, here is my heart which I commit to You. While I am away from home, may my heart be full of the fragrance of Your blessed Presence. And when I return at night, may I still find my heart in Your kind keeping!" And every night, before we go to sleep, let us pray—

"Should swift death this night overtake us,
And our couch become our tomb,
May the morn in Heaven awake us,
Clad in light and deathless bloom!"

Are you going to a foreign land? Then renew the committal of your life to God. Are you going to change your state, and enter upon the joys and responsibilities of married life? Then commit yourself to God. Are you going to a new situation, or opening a new business? Is any change coming over you? Then make a new committal, or a re-committal of your soul to the Lord Jesus—only take care that you do it heartily and thoroughly—and make no reserve. I rejoice to feel that I have committed myself to Christ as the slave of old committed himself to his master. When the time came for him to be set free under the Jewish Law, he said to his master, "No, I do not want to go. I love you, I love your children, I love your household, I love your service. I do not want to be free." Then you know that the master was to take an awl and fasten him by the ear to the doorpost. I supposes this was done to see whether the man really wanted to remain with his master or not. Ah, Beloved, some of us have had our ears bored long ago! We have given ourselves up to Christ and we have a mark upon us which we can never lose. Were we not buried with Him by Baptism unto death—a symbol that we are dead to the world and buried to the world for His dear sake? Well, in that same way, give yourself wholly up to Jesus! Commit yourself to Him. As that young bride commits all her life's joys and hopes to that dear bridegroom into whose face she looks so lovingly, so, O Souls, commit yourselves to that dearest Bridegroom in earth or Heaven—the Lord Jesus Christ! Commit yourselves to Him, to love and to be loved—His to obey, His to serve and His to be kept—His in life—and you need not add "till death us do part," but you may say, "till death shall wed us more completely and we shall

sit together at the marriage banquet above and be forever and forever one before the Throne of God."

Thus the poor soul commits itself unto Christ, is married unto Christ, gets the portion which Christ possesses, becomes Christ's own and then lives with Christ forever! Oh that this might be the time in which many a man and many a woman would commit themselves to Christ! I do not merely mean you who are poor in pocket, but you who are poor in spirit—I am asking you to commit yourselves to Christ. Do not put it off, but may this be the very hour in which you shall be committed to Christ and He shall take possession of you to be His forever and forever! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 31.

Verse 1. *In You, O LORD, do I put my trust.* This is a good beginning. This is the fulcrum which will give us the necessary leverage for lifting any weight of sorrow or trouble that may be burdening us—"In You, O Jehovah, do I put my trust." Can each of us truthfully say that to begin with? If so, we may go on with David to the petitions that follow.

1. *Let me never be ashamed: deliver me in Your righteousness.* It would be to us the shame of shames if God, in whom we put our trust, could fail us. Then, indeed, might the scoffers say, "Where, now, is their God?" And what should we then be able to say of the righteousness of God? He has pledged Himself that He will never fail nor forsake any of His people. So, if He ever did fail them, what would become of His honor?

2. *Bow down Your ear to me.* "Listen to me, O Lord! Stoop down out of Your Glory to catch the faint accents of my sorrowing, almost expiring spirit."

2. *Deliver me speedily.* "My case is urgent, Lord, for I am in deep distress. Delay will be dangerous and may be even fatal—'Deliver me speedily.'"

2. *Be You my strong rock, for a house of defense to save me.* David was so accustomed to hide in the rocks of Engedi and similar fastnesses, that we do not wonder that he found such a comparison as this come naturally to his mind—"Be You my strong rock, for a house of defense to save me."

3. *For You are my rock and my fortress.* Why did David just now pray God to be to him what he here says that God is? Surely it was in order that he might know *experimentally* what he already knew doctrinally—he wanted the Truth of God, in which he already believed, to be proven in his own experience, so he prayed to the Lord, "Be You my strong rock…for You are my rock and my fortress."

3. *Therefore for Your name's sake.* "For Your glory's sake, for Your honor's sake."

3. *Lead me and guide me.* "Lead me as a child needs to be led. Guide me as a traveler in a foreign land needs to be guided. I need You to both lead and to guide me."

4. *Pull me out of the net that they have laid privately for me: for You are my strength.* Sometimes the Believer gets so entangled that he sees no way of escape. He is caught like a bird in the fowler's net and he is so surrounded by it that he cries to the Lord, "Pull me out of the net." He feels that he can only be delivered by the putting forth of God's power—and that is the reason why he adds, "O Lord, use Your strength on my behalf! Give a desperate tug and pull me out of the net that they have laid privately for me; for You are my strength."

5. *Into Your hands I commit my spirit.* The dying words of Jesus may well be the living words of each one of His redeemed people. We ought continually to commit our spirit into our great Father's hands, for there is no other place that can be so safe and blessed as between the strong, almighty, never-failing hands of the eternal God!

5. *You have redeemed me, O LORD God of Truth.* Redemption is such a blessed ground for confidence in God. Even the ordinary redemptions, such as David had experienced when the Lord had redeemed him out of the hand of his enemies and redeemed him out of troubles of many kinds, were great sources of consolation to David. But what shall we say of that rich, full, free redemption which Christ accomplished for His people upon Calvary's Cross? Think you that God will not keep those whom He has purchased with the blood of His own dear Son? Will He suffer those to perish who have cost Him so dearly? Oh, no! None shall pluck them from His hands. This is a sound argument that David uses—"Into Your hands I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth."

6. *I have hated them that regard lying vanities.* That is, those that trusted in their idol gods which he calls by this contemptuous name, "lying vanities." David was not very respectful to false religions. He called them vanities and lies, and said, "I have hated them that regard them."

6, 7. *But I trust in the LORD. I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy: for You have considered my trouble; You have known my soul in adversities.* "'You have considered my trouble.' You have looked at it, weighed it, understood it." When a wise man gives his consideration to a thing, we respect his judgment, but what shall we say of the consideration of God? This is a wonderful expression—"You have considered my trouble; You have known my soul in adversities." "When I hardly knew myself, and could not make out what I was or where I was, You have known all about me. You have known me when I was in rags and tatters, when I was so down at the heel that nobody else would acknowledge me. You did not discard me—'You have known my soul in adversities.'"

8-10. *And have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: You have set my feet in a large room. Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble: my eyes are consumed with grief. Yes, my soul and my belly. For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing.* That is better than spending our years in sinning! Yet it is a painful experience when every breath seems to be drawn with a pang and the effort to live is itself a struggle, as it is in certain trying diseases.

10, 11. *My strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones are consumed. I was a reproach among all my enemies, but especially among my neighbors.* They were the nearest to him and, therefore, could smite him the most keenly.

11. *And a fear to my acquaintance.* They did not like to acknowledge him even as an acquaintance. They were afraid of him. Yet what a light this verse throws upon David's previous declaration, "You have known my soul in adversities"!

12. *I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind.* The very man in whose honor, in the former times, the women out of all the cities of Israel sang, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands," now had sorrowfully to say, 'I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind."

12. *I am like a broken vessel.* "Men think me of no more value than a piece of broken crockery that is flung away on the dunghill as utterly useless."

13. *For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side.* The very best of men have had to smart under the wounds caused by that cruel, accursed thing, slander! No quality of purity, no degree of piety can screen a man from the tongue of slander. In fact, as the birds peck most at the ripest fruit, it is often the best of men who are most slandered.

13, 14. *While they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life. But I trusted in You, O LORD: I said, You are my God.* That is a grand utterance of the Psalmist! Now he is coming back to the point where he began—the Psalm is now in harmony with its keynote.

15. *My times are in Your hands.* My times are not in the hands of my enemies—they cannot hurt me without God's permission.

15, 16. *Deliver me from the hand of my enemies, and from them that persecute me. Make Your face to shine upon Your servant.* Oh, for the shining of God's face! How blessed and glorious they are! It is Heaven on earth to dwell within the circle of that light—but if we get out of the range of those rays, what joy can we have?

16. *Save me for Your mercies' sake.* That is a prayer for a sinner and a prayer for a saint—a prayer for every day of the year. "Save me for Your mercies' sake."

17-19. *Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon You: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave. Let the lying lips be put to silence which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous. Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for them that fear You.* Then be of good courage, you tried ones! Think of all the good things that are laid up in store for you—the treasures that are put away for the present. Nor is this all—"How great is Your goodness."

19. *Which You have worked for them that trust in You before the sons of men!* So there is goodness in the present as well as goodness in the future—goodness worked out as well as goodness stored up!

20. *You shall hide them in the secret of Your Presence from the pride of man: You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.*

There is nothing much worse than the strife of tongues. A pack of wolves would not be half as bad as a pack of tongues let loose upon a man! Wolves do but tear the flesh, but tongues devour a man's character and eat up his very life. Oh, how blessed it is to be kept secretly in God's royal pavilion from the strife of tongues!

21. *Blessed be the LORD; for He has showed me His marvelous kindness in a strong city*. He has kept me in safety, and preserved me from every foe. Blessed be His holy name!

22, 23. *For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Your eyes: nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried unto You. O love the LORD, all you His saints.* It seems as if David felt that he could not love the Lord sufficiently by himself, so he calls upon all the saints to bring their hearts full of love and yield their treasure unto God.

23. *For the LORD preserves the faithful, and plentifully rewards the proud doer.* He gives him a sharp blow with the back of His hand, but He gives to the righteous a full-handed mercy!

24. *Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you that hope in the LORD.* Your heart is faint, but the Lord will put strength where there now is weakness. Therefore "be of good courage." Cowardice weakens, fear saps a man's strength—so "be of good courage," for your strength shall be equal to your day—and you shall yet win the victory, "all you that hope in the Lord."

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

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THE GOOD SHEPHERD
NO. 3060

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3, 1907.

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

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want."
Psalm 23:1.

[See Sermon #3006, Volume 52—"THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD." Sermons on the Parable of the Good Shepherd are as follows—#1877, Volume 32—OUR OWN DEAR SHEPHERD; #1713, Volume 29—OTHER SHEEP AND ONE FLOCK; #995, Volume 17—THE SHEEP AND THEIR SHEPHERD and #2120, Volume 35—THE SECURITY OF BELIEVERS—OR, SHEEP WHO SHALL NEVER PERISH. Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

DOES not this sound just like poetry or like singing? If you read the entire Psalm through, it is written in such poetic prose that though it is not translated into meter, as it should have been, it reads just like it. "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. He restores my soul: He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." It sounds like music for this, among other reasons, because it came from David's heart. That which comes from the heart always has melody in it. When men speak of what they know and from the depths of their souls testify to what they have seen, they speak with what we call, eloquence, for true eloquence is speaking from the soul. Thus David spoke of what he knew—what he had verified all his life—and this rendered him truly eloquent.

As "truth is stranger than fiction," so the truth that David spoke is more sweet than even fancy could have imagined. And it has more beauty than even the dream of the enthusiast could have pictured. "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." How naturally it seems to strike on the ear as uttered by David who had, himself, been a shepherd boy! He remembers how he had led his flock by the waters in the warm summer, how he had made them lie down in shady nooks by the side of the river, how, on sultry days, he had led them on the high hills that they might feel the cool air and how, when the winter set in, he had led them into the valleys that they might be hidden from the stormy blasts. Well could he remember the tender care with which he protected the lambs and carried them—and how he had tended the wounded of the flock. And now, appropriating to himself the familiar figure of a sheep, he says, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." I will try to preach experimentally

tonight and I wonder how many of you will be able to follow the Psalmist with me while I attempt to do so?

First of all, *there are some preliminaries* before a man can say this—it is absolutely necessary that he should feel himself to be like a sheep by nature, for he cannot know that God is his Shepherd unless he feels in himself that he has the nature of a sheep. Secondly, *there is a sweet assurance*—a man must have had some testimony of Divine care and goodness in the past, otherwise he cannot *appropriate* to himself this verse, "The Lord is my Shepherd." And thirdly, *there is a holy confidence.* I wonder how many there are here who can place all their future in the hand of God and can join with David in uttering the last sentence, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."

I. First then, we say THERE IS A CERTAIN CONFESSION NECESSARY BEFORE A MAN CAN JOIN IN THESE WORDS. We must feel that there is something in us which is akin to the sheep. We must acknowledge that in some measure we exactly resemble it or else we cannot call God our Shepherd.

I think the first apprehension we shall have if the Lord has brought us into this condition, is this—we shall be conscious of our own folly—we shall feel how unwise we always are. *A sheep is one of the most unwise of creatures.* It will go anywhere except in the right direction. It will leave a fat pasture to wander into a barren one. It will find out many ways, but not the right way. It would wander through a forest and find its way through ravines into the wolf's jaws, but never by its wariness turn away from the wolf. It could wander near his den, but it would not instinctively turn aside from the place of danger. It knows how to go astray, but it knows not how to come home again. Left to itself, it would not know in what pasture to feed in summer, or where to retire in winter.

Have we ever been brought to feel that in matters of Providence, as well as in things of Grace, we are truly and entirely foolish? I think no man can trust Providence till he distrusts himself—and no one can say, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," until he has given up every idle notion that he can control himself or manage his own interests. Alas, we are, most of us, wise above that which is written and we are too vain to acknowledge the Wisdom of God! In our self-esteem we fancy our reason can rule our purposes and we never doubt our own power to accomplish our own intentions! And then, by a little maneuvering we think to extricate ourselves from our difficulties. Could we steer in such a direction as we have planned, we entertain not a doubt that we could avoid at once the Scylla and the Charybdis—and have fair sailing all our life! O Beloved, surely it needs but little teaching in the School of Divine Grace to make out that we are fools! True wisdom is sure to set folly in a strong light.

I have heard of a young man who went to college and when he had been there a year, his father said to him, "Do you know more than when

you went?" "Oh, yes!" he said, "I do." Then he went the second year and was asked the same question, "Do you know more than when you went?" "Oh, no," he said, "I know a great deal less." "Well," said the father, "you are getting on." Then he went the third year and was asked, "What do you know now?" "Oh," he said, "I don't think I know anything." "That is right," said his father, "you have now learned to profit since you say you know nothing." He who is convinced that he knows nothing as he ought to know gives up steering his ship and lets God put His hand on the rudder. He lays aside his own wisdom and cries, "O God, my little wisdom is cast at Your feet. Such as it is, I surrender it to You. I am prepared to renounce it, for it has caused me many an ill and many a tear of regret, that I should have followed my own devices. But from now on I will delight in Your statutes. As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so shall my eyes wait upon the Lord my God. I will not trust in horses or in chariots; but the name of the God of Jacob shall be my refuge. Too long, alas, have I sought my own pleasure and labored to do everything for my own gratification. Now would I ask, O Lord, Your help that I may seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and leave all the rest to You." Do you, O my Friends, feel persuaded that you are foolish? Have you been brought to confess the sheepishness of your nature? Or are you flattering your hearts with the fond conceit that you are wise? If so, you are indeed fools! But if brought to see yourself like Agur when he said, "I am more brutish than any man and have not the understanding of a man," then even Solomon might pronounce you wise! And if you are thus brought to confess, "I am a silly sheep," I hope you will be able to say, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I cannot have any other, I want none other—He is enough for me."

Again, a sheep is not only foolish, but *it is a very dependent creature*. The sheep, at least in its domesticated state, as we know it, must always be dependent. If we should take a horse, we might turn him loose upon the prairie and there he would find sufficient food for his sustenance. And years later we might see him in no worse condition than that in which we left him. Even the ox might thus be treated and still be able to provide for itself. But as for the silly sheep, set it alone in the wilderness, let it pursue its own course unheeded—and what would be its fate? Presently, if it did not wander into places where it would be starved, it would ultimately come to ruin, for assuredly some wild beast would lay hold upon it and it has no means of defense for itself.

Beloved, have we been brought to feel that we have of ourselves no means of subsistence and no power of defense against our foes? Do we perceive the necessity for our dependence upon God? If so, then we have learned another part of the great lesson that the Lord is our Shepherd. Some of us have yet to learn this lesson. Gladly would we cater for

ourselves and carve for ourselves—but as the good old Puritan said, "No child of God ever carves for himself without cutting his fingers," we sometimes fancy that we can do a little for ourselves—but we shall have that conceit taken out of us very soon. If we, indeed, are God's people, He will bring us to depend absolutely upon Him day by day. He will make us pray, "Give us this day our daily bread"—and make us acknowledge that He opens His hands and gives us our food in due season. Sweet is the meal that we eat, as it were, out of His hands! Yet some will rebel against this dependence as very humiliating. Men like to vaunt their independence—nothing is more respectable in their eyes than to live in independent circumstances. But it is no use for us to talk of being independent—we can never be.

I remember a dear Christian who prayed very sweetly each Sunday morning at a certain Prayer Meeting that I once attended, "O Lord, we are *independent* creatures upon You." Except in such a sense as that, I never knew any independence worth having! Of course he meant, "we are dependent creatures upon You." So we must be. We cannot be independent even of one another—and certainly we are not independent of God, for when we have health and strength, we are dependent upon Him for their continuance. And if we have them not, we are dependent on Him to restore them to us. In all matters whatever, it is sweet, it is blessed to see the tokens of His watchful care. If I had anything of which I could say, "God has not given me this," I hope, by Divine Grace, I would turn it out of doors. Food, raiment, health, breath, strength—everything comes from Him and we are constantly dependent upon Him! As Huntington used to say, "My God gives me a hand-basket portion. He does not give me an abundance at once, but He gives it, basket by basket, and I live from hand to mouth." Or, as old Hardy once said, "I am a gentleman commoner on the bounty of God. I live day by day upon morning commons and evening commons—and thus I am dependent upon Him—independent of the world, but dependent upon God." The sheep is a dependent creature, always needing some help. And so is the Christian. And he realizes the blessedness of his dependence when he can say, "The Lord is my Shepherd."

These are the two principal points upon which we view this Truth of God with regard to Providence. I might wander from what I wished to be the subject of this evening. And I might be doing good if I were to show you some other points of comparison between the Christian and the sheep. O Beloved, there are some of you here present who know yourselves to be *sheep by reason of your frequent wanderings.* How often have we made this confession, "We have erred and strayed from Your ways like lost sheep"? And we feel it this night, bitterly ruing the waywardness of our hearts. But it is well to be the sheep of God's pasture even if we have been wandering sheep! We do not read of wandering dogs, because dogs are naturally wild, while sheep are always

accounted to be someone's property. The straying sheep has an owner—and however far it may stray from the fold, it ceases not to belong to that owner. I believe that God will yet bring back into the fold every one of His own sheep and they shall all be saved. It is something to feel our wanderings, for if we feel ourselves to be lost, we shall certainly be saved! If we feel ourselves to have wandered, we shall certainly be brought back.

Again, we are just like sheep *by reason of the perverseness of our wills.* People talk about free-will Christians and tell us of persons being saved and coming to God of their own free will. It is a very curious thing, but though I have heard a great nanny free-will sermons, I never heard any free-will prayers. I have heard Arminianism in preaching and talking, but I have never heard any Arminian praying. In fact, I do not think there can be any prayer of that sort—it is a style that does not suit prayer! The theory may look very nice in argument and sound very proper in discourse, though we somewhat differ from it. But for practical purposes it is useless! The language will not suit us in prayer and this alone would be sufficient reason to condemn it. If a man cannot pray in the spirit of his own convictions, it shows they are a delusion from beginning to end, for if they were true, he could pray in that language as well as in any other! Blessed be God, the Doctrines of Grace are as good to pray with as to preach with! We do not find ourselves out of order in any act of worship when once we have the old fundamental Doctrines of the blessed Gospel of Grace! Persons talk about free-will Christians coming back to Jesus of themselves. I intend to believe them when they find me a free-will sheep that has come back of itself—when they have discovered some sheep, after it has gone from its fold—stand bleating at its master's door, asking to be taken in again! You will not find such a sheep and you will not find a free-will Christian, for they will all confess, if you thoroughly probe the matter, that it was Grace, and Grace alone that restored their souls—

"Grace taught our souls to pray,
And made our eyes overflow—
'Tis Grace that keeps us to this day
And will not let us go."

II. The next thing is THE ASSURANCE THAT THE LORD IS OUR SHEPHERD. It is very easy to say, "The Lord is a Shepherd," but how shall we appropriate the blessedness to ourselves and be able to say, "The Lord is *our* Shepherd?" I answer that He has had certain dealings with our souls in the past which have taught us that He is our Shepherd. If every man and every woman in this assembly should rise up and say, "The Lord is my Shepherd," I feel convinced it would be, in many instances, the solemn utterance of a lie, for there are, it is to be feared, many here who have not God for their Shepherd. He is their Guide, it is true, in some sense, because He overrules all the hearts and controls all the affairs of the children of men. But they are not the people of His

pasture, they are not the sheep of His hand. They do not believe—therefore they are not of His fold. And if some of you should say that you are, your own conscience would belie you! How, then, does a man come to know that the Lord is his Shepherd?

He knows it, first, *because Jesus Christ has brought him back from his wanderings.* If there is anyone here who, after a course of folly and sin, has been fetched back from the mountains of error and the haunts of evil. If there is one here who has been stopped in a mad career of vice and has been reclaimed by the power of Jehovah Jesus, such a one will know, by a happy experience, that the Lord is his Shepherd! If I once wandered on yon mountaintop and Jesus climbed up and caught me, and put me on His shoulders and carried me home, I cannot and dare not doubt that He is my Shepherd! If I had belonged to some other sheep-owner, He would not have sought me. And from the fact that He did seek me, I learn that He must be my Shepherd! Did I think that any man convinced me of sin, or that any human power had converted me, I would fear I was that man's sheep and that he was my shepherd. Could I trace my deliverance to the hand of a creature, I would think that a creature might be my shepherd! But since he who has been reclaimed of God must and will confess that God alone has done it and will ascribe to His free Grace, and to that alone, his deliverance from sin, such a one will feel persuaded that the Lord must be his Shepherd because He fetched him back from his wanderings—He snatched him out of the jaw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear.

We know still further that like a shepherd, *He has supplied our needs.* Some of you, Beloved, know of a surety that God is your Provider. Sometimes you have been brought into such straits that if it had not been for an interposition of Heaven, itself, you never could have had deliverance! You have sunk so deep down into poverty and loved ones and acquaintances have stood so far aloof from you that you know there is but one arm which could have fetched you up. You have been reduced, perhaps, to such straits that all you could do was to pray. You have wrestled at the Throne of God and sought for an answer, but it has not come. You have used every effort to extricate yourself and darkness has still compassed your path. Again and again you have tried till hope has well-near vanished from your heart. And then, adding vows to your prayer, you have said in your agony, "O God, if You will deliver me this time, I will never doubt You again!" Look back on the path of your pilgrimage. Some of you can count as many Ebenezers as there are milestones from here to York! Ebenezers piled up with oil poured on the top of them—places where you have said, "Hitherto, the Lord has helped me." Look through the pages of your diary and you will see, time after time, when your perils and emergencies were such as no earthly skill could relieve and you felt constrained to witness what others among you have never felt—that there is a God, that there is a Providence—a God

who compasses your path and is acquainted with all your ways! You have received deliverance in so marvelous a way, from so unseen a hand and so unlikely a source, under circumstances, perhaps, so foreign to your wishes—and yet the deliverance has been so perfect, so complete and wonderful—you have been obliged to say, "The Lord is my Shepherd." Yes, He is! The sheep, we know, fed day by day in good pasture, may forget its Shepherd. But if for a time it is taken from the pasture and then brought home again, after having been nearly starved, it says, "Truly, He is my Shepherd." If I had always been supplied with bread, without the pinch of anxiety, I might have doubted whether He had given it, and ascribed it to the ordinary course of passing events. But seeing that "everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need," I acknowledge that it is my God who supplies all my need! Yes, and with gratitude I will write it down for a certainty—"The Lord is my Shepherd."

But, Beloved, do not be distressed even though you should not have had these particular trials and deliverances, for there is a way whereby we can tell that the Lord is our Shepherd without encountering so many rough and rugged passes, as I will show you presently. I have heard it said, by some, that a man cannot be a child of God unless he has gone through a certain set of trials and troubles. I recollect hearing a sermon from these words, "Who passing through the Valley of Baca makes it a well." Certainly the preacher did not make his sermon a well, for it was as dry as a stick and not worth hearing. There was nothing like cheerfulness in it, but a flood of declamation all the way through against hopeful Christians, against people going to Heaven who are not always grumbling, murmuring, doubting, fumbling for their evidences amidst the exercises of their own hearts, always reading and striving to rival Job and Jeremiah in grief, taking the Lamentations as the fit expression of their own lips, troubling their poor brains, vexing their poor hearts, smarting, crying and wearying themselves with the perpetual habit of complaining against God, saying with poor Job, "My stroke is heavier than my groaning." Such persons measure themselves by their troubles, trials, distresses, tribulations, perplexities and no end of things—things that we will not stop to recount! We believe, indeed, that such things will come to a child of God. We think every Christian will be corrected in due measure—we would be the last to deny that God's people are a tried people! They must all pass through the furnace of affliction and He has chosen them there, but still, we believe that religion is a blessed and a happy thing and we love to sing that verse—

"The men of Grace have found
Glory begun below!
Celestial fruits on earthly ground
From faith and hope may grow."

And what though some of my Hearers have not yet had to swim through the rivers. Though they may not have had to pass through the fiery furnace of Providential trial, they have had trials enough and trials that no heart has known except their own suffering which they could not tell to flesh and blood, which have gnawed their very souls and catered into the marrow of their spirits. Bitter anguish and aching voids such as those who boast about their trials nearer felt, such as mere babbling troublers did never know, deep rushing of the stream of woe with which little bubbling narrow brooks could never compare! Such persons fear to murmur—they cannot reveal their sufferings because they think it would be showing some lack of trust in God. They keep their trials to themselves and only speak of them into that ear which hears and has no lips to babble afterwards.

"But," you say, "how can you tell that the Lord is your Shepherd if you have not been tried in any of those great deeps?" We know that He is *because He has fed us day by day in good pasture.* And if He has not allowed us to wander as far away as others, we can lift up our eyes to Him and each one of us say, "Lord, You are my Shepherd. I can as fully prove that You are my Shepherd by Your keeping me in the grassy field as by Your fetching me back when I have wandered. I know You are as much my Shepherd when You have supplied my needs day by day as if you had allowed me to go into poverty and given me bitterness. I know You are as much my Shepherd when granting me a continua1 stream of mercy, as if that stream had stopped for a moment and then had begun to flow again." People say, if they have had an accident and been nearly killed, or have narrowly escaped, "What a Providence!" Yet it is as much a Providence when you have no accident at all! A good man once went to a certain place to meet his son. Both his son and he had ridden some distance. When the son arrived, he exclaimed, "Oh Father! I had such a Providence on the road." "Why, what was that?" "My horse stumbled six times and yet I was not thrown." "Dear me!" said his father, "but I have had a Providence too!" "And what was that?" "Why, my horse never stumbled at all! And that is just as much a Providence as if the horse had stumbled six times and I had not been thrown."

It is a great Providence when you have lost your property and God provides for you. But it is quite as much a Providence when you have no loss at all and when you are still able to live above the depths of poverty! And so God provides for you. I say this to some of you when God has blessed and continually provided for you from your earliest youth. You, too, can each of you say, "The Lord is my Shepherd." You can see this title stamped on your mercies, though they come daily. They are given to you by God and you will say, by humble faith, the word, "my," as loudly as anyone can! Do not get to despising the little ones of the flock because they have not had as many trials as you have had! Do not get to cutting the children of God in pieces because they have not been in such fights

as you have! The Shepherd leads the sheep where He pleases and be you sure that He will lead them rightly! And as long as they can say from their hearts, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," do not trouble yourselves about where or how they learned it!

III. Now we finish up with THE HOLY CONFIDENCE OF THE PSALMIST. "I shall not want."

"There," poor Unbelief says, "I am wanting in everything. I am wanting in spirituals, I am wanting in temporals and I shall always want! Ah, such distress as I had a little while ago you cannot tell what it was—it was enough to break one's heart and it is coming again—I shall want." That is what Unbelief says, but you must write your own name at the bottom and then I will repeat this, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." That is what David said and I think David's faith far preferable to your unbelief. I might take your evidence in some matters, but I really would not take it before David's. I would accept your testimony as an honest man in some respects, but the words of Inspiration must be preferable to your words of apprehension! When I find it written, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," I would rather take one of David's affirmations than 50 of your negations.

I think I hear someone saying, "I would bear the want of any temporal good if I could but obtain spiritual blessings. I am in want this night of more faith, more love, more holiness, more communion with my Savior." Well, Beloved, the Lord is your Shepherd, you shall not want even those blessings—if you ask of Him, He will give them to you, though it may be by terrible things in righteousness that He will save you. He often answers His people in an unexpected manner. Many of God's answers to our letters come down in black-edged envelopes, yet mark you, they will come. If you want peace, joy, sanctification and such blessings, they shall be given to you, for God has promised them. The Lord is your Shepherd, you shall not want. I have often thought of that great promise written in the Bible—I do not know where there is a greater one—"No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." "No good thing!" It is a mercy that the word, "good," was put in, for if it had said, "He, will withhold nothing," we should have been asking for many things that would be bad for us. But it says, "no good thing!" Now, spiritual mercies are good things and not only good things, but the *best* things so that you may well ask for them! For if no good thing will be withheld, much more will none of the best things! Ask, then, Christian, for He is your Shepherd and you shall not want! He will supply your needs. He will give you whatever you require. Ask in faith, doubting nothing, and He shall give you what you really need.

But still there are some who say, "The text applies to temporal matters," and persist in it. Well, then, I will accept this sense—the Lord is your Shepherd, you shall not want for temporal blessings. "Ah," cries

one, "I was once in affluence and now I am brought down to penury. I once stood among the mighty and was rich—now I walk among the lowly and am poor." Well, David does not say, "The Lord is your Shepherd, and you shall not come down in society." He does not say, "The Lord is your Shepherd and, therefore, you shall have 500 or a thousand pounds a year." He does not say, "The Lord is your Shepherd and, therefore, you shall have whatever your soul lusts after." All David says is, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." There are different ways of wanting. There are many people whose foolish craving and restless anxiety make them always in want. If you gave them a house to live in and fed them day by day, they would always be wanting something more. And after you had just relieved their necessities, they would still want. The fact is theirs are not real wants, but simply fancied wants. David does not say, "The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore I shall not fancy that I want," for though God might promise that, it would need His Omnipotence to carry it out, for His people often get to fancying that they want when they do not. It is real needs that are referred to. "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not really want." There are many things we wish for that we do not really need, but there is no promise given that we shal1 have all we wish for. God has not said that He would give us anything more than we need, but He will give us that.

So lift up your head and do not be afraid! Fear not, your God is with you! He shall prevent evil from hurting you. He shall turn darkness into light and bitter into sweet. He has led you all the way and all the way this shall be your constant joy—He is my Shepherd, I shall not really want that which is absolutely necessary. Whatever I really require shall be given by the lavish hands of a tender Father. Believer, here is your inheritance, here is your income, here is your yearly living—"He is your Shepherd, and you shall not want." What is your income, Believer? "Why," you say, "it varies with some and others of us." Well, but, a Believer's income is still the same. This is it—"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." That is my income and it is yours, poor little one. That is the income of the poorest pauper in the workhouse who has an interest in the Grace of God—the Lord is her Shepherd, she shall not want! That is the income of the poor foundling child who has come to know the Lord in early life and has no other friend—the Lord is his Shepherd, he shall not want! That is the widow's inheritance—the Lord is her Shepherd, she shall not want! That is the orphan's fortune—the Lord is his Shepherd, he shall not want! That is the Believer's portion, his inheritance, his blessing!

"Well now," some may say, "what is this Truth worth?" Beloved, if we could change this Truth for a world of gold, we would not! We had rather live on this Truth of God than live on the finest fortune in creation! We reckon that this is an inheritance that makes us rich, indeed—"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Give me ten thousand pounds and one

reverse of fortune may scatter it all away. But let me have a spiritual hold of this Divine Assurance, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," and then I am set up for life! I cannot break with such stock as this in hand! I never can be a bankrupt, for I hold this security—"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Do not give me ready money now—give me a checkbook and let me draw what I like. That is what God does with the Believer. He does not immediately transfer his inheritance to him, but lets him draw what he needs out of the riches of his fullness in Christ Jesus! The Lord is his Shepherd; he shall not want. What a glorious inheritance! Walk up and down it Christian! Lie down upon it, it will do for your pillow—it will be soft as down for you to lie upon. "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Climb up that creaking staircase to the top of your house, lie down on your hard mattress, wrap yourself with a blanket, look out for the winter when hard times are coming and say not, "What shall I do?" but just hum over to yourself these words, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."

That will be like the hush of lullaby to your poor soul and you will soon sink to slumber. Go, you business man, to your counting-house again, after this little hour of recreation in God's House, and again cast up those wearisome books. You are saying, "How about business? These prices may be my ruin. What shall I do?" When you have cast up your accounts, put this down against all your fears and see what a balance it will leave—"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." There is another man. He does not lack anything, but still he feels that some great loss may injure him considerably. Go and write this down in your cash-book. If you have made out your cash-account truly, put this down—"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Put this down for something better than gold and silver—"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." He who disregards this Truth, knows nothing about its preciousness, but he who apprehends it, says, "Ah, yes, it is true, 'The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.'" He will find this promise like China wind of which the ancients said that it was flavored to the lips of him that tasted it! So this truth shall taste sweet to you if your spiritual palate is pure—yet it shall be worth nothing to you but mere froth if your taste is not healthy.

But Beloved, we must divide our congregation before we send you away and remind you that there are some of you to whom this Truth of God does not belong. Perhaps some of you professors of religion may want this Truth badly enough, but it is not yours. The Lord is not your Shepherd—you are not the sheep of His pasture and the flock of His hand. You are not sheep, but goats—unclean creatures, not harmless and undefiled as sheep, but everything that is the very reverse! Oh it is not only eternal loss, it is not only everlasting injury that you have to regret—it is also present loss and present injury—the loss of an inheritance on earth, the loss of an inheritance below. To be deprived of

such a comfort as this is a terrible privation. Oh, it is enough to make men long for religion if it were only for that sweet peace and calm of mind which it gives here below! Well might men wish for this heavenly oil to be cast on the troubled waters of this mortal life even if they did not anoint their heads with it or enter into glory with the joy of their Lord upon their countenance!

Beloved, there are some I know here—and your conscience tells you whom I mean—who have a voice within your own hearts which says, "I am not one of Christ's sheep." Well then, there is no promise for you that you shall not want! The promise and the Providence are for Believers, not for you. There is no promise that all things shall work together for your good, but rather you shall be cursed in your basket and cursed in your store, cursed in the field, cursed in your house, cursed in your going out and cursed in your coming in, for, "the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked." It does not merely peep in at his window but it is in his house! Yet God "blesses the habitation of the just." If you do not repent, the curse shall follow you until your dying day and not having Christ for your Shepherd, you shall wander where that hungry wolf, the devil, shall at last seize upon your soul—and everlasting misery and destruction from the Presence of Jehovah must be your inevitable, miserable and inexpressibly awful doom! May the Lord in mercy deliver you from it!

And this is the way of salvation—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." "He that believes and is baptized"—we omit nothing that God has said. "He that believes and is baptized"—not he that is baptized and then believes (which would be reversing God's order), but "He that believes and is baptized—not he that is baptized without believing, but the two joined together! He that believes with his heart and is baptized, confessing with his mouth—"he that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Do you neglect one part of it? It is at your peril, Sir! "He that believes and is baptized," says God. If any of you have neglected one portion of it—if you have believed and have not been baptized—God will save you. Still, this promise says not so. "He that believes and is baptized." It puts the two together and "what God has joined together, let no man put asunder." What He has ordered let no man disarrange. "He that believes"—that is, he that trusts in Jesus—he that relies upon His blood, His merits, His righteousness—"and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned."

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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 GRACE
NO. 3061

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 17, 1873.

"Many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the Prophet; and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian."
Luke 4:27.

OUR Savior never sought popularity. His ministry was so attractive that thousands thronged to hear Him, glad to catch the accents of His instructive tongue, but He never for a moment sought to preach flesh-pleasing truths, neither did He keep back any Doctrine by which it might be feared that His hearers would be disgusted. On this occasion He was speaking to His own townsmen. The young Man who had left the place for a while and who, during His absence, had acquired great fame as a Teacher and Miracle-Worker, had come home and there was, naturally, much curiosity to hear Him. They supposed that He would make the town where He had been brought up, to be the chief place of His benedictions. They were His fellow townsmen, so surely they had some claim upon Him! But our Lord, knowing right well that if they really understood His teaching, they would not be pleased with it—and knowing that the blessings He came to bring were not such as they desired—at once dealt honestly with them and told them that Elisha did not heal the lepers in his own country, but one was healed who came from a foreign land. And He led them to infer that very likely He would do His greatest deeds of healing elsewhere than at Nazareth, that God might be pleased to bestow the richest supplies of His Grace upon heathens—upon Syrians—and not upon those who seemed to suppose that they had some right or claim to it. Our Lord, in fact, preached to these people the great Doctrine of Divine Sovereignty, the humbling Doctrine of Divine Election of which Paul wrote to the Romans, "He said to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy." [See Sermon #442, Volume 8—GOD'S WILL AND MAN'S WILL——Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] That was the main point of our Savior's discourse and His fellow townsmen could not endure it, as many since have not been able to endure it—and seeking to end such hateful teaching by murdering the Teacher, they hurried Him from the synagogue to the top of the precipice whereon their city stood, that they might hurl Him down and destroy Him!

I learn, from this incident in our Lord's life, that it is not the preacher's business to seek to please his congregation. If he labors for

that end, he will in all probability not attain it. But if he should succeed in gaining it, what a miserable success it would be! He must lose the favor of his Master if he should once aim at securing the favor of his fellow men. We therefore ought to preach many Truths of God which will irritate our hearers! We ought to declare to them the doctrines which are for their present and eternal welfare, however distasteful they may be to their carnal reason and natura1 inclinations. As the physician must give bitter medicine to his patients if he would cure them of their diseases, so must the preacher, who is truly sent of God, proclaim unpalatable Truths of God to his hearers and he must preach the more often upon those very bitter Truths because men are so unwilling to receive them. That part of the Gospel which they will readily embrace without any persuasion need not be preached as often—but that part which they will kick at and resist must be enforced again and again, if perhaps at last their judgment should be convinced of its truth and their heart won for its reception!

By the Holy Spirit's help, I am going to preach to the unconverted with the earnest desire and hope that they will remain unconverted no longer. And my subject is the healing of Naaman the Syrian. There are two points in it that are especially worth noting. The first is *the sovereignty of Divine Grace* which was manifest in it. And the second is *the unvarying rules by which that Grace works.*

I. First then, let us consider THE SOVEREIGNTY OF DIVINE GRACE which was so clearly manifested in the healing of Naaman the Syrian.

And I will observe at the outset that *the experience of Naaman equally teaches the freeness of Divine Grace.* If our Savior had selected this case as an instance, not of the sovereignty, but of the freeness of Divine Grace, it would have been equally appropriate. Two Truths of God which sometimes appear to be in opposition will often prove, if they are examined more closely, to be nestling side by side with one another. Suppose our Savior had put the case of Naaman thus—"Every person who was a leper who applied to Elisha to be healed was healed, and though one of them came from a foreign country and was a heathen—and a determined enemy of Israel—he was not rejected, for whoever came to the Prophet was accepted and received the blessing." That would have been a Truth of God and a most blessed Truth, too, and a Truth which we delight to preach and which we do preach incessantly. And that Truth does not clash with the other Truth of God of which our text speaks—that out of all the lepers who were in Israel in the days of Elisha, none were cleansed save this one stranger from the alien land of Syria! The universality of Divine Grace is easily reconciled with the sovereignty of it! Perhaps we cannot reconcile it so that others can see the reconciliation, but we have felt the reconciliation in our own hearts and in our own experience. And for my part it would be as stern a difficulty to see that there is anything irreconcilable between the two Doctrines as it seems to be to others to see how the two Doctrines can possibly agree! I cannot, for the life of me, detect where they clash, just as some others cannot see how they agree. I do unfeignedly believe that Christ will in no wise cast out anyone who comes to Him and I dare to say that to every man and

woman of the human race—but I also believe just as firmly that no one comes unto Christ except those whom the Father draws to Him—and that all whom the Father has given to Christ shall surely come to Him. [See Sermons #1762, Volume 30—HIGH DOCTRINE AND BROAD DOCTRINE and #2386, Volume 40—THE DRAWINGS OF DIVINE LOVE—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Both these statements are true and, therefore, both of them are to be believed and we may rest assured that they both agree with one another!

But our Savior, on this occasion, though He often preached upon the freeness of Divine Grace, was pleased to preach upon the sovereignty of it, for *it was the sovereignty of Grace that saved Naaman.* He was a heathen, a worshipper of the idol god, Rimmon, yet when he obeyed the Prophet's command, he received the healing he asked for, yes, and more than that, he received the salvation of his soul, too! In addition to being a heathen, this man was a sworn enemy of Israel. He had often led the bands of Syria to plunder the people of God and yet, for all that, eternal mercy looked with complacency upon him and determined not only that his leprosy should be healed but that he should be a perpetual monument of the Sovereign Grace of God! He also lived far away from the abode of Elisha and in those days, the difficulty of travelling such a distance was exceedingly great—and yet, for all that, the Grace of God which passed by the lepers who were living near the Prophet's home, went far afield and found this Syrian soldier—and it is even so to this day! There are those who have lived ungodly, dishonest, unrighteous, unchaste lives whom God, nevertheless, saves by His Almighty Grace! There are even those who have been enemies of the Gospel, deniers and despisers of it and some who have been persecutors of God's people who have, like Saul of Tarsus, breathed out threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord and who have hated the things of God with their whole heart, yet, like Saul of Tarsus, these men have been overcome by the Omnipotence of Eternal Love and they have been saved by the Sovereign Grace of God. Some of these people have like Naaman been far off from the means of Grace. They have seldom attended the House of Prayer. They have been disregarders of God's holy Sabbath and yet, strange to say, the first time they went to the House of God, they found the blessing! They have been sought for by Go, and found according to His Sovereign Grace. 'Tis wonderful, but 'tis true, and nobody can long be pastor of such a Church as this without observing that it is often the most unlikely persons who are saved. Those who seem to you not likely even to be influenced by Divine Truth, are the very people who yield to it! Many whom you have set down as quite incorrigible have been renewed by Sovereign Grace. Why it is so, is not for us to know—we can only say, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Your sight."

This sovereignty of Grace, in the case of Naaman, seems all the more remarkable when we think of *the many others who were passed over* while he was healed. We would have thought surely, if Elisha can cure lepers, he will begin with those in Israel of whom our Lord tells us that there were many. But he does not begin with them—what he does is done for Naaman the Syrian! We think, surely, if he can cure lepers, he

will cure those who are observers of the Ceremonial Law, but he does no such thing—he brings healing to this heathen foreign soldier! At the present day, in every congregation, there are persons who have been brought up in an atmosphere of godliness. The first sound they ever heard was the voice of praise and prayer and they have lived in such surroundings all their lives—yet they are not converted. They have been at the House of God almost as often as the doors have been open—yet they are not saved. And they are respectable people, too. They are of excellent morals, very good in many ways and yet, for all that—while publicans and harlots, strangers and foreigners, occasional hearers and the like have actually been converted and are rejoicing in the blessings of full salvation—these people still remain in the leprosy of their natural depravity and sin—impenitent, unbelieving, unconverted, unpardoned!

How is this and why is it? It is not for us to give any reasons except the one reason that lies upon the surface, which is this—that God will have all men know that there is no one who has any right to salvation! That we are all lost and condemned to begin with and that if He does save any of us at all, it must be upon the resting of His free, Sovereign Mercy and cannot be upon the ground of our own merits and works. Suppose that it were a rule of the Kingdom of God that all the children of pious parents should be converted? There would be many who would say, "My mother was a godly woman, my father was a Christian—and that is all that is required." But it is not so. You are a lost sinner whatever your mother may have been! And you must repent and be converted just as truly as if you had been the child of the worst drab of the streets. Even though you may have descended from a long line of saints, you are a sinner and must be pardoned through the Infinite Mercy of God quite as much as the child of the man who was hanged for committing murder! You must be saved on the same principles as the vilest of the vile, must be saved and, to make men see this, God often passes by the children of the godly and calls the children of the godless into the Kingdom of His Grace. If everybody who went to the House of God was entitled to the blessings of salvation, many would say, "We attend such-and-such a place of worship and that is sufficient to ensure us a place in the Kingdom of Heaven!" So you seat-holders would conclude that there was no need for you to be anxious and that one of these days you would be sure to get the blessing.

But, my dear Hearers, how many have gone to Hell from seats in places of worship! How many regular hearers of the Word are also regular unbelievers who will one day be banished from God's Presence with a deeper woe upon them because they knew their duty, yet did it not—they heard the Truth of God yet did not heed it! And the Lord makes this to be known among men by often calling, by His Grace, those who attend our services, as it were, by accident and by making the Word preached to be the savor of life unto life to them—while those who regularly hear it, yet do not receive it, prove it to be the savor of death unto death to them! And, then, if all respectable people were saved, or those only were saved who were respectable, we would have this pretty thing which is nowadays called, "respectability," seeking to make God its

debtor and to cause the Most High to bow down before the respectability of men!

Let a woman but turn aside from the path of virtue. Let a man be but once convicted of a crime and how our self-righteous hands are held up against them! We are so pure, so good, so free from sin that we can afford to say with the hypocrite of old, "Stand by yourself, come not near me, for I am holier than you." We do not wonder that the Lord said concerning such people, "These are a smoke in My nose, a fire that burns all the day." How the thrice-holy Jehovah must loathe those who hypocritically pretend to be pure when their heart is full of rottenness and uncleanness! Many a man may appear not to be leprous, but the fatal disease is upon him all the while—and only waiting for an opportunity to show itself as it will do before long! Oh how God hates the wicked cant of this self-righteous world! And therefore He comes and looks for sinners, for real sinners, for those who admit that they have gone astray from His ways like lost sheep—and He leaves those who think themselves good, those who are in their own esteem, righteous. And He says to them, "According to your belief, you do not need a Savior. Therefore go your way and perish in your sin. But as for those poor lost ones whom you judge to be so full of sin that there is a double necessity for them to be pardoned and saved, it is for just such sinners as these that Jesus died! He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

I have heard of a great man who was once taken to see the French galley slaves. And he had given to him the authority to set free any man whom he found at the galleys to whom he cared to give his liberty. He went to one man and found that he was committed for ten years and he asked him about his crime. He said that he thought he had been treated very unfairly. He didn't know that he had done much amiss. Perhaps he had, once or twice, taken a little that was not his, but the temptation to which he had yielded was very strong and he had done so much good in other ways that he really thought he was very harshly treated in being sent to the galleys. So the gentleman passed him by—he was too good a man to receive a free pardon. There was another who said that he was perfectly innocent. He even swore that he was as innocent as a new-born babe of every accusation that had been brought against him. The gentleman also passed him by, for he, too, was too good to be freely forgiven. Then he came to another who said that he might have tripped perhaps, but much more was made of it than was true and there were liars in court and perjury had been committed by a great many of the witnesses against him. And he knew a great many men who were twice as bad as he was, yet they were at liberty while he was there in chains. That man was not the one to be pardoned. At last the visitor came to a poor fellow who said to him, "I have a long sentence to serve, but I fully deserve even more than that sentence. I wonder that I was not condemned to death, for had they proceeded to extremities, they might have proved me guilty of murder. So I look upon my sentence as much lighter than I really deserve to suffer." Then he who had received the

authority to pardon whom he pleased, said, "I pardon you, for, according to your own confession, you appear to be the only man in the whole place who is really receiving justice and, therefore, I will show you mercy, so you may go your way as a free man." In like manner, the Lord Jesus Christ is always ready to bestow His mercy upon those who confess that they deserve the heaviest sentence of His justice. But as long as we kick against that, we cannot expect Him to look upon us in love.

II. Now I think I have spoken sufficiently upon the Sovereignty of Grace, so I want to enlist your earnest attention to another part of the subject as I try to show you that in the case of Naaman, Sovereign Grace followed THE UNVARYING RULES OF GRACE.

God is a Sovereign and may therefore save whom He wills. And He may also save them *how* He wills. Yet when He is about to save a man, He does not depart from His usual method of working, but saves him according to the way in which He is accustomed to save.

Let me call your attention, first, to the fact that although Naaman was to be healed, and although Divine Sovereignty ordained the healing, *it was necessary that he should first hear the good news of the possibility of healing.* The ordinary way in which a sinner is saved is this, "Faith comes by hearing." It is as simple as possible. We hear the message and we believe it. So Naaman must first hear about the possibility of his being healed—but how is he to hear? Where is the preacher who will wend his way to Syria and tell him about the Lord's Prophet in Samaria? There is no need for any preacher to go on that long journey—a little maid is taken captive and she conveys the necessary message! That is all that is required. It was through a suitable messenger that Naaman was healed and blessed, so let none of us ever get into our heads the idea that God will save His own and, therefore, there is no need for us to go out to seek them, or to preach to them when we have found them! He will not save them apart from His own way—which way is that the preacher shall be sent and the person to be blessed shall hear the Gospel—and when he hears it, he shall be constrained to believe it. Hence we who are preachers must continue to preach the Word and you who are unsaved hearers, must make a point of endeavoring to hear the Gospel message, for that is both your privilege and your duty. God's own message to you is, "Incline your ears and come unto Me. Hear and your soul shall live." Therefore give your most earnest attention to the gracious message of mercy which God sends to you by His servants!

Next, when Naaman has heard that there is healing to be had in Israel, *he must give heed to the message* and make a long journey in order to reach the Lord's Prophet. He would not have been healed if he had sat down and said, "I have heard about this possibility of being healed of my leprosy, but I shall take no trouble to see whether it is true or not." Oh, no! He does not talk like that, but he gives orders for the horses and camels to be brought out and the talents of silver, and the pieces of gold, and the changes of raiment that he will need for use as presents. And he departs for that far country where he hopes to receive the blessing that he desires. And, sinners, if you really wish to be saved, you must remember that God will save you through your attentively

listening to the Gospel message that He sends to you and compelling your spirits to do what that message bids you do. God does not convert sinners while they are asleep! The Gospel is not absorbed by men as water is absorbed by a sponge, by a kind of insensible action. The Truth of God comes to the mind of the hearer and he is impressed by it. And being impressed by it, he lays it to heart and gives his whole soul to its comprehension and reception. And if you would be converted, you must get the Truth into your very soul. You must not play with it, you must not toy with it, you must not trifle with it—but you must be in earnest about the matter—you must, as the Apostle says, "Lay hold on eternal life." There must be an agonizing and a wrestling that you may enter into the full appropriation and possession of the Truth of God which is proclaimed in your hearing!

When Naaman had come to the Prophet Elisha, he was not healed merely because he had heard the little maid's message, or because he had heard it with such a measure of attention that he had given earnest heed to it. But *it was also imperative upon him that he should obey the command he received.* "Go," said the Prophet, "and wash in Jordan seven times." Naaman was ordained to be healed, yet he never would have been healed without the washing that Elisha commanded! And there is no sinner, be the purposes of God what they may, who will ever get his sins forgiven except by washing in the precious blood of Jesus! It matters not who you may be—unless you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you cannot have eternal life! Do not suppose, dear Hearers, that there is some secret decree of God that will override this—there is no such decree! The Truth of God with which you have to do is this, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." If you do not believe in Jesus, there is no hope for you! There remains, neither in God, nor in anyone else, any hope for you! The way of salvation is set before you and it is quite as simple as Elisha's command to Naaman to wash seven times in Jordan. The Gospel is that Jesus Christ suffered in the place of all sinners who trust Him as their Savior, that He endured what they ought to have endured and made atonement to God for all the sins that they would ever commit. And if you thus trust Him, you are saved. The simple act of relying upon Jesus as your Substitute and Savior puts away your guilt and sin forever!

But if you say, "This plan of salvation is too simple to be safe! I thought that there would be some imposing ceremony to be performed. I fancied that there would be certain mysterious feelings to be experienced!" If you talk like this, you cannot be healed. It is the Eternal Purpose of God that we shall be saved through faith in Jesus Christ and if there is no faith in Jesus Christ, that is a proof that there is no Divine Purpose to heal that soul! But where there is the Divine Purpose to heal, it is evidenced, sooner or later, by a submissive yielding to the ordained way of salvation and simple trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice once more, *Naaman was not healed until he was humbled.* It was God's purpose to heal him. He had been set apart by Sovereign Grace to be healed, yet he had to be humbled before the blessing could

come to him. While his pride was so great, he could not be healed. Why should he wash in the Jordan? Were not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, quite as good as the Jordan? Why should he wash there? Is he not high in the esteem of his master, the king of Syria? Why should he stoop to this indignity? He will not do anything of the kind! But if he will not, be he who he may, he cannot be healed. Though he is such great man, there is no healing for him without humbling—and it is so with those who would be cured of the leprosy of sin! There is no hope of Heaven for you unless you are humbled. As long as you have a rag of your righteousness that you trust in, you cannot have the robe of Christ's righteousness to cover you. If you glory in what you have, and what you are, you are not the kind of man whom God delights to save! You must lie low at the feet of Jesus! You must plead for forgiveness like a poor guilty sinner! You must cry, "Jesus save me, or I die!" or else through the gate of Heaven you are too big to pass for, "strait is the gate and narrow is the way," and no self-righteousness can go in there.

"But," says one, "I have always been a regular attendant at a place of worship. I have always paid twenty shillings in the pound. I give a guinea to the hospital and I believe myself to be, on the whole, a most excellent person." I do not suppose that anybody will say just that, but I mean that great many will think it. And I want all such people to plainly understand that until they get all this horrible boasting out of their soul, they will no more go to Heaven than the devil himself will! But if any man here confesses that he is a mass of iniquity—that even his best works have something bad in them, that his praying has to be wept over and his tears of repentance have to be washed to get the filth out of them—if there is a sinner here, real black or scarlet sinner, he or she is the one who is freely invited to come and put his trust in Jesus, for it is "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the very chief! Pride must come down, self-righteousness must die and the sinner must glorify the Grace of God by admitting that he has no merit of his own—or he cannot be saved.

What shall we say, then, to these things? Just this. Let us all go together to the Throne of God where we have offended and let us confess that none of us have any claims upon Him. Let each of us say to Him, "My Lord, if You should destroy me, I must confess that I deserve it. If You should save my brother, who is equally guilty, and not save me, I dare not complain, for You have the right to exercise Your mercy wherever and however You will. I shall receive the sentence that is just even if I am banished from Your Presence forever." Submit to the Lord as the burgesses of Calais came to the conquering king with ropes about their necks! That is the proper costume for a sinner to wear before God. Say, "Lord, I deserve, to die. I deserve to perish. I deserve to be destroyed. I will have no quibbles with You about my sentence, for how can a worm dispute with the Almighty? Who am I that I should reply against my Maker?"

When you have taken that position, rely upon the freeness of Divine Grace. Grasp, as with a death-clutch, this great fact and say, "Lord, You

forgive sinners for Your own name's sake. You cannot find anything in us that is good, anything that can move You to pity. But oh, by Your mercy and Your love, let men see what a gracious God You are! For Your great name's sake, have mercy upon us and save us!" And you can plead that Jesus said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." And that He has bid His servants say, "Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "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." Plead with Him that He has said, "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." Go and plead in that way, and trust yourself upon the Truth revealed in the Word of God. Try it and prove it, and see whether God really means what He says. Say to Him—

"You have promised to forgive
All who in Your Son believe.
Lord, I know You cannot lie—
Give me Christ, or else I die!"

I will not say to you—Go and risk it, for there is no risk. I will not say to you—Go and venture, for it is no venture. Go and say to the Lord, "O Lord, if I must perish, I will perish trusting in Your mercy through the precious blood of Jesus, Your dear Son! 'Other refuge have I none.' I cast aside all my former confidences and all my boasting and come as the worst sinner must come, for I feel that in some respects I am the worst sinner who ever came to You. I come as an utterly lost, undone, bankrupt sinner and I look to the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus for all that, I need." Then if you perish like that, I am quite willing to perish with you! And I will stand at the bar of God with you on the same terms, for if you are lost, I must be lost too! I solemnly avow that I have no hope in anything I have ever done. I have preached the Gospel these many years, but I have not preached one sermon that I can look upon with any confidence so far as to depend upon it as a merit in the sight of God! After we are saved, we may do something in the way of almsgiving and other things to show our gratitude to God, but they are worse than useless if we begin to boast of them as a reason *for* our salvation. My song is—

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

I know He did and I hope many of you can say the same thing. We are in the same boat and if we go down, God will have to go down, too, for it would stain His honor for anyone to be lost trusting in Jesus. But we shall never go down if we are trusting in Him! We shall stand when the great floods are out and the heavens are pouring forth their deluge of devouring rain! We shall stand, for we are built upon a rock if we are trusting in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ! God grant that we may all be found there and His shall be the praise forever and ever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 107:23-82.

Verses 23, 24. *They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the LORD, and His wonders in the deep.* The Jews were never given to navigation. To "go down to the sea in ships," seemed a very extraordinary thing to them. They looked upon it as a going down, as it were, into a dreadful abyss. We who are more accustomed to going to sea than they were, talk of "the high seas," but they spoke of going "down to the sea." They never went to sea except on business. King Solomon had no pleasure yacht. There was never one of that ancient race who cared to trust himself upon the sea except as a matter of sheer necessity—and those who did so were looked upon with wonder by their land-loving friends. "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord"—that is, His greatest works, both in the sea and on it. They know what storms are and they see what Omnipotence can do—and they come back to tell of the wonders of God upon the mighty deep. This verse may be read spiritually as well as literally. God calls some of His servants, as it were, to go down to the sea in ships. They are tried with poverty, with personal sickness, with temptation, with inward conflicts, with fierce persecutions. And God never calls them to these trials out of mere caprice, there is always a reason for it. They go down to the sea in ships to "do business in great waters." There is something to be gained from their trials and something to be learned from them. They "do business in great waters" and "these see the works of the Lord." Others hear about them and believe what they are told concerning them. But these see them. They see what God has done in their case—how He sustains, how He delivers, how He sanctifies trials and overrules them for His own Glory and His people's good. "These see the works of the Lord." And they also see the wonders of the economy of Grace. They are made to experience the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths of that love which passes knowledge. They see "His wonders in the deep." You and I need not desire to have trouble, as though we put out to sea for our own pleasure, but if God calls us to sail upon a sea of troubles, if He sends us there upon His business, we may depend upon it that He means that business to end to our profit and His Glory.

25-27.—*For He commands, and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves. They mount up to the heavens. They go down again to the depths. Their sou1 is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end.* Here we learn something of what sailors see and of what tried Christians experience. These great storms arise by God's command—not as many say, nowadays, "by the laws of nature." The wind, which had been quiet, heard God's voice and raises itself up, like a wild beast from its lair—"He commands, and raises the stormy wind." And no sooner does the great wind begin to blow than the white crests of the waves are seen, and the white horses fly before the blast which lifts up the waves on high. Then the ship, however staunch it is, seems to have no greater power of

resistance than a frail sea bird. And it is tossed up and down, up and down, from the trough of the sea to the billows' crown—"They mount up to the Heaven, they go down again to the depths." And their very soul begins to melt. Brave men as they are, it only needs a sufficient amount of storm to make their hearts turn to water and their spirits dissolve into the turbulent element that is all round them! "Their soul is melted because of trouble." Then they cannot keep their balance—"they reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man." What is worse, they cannot control their thoughts—they "are at their wit's end." What can they do in such a case as that? There is an end to all human wit and wisdom when the great storms are out upon the sea. You who have ever had deep spiritual trials know the analogy of all this. There may come times—there have come times to some of us—when, at the command of God, or by Divine Permission, there has been a fierce blast of temptation or a fiery trial—and then all that was peaceful around us before, suddenly turns into a whirlpool of tempestuous billows and we are tossed to and fro at the mercy of the winds and the waves. Sometimes we ascend in presumption and then we go down into the very depths of despair. At one moment we are joyous with hope and a moment later we seem ready to give up all hope—our courage fails us and our soul dissolves within us. If you have never known this experience, I pray that you never may know it, but some of us have had stormy times when we have seemed to have no foothold, when we have reeled to and fro like drunken men—when the best faith we have had has been little better than staggering! Still, it is better to stagger on the promise than to stagger at it—and we did still stand though we staggered and we were at our wit's end. We could not see what to do, we could not tell what to do and we could not have done it if we had known what to do! We were brought to such an extremity that we seemed to have neither wit nor wisdom left.

28. *Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses.* This shows that although they were at their wit's end, they had wit enough or wisdom enough to pray! Their souls were melted, so they let them run out in prayer. It is a good thing to get the soul melted, for then it will flow out like water before the Lord. Note that these sailors cried to God when there was no one else to whom they could cry—"Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble." Learn from this sentence that when your soul is melted because of trouble, you can still pray. When you reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man, you can still pray—and when you are at your wit's end—you can still pray! Prayer is never out of season! It is a fruit of Grace that is acceptable to God in autumn and in winter, in spring and in summer. As long as you live and even when the worst comes to the worst, cry mightily unto God, for He will surely hear you. Was it not so with us when we were in spiritual trouble and could do nothing else but cry unto the Lord? It was a poor prayer that we offered, but it was a real prayer that we presented when we cried unto God. Mark how quick God is to hear such prayer as this—"Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses." He brought them into them and, therefore, He brought

them out of them. It was God who took Jacob into Egypt and, therefore, though it took 400 years to bring Israel out of Egypt, God brought them out at last. He kills and He makes alive. He wounds and He heals. Rest in this Truth of God as a matter of absolute certainty!

29. *He makes the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.* At the first, God made everything out of nothing, so He can easily make a calm out of a storm. And He can make the storm a calm for you whenever He pleases to do so. Your troubled feelings, your tossing to and fro may soon subside into "the peace of God, which passes all understanding," which "shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

30. *Then are they glad because they are quiet; so He brings them unto their desired haven.* And there is no music that is sweeter to the mariner's ears than the rattle of the chain as the anchor grips the bottom of the harbor and the ship rests from all her tossing. The Lord will give you Grace, my Brother, my Sister, to let down your anchor—or, rather, to throw it up "into that within the veil," for that is the way that your anchor goes—and then you shall be glad because you will be quiet. I believe that there is often a greater, fuller, deeper joy in being quiet than there is in making a noise. There are times when it is good to praise the Lord with the high-sounding cymbals and with the harp of a solemn sound. But, in the deepest joy of all, we are still before God and praise is silent before God in Zion.

31. *Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!* Should they not do so? Those who have survived the storms at sea, or the still greater storms within their own souls should surely take care to praise the Lord. If we know how to pray, we also ought to know how to praise. Prayer and praise ought to form the two covers of the book of our life—and our life is not well bound unless these are the two covers to it—with a good stiff back of faith to bind the two covers firmly together and to hold every leaf in its proper place.

32. *Let them exalt Him also in the congregation of the people, and praise Him in the assembly of the elders.* Let them not only praise the Lord in private, but let them also sound out their song of gratitude to God where the graybeards are gathered together! And let the men of experience, the officers of the Church, the leaders of the Lord's people, help them in the expression of their gratitude.

—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 SPIRIT'S OFFICE TOWARDS DISCIPLES
NO. 3062

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 23, 1865.

"He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you." John 16:14.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon this passage are as follows—#465, Volume 8—
THE HOLY SPIRIT GLORIFYING CHRIST; #2213, Volume 37—"HONEY IN THE MOUTH";
#2382, Volume 40—THE HOLY SPIRIT'S CHIEF OFFICE.
An Exposition of John 16:1-22, was published with #3052, Volume 53—
CHRIST'S LONELINESS AND OURS—
Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

MANY persons are anxiously asking the question, "Are we partakers of the Holy Spirit?" With enlarged anxiety, they reason thus, "We have felt certain inward emotions. There has been in us, we trust, a change of life. Eager are our desires for God and His Grace. Do these come of the Spirit of God? When we find a suggestion which appears to be holy in our soul, does it come from Him? When we are at any time filled with earnestness and pray, or our soul has peculiar delight in considering Divine things, may we say with truth that we are under the operation of the Holy Spirit?" I do not intend to go thoroughly into the resolution of these scruples—that would be too wide a subject for a short evening's discourse—but there is one point which may often relieve your perplexities. It appears from the text that it is the work and office and custom of the Holy Spirit to glorify Christ. If, therefore, with much strength and fervor in your soul, you glorify Him, you may trust that it comes from the Spirit of God. But if there is anything in you which is derogatory to the Character or Person or Glory of the Lord Jesus, it may either come from Satan or from your own corrupt mind. But from the Spirit of God it never came and it would be blasphemy to impute it to Him. Whatever you feel which lifts Christ on high in your soul comes of the Spirit—but whatever there may be which exalts self or anything else in the place of Christ—no matter from where it comes—the Holy Spirit has nothing to do with it!

Let us then just handle this point. The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ in His people. How does He do it and how far may I judge that He is at work in me?

One way in which the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ is *this—He gives us more and more debasing views of ourselves.* There are two Gods, as it

were. One the true, the other the false. Self first mounts the throne in our heart and the higher the throne of self is exalted, the lower must Christ go. Much of self, little of the Savior. Exalted views of self, self-power, or self-righteousness, and then there are sure to be low views of Christ. But when self goes down, then Christ at once rises. It may be said of self, as John the Baptist once said of Christ and himself, "He must increase, but I must decrease." If you have had shallow views of your own natural depravity, then you have had very shallow thoughts of Christ. If you think sin to be delightful, if Gethsemane, Golgotha and Calvary seem to you to be names without weight or meaning. If you have never groaned under sin, I do not wonder that you think little of Christ's groans, griefs and bloody sweat. But when you come to know yourself as verily lost and undone, then you will prize your Deliverer! When the dread word, "lost," has seemed to fall like a death knell upon your ears, then the tidings that the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost will be as sweet to you as the Christmas carol of the angels, when they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." If you feel the disease, you will value the Physician. If you know your own emptiness, you will prize Christ's fullness. But if you reject the teaching of the Holy Spirit which shows you your utter helplessness and worthlessness, in so doing you have rejected Christ and put far from you that Savior who alone came to save sinners! It is, then, a most precious thing when we begin to sink lower and lower in our own estimation. At the commencement of spiritual life we believe that we are nothing. As we advance, we find that we are less than nothing. May the Holy Spirit so work in you! Some of you are, perhaps, depending and thinking that you are not children of God, or else you would not be so cast down as you are. I pray you to understand this matter aright. Instead of having any reason for despondency, you will find a subject for joy, for I am sure that the Spirit is honoring Christ when He is lowering you in your own estimation.

Still more to the point, when the Holy Spirit really works in the heart of man, He honors Christ in every respect. *He honors the Person of Christ.* Those who think but little of His Deity are not taught of the Spirit of God. No man is taught by the Holy Spirit to regard the only-begotten Son of the Father as a secondary God, for the Holy Spirit teaches us upon this wise, "When He brings in the First-Begotten into the world, He says, "And let all the angels of God worship Him." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The Spirit always teaches concerning Christ that He is God over all, blessed forever. Some have had lowering views of His Humanity. Every now and then we hear dark hints about the Human Nature of our Lord Jesus Christ, His peccability and so on. But this never comes from the Spirit of God. Both the Deity and the Humanity of Christ receive honor in the Christian's soul when the Spirit comes there with the Light of God—

"Jesus is worthy to receive
Honor and power Divine."

That very Man who did hang upon Calvary we now adore. He is exalted far above all principalities and powers. All teaching which honors Christ in His Person is of the Spirit. And that which dishonors Him should be branded with its evil authorship.

The Spirit also glorifies Christ in His work. Have you ever seen the finished work of Christ? He came into the world to save men and He did save them. He did not make a bridge over which they might possibly get across, but He carried them across the bridge. He did not so far accomplish the work of redemption that, by their own exertions, some persons might climb to Heaven, but He, Himself, entered into the heavenly places and took possession, representatively, of the Throne of God for all His people who were in Him. The salvation of the elect, so far as Christ is concerned, is finished. He took upon His shoulders all their guilt. He was punished for that guilt and they were then and there justified. He rose again, having shaken off alike the punishment and the iniquities that incurred it. He entered into Glory and they were then and there virtually made possessors of an inheritance which nothing will ever be able to take from them! Let the Christian feel that the teaching which lowers the work of Christ or makes it dependent upon the will of man as to its effect, puts the Cross on the ground and says, "That blood is shed, but it may be shed in vain, shed in vain for you"—let us all feel that such teaching comes not from the Spirit of God! That teaching which, pointing to the Cross, says, "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." That teaching which makes the Atonement a true atonement which forever put away the vindictive Justice of God from every soul for whom that Atonement was offered, exalts Christ and, therefore, it is a teaching which comes from the Spirit of God! When your heart is brought to rest upon what Christ has done. When, laying aside all confidence in your own works, knowledge, prayers, doing, or believing, you come to rest upon what Christ has done in its simplicity—then is Jesus Christ exalted in your heart and it must have been the work of the Spirit of Divine Grace! The Person, then, and the work of Christ are exalted.

The Holy Spirit also exalts Christ in all His offices. That teaching which calls a man a priest and bids me take my child to receive some "grace" at his priestly hands and which puts another man into lawn sleeves and bids me kneel before him to receive a confirmation of my "grace" from his pretentious fingers. That system of religion which lifts up any one man above his fellow men, as if there were any priests other than the common and general priesthood which belongs to every child of God—such teaching as that lowers Christ by lifting up human priests info Christ's place! The Spirit bears witness that Christ is the Great High Priest of His Church. It is from His hands we receive the blessing! Through His blood we receive the washing! And nowhere else will we look for the Divine Grace that comes alone from Him!

Christ, too, is exalted by the Spirit in His prophetic as well as in His priestly office. Shall I call any man master so as to take him for my teacher? All teaching which lifts up Wesley, or Calvin, or any man, living

or dead, in the place of the authorized Teacher and which says that their teachings are to be taken as though they were the Infallible Revelations of Christ is not of the Spirit of God! But that teaching which says, "One is your Master, even Christ, and all you are brethren," and which tells us of the holy equality of all saints and that the true Teacher and the only Teacher who can speak with authority is Jesus Christ, the Son of God—such teaching you may accept as coming from God the Holy Spirit.

Then Christ occupies a third office. He is Prophet and Priest—and He is also King. And any teaching which takes Christ off the Throne of God and puts someone else on it, is not according to the Spirit of God. The Headship of Christ in His Church is the Doctrine which, perhaps, beyond all others, needs to be taught at this time. It was for this that Scotland's sons suffered misery and death. Cast out, they wandered in the morasses and among the mountains. I stood, the other day, near the place where the monument is raised to thousands of men who had shed their blood for Christ—and I felt it no small privilege to stand where Guthrie and others had poured out their blood for the defense of the Headship of the Church when Charles the Second would be the head of the Church, or James, or some other man of like character. But would this be tolerated by true-hearted saints of God's own true Church? No! None but rogues and cowards will ever admit the authority of men or women over the Church of Christ, or permit them to usurp the Divine rights of the Lord Jesus! When that day comes, when the King of kings shall sit upon His throne, He will take summary vengeance upon the traitors who have dared to give up His high prerogatives! Christian, make Christ your Priest who absolves you! Take Him as your only Leader and Prophet, who is the truth and the life for you! And then take Him as your King and bow your knees become Him! Take Christ in all His offices to be exalted, for so the Spirit teaches.

Then *Christ is also exalted by the Holy Spirit in His Word.* There are some who think and say that they can do without the Bible. But certainly such think and speak not by the Spirit of God! This is always an Infallible test of the work of the Spirit—that He honors God's own Word. I could think no man true who, first of all, professed to write out his own mind and then afterwards contradicted it. Then how can that spirit be true that contradicts the writing of the Spirit of the living God? Bring whatever you have of revelation to the test of Scripture—if it is not in accordance with it—throw it away! I wish this rule were learned by all men, for every now and then we read of or meet with persons who think that the Spirit has revealed to them something over and above what is in Scripture. Now this is never the case! Any man who says that he has had more revealed to him than is in the Holy Scriptures, incurs the curse of the last chapter of Revelation! He must take care lest, since he adds to the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, "God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this Book." "It is finished," must be said concerning this Book as we close it. Not a single verse or Revelation shall henceforth

come of the Spirit. Until Christ comes, this Book is sealed, so far as any addition to it is concerned!

Indeed, *there is nothing which concerns Christ which the Spirit of God does not magnify.* Consider any of His offices or His relationships and you will find that the Spirit magnifies them and glorifies them—and so presents them to the Believer's soul that he may rejoice therein.

Now, I advance a little further. The Holy Spirit's work is to glorify Christ and *this He will do by filling you with Christ.* If you are subject to the work of the Spirit, then ought you to have much of the spirit of Christ within you. But if you can live days and weeks without thinking of Christ, set yourself down as being a hypocrite, if you will, for you are not a true Christian! The very mark of the blessed man is that he lives upon God's Word. "In His Law does he meditate day and night." We feed upon Christ and as our bodies could not live without food, so neither can our souls live without Jesus. The Spirit of God will also fill your heart with Christ so that the more you have of that Spirit, the more intense will be your love of the Savior until, at last, you will be able to say—

"Jesus, the very thought of You
With sweetness fills my breast."

When the Spirit of God is with you, you will indeed feel that it is so. No joy can be compared with that of the love of Christ shed abroad in your heart. When the Spirit has thus filled your thoughts and heart, He will be sure to occupy your tongues. They who love the Savior must speak of Him! In choice company they will tell some of the secrets of His love, and in any company they will not be ashamed to acknowledge that they are His servants. Occupying their tongue, He will also be sure to engage it in prayer for them and they will not cease to offer such prayers as these—"Your Kingdom come, Jesus. Be You exalted. Oh, when will You come in Your chariot of salvation to ride over the whole earth? Come quickly, O come quickly, Lord Jesus!" And then, too, your tongue will be employed in songs concerning Him. It is always a token of a revival of religion, it is said, when there is a revival of Psalmody. When Luther's preaching began to tell upon men, you could hear plowmen at the plow-tail singing Luther's Psalms. Whitefield and Wesley would never have done the great work they did if it had not been for Charles Wesley's poetry and for the singing of such men as Toplady, Scott, Newton and many others of the same class. And even now we mark that since there has been somewhat of a religious revival in our various denominations, there are more hymnbooks than there ever were before and far more attention is paid to Christian Psalmody than ever before. When your heart is full of Christ you will want to sing! It is a blessed thing to sing at your labor and work, if you are in a place where you can do so. And if the world should laugh at you, you must tell them that you have as good a right to sing the songs that delight your heart as they have to sing any of the songs in which their hearts delight. Praise His name, Christians! Be not dumb! Sing aloud to Jesus, the Lamb! And if we, as Englishmen, can sometimes

sing our national air, let us as Believers have our national hymn and sing—

"Crown *Him, crown Him,*
Crown Him Lord of all!"

And surely when the Spirit of God thus honors Christ in the tongue, it will not stop there! It comes to the acts of daily life. *The Spirit shall glorify Christ by helping you to glorify Him in your own actions.* I spoke, this morning [See Sermon #626, Volume 11—THE WATERER WATERED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] of some who set themselves apart for extraordinary service. I did not, however, intend to imply that that was at all necessary, for you may serve Christ as good housewives. You may serve Him as merchants, shopkeepers and, in short, in every condition of life. Our religion is for the market-place, for the shop, for the streets and for the field. And as God's Being is not confined to temples made by the hands of men, but is present everywhere—on heath, and city, and moor, and field—in the sunbeams that light the peasant's cot as well as the monarch's palace—present in the minute as well as in the magnificent—down there in the glades where the red deer wander and the child loves to play. And up there where the storms gather upon the mountain's hoary brow—as visible in a blade of grass as in the cedar and the tall waving pine—to be seen as well in the dewdrop as in the avalanche—as certainly in the falling of a leaf as in the tremendous roar of the thunder—everywhere present—so is true religion everywhere—in the cottage as well as in the temple, in business as well as in devotions. Abroad in the streets as well as in the silence of retirement! Up yonder where men wrestle with God and down there where they come to contend with men and for His Truth! You have never received the Spirit so as to know that Christ is the Glorified One unless in your life as well as with your lips you show forth His praise!

If the Spirit has thus far instructed you, He will conduct you a little further and you *may accept His teaching because it glorifies Christ.* There are some Doctrines which are not often preached in certain pulpits. They are supposed to be rather dangerous. Speaking of a certain hymnbook, I remarked to a minister in whose pulpit I preached, that I did not like the hymnbook, as I could never find a hymn that sang of the Covenant of Grace or the Doctrine of Election. "Oh, well," he said, "that is no disadvantage to me, for I never say anything about those Doctrines!" And I can quite believe what he said. There are certain higher Truths of God which only belong to those who have passed through the rudiments and have done with the grammar-school books and can enter into the university! One of the things which glorify Christ is where the Spirit makes us understand the eternal love of Christ to His people and His Covenant engagements for them.

Christian, I would have you know that Christ never did begin to love you! Before the mountains were piled, or the clouds had gathered about them, Christ had set His heart upon you! No, when this great world, the sun, moon and stars slept in the mind of God like forests in an acorn-cup, then—then had Jehovah-Jesus love for you! And when the proper

time came, He offered Himself up as a Surety for your souls, to pay your debts, to stand as your Representative, to keep you in this world and to present you at the last to the Father as a priceless jewel. Oh, how you will glorify Christ if you have faith enough to take in this Divine mystery! Stagger not at electing love—it is one of the highest notes of heavenly music! Be not afraid of such a verse as this—"I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you." Here is marrow and fatness such as saints fed upon in days long since gone!

Take another Truth of God, the precious Truth of the *finished* work of Christ for His people. How often do you hear Christ's work preached as if it were only begun and many hold Him up as though He had commenced a fitting garment but had left off somewhere so that by adding our rags we might complete the work! I was in one of the vaults of the British Museum some time since, when the sculptures came from Nineveh and one of them was unfinished. There was evidently the last mark which the mason had made before he was destroyed or, it may be, called away from his work to which he never returned. But Jesus Christ has left no sculpture of this kind—He has *finished* all His work. "It is finished," were words that gladdened earth and made Heaven more glorious! There is now nothing for souls to do to save themselves. For where Jesus died, that soul is saved and all that that soul has to do is, being saved, to show its gratitude and love as one that is brought to life from the dead—

"Loved of my God, for Him again
With love intense I burn.
Chosen of Him before time began,
I chose Him in return."

You may know that *perfection* in Christ by a firm reliance upon the Scriptures. How can you perish? You are saved! There is, therefore, now no condemnation recorded against you. Who shall lay anything to your charge? Who shall separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, your Lord?

If there is one Doctrine, however, more sweet and yet more deep than another, it is the Divine Doctrine of that Eternal Union which exists between Christ and His people. It is the Spirit's work to take the golden key and let us into this secret cabinet. Believers are one with Christ! By vital personal union they are one with Him! They are members of His body, or as He, Himself, says, they are the branches and He is the Vine. They are the members and He is the Head. I know of nothing that can be more delightful than this union—this eternal union—with Christ—

"One in the tomb, one when He rose,
One when He triumphed over His foes!
One when in Heaven He took His seat,
While seraphs sang all Hell's defeat!
This sacred tie forbids our fears
For all He is or has is ours.
With Him, our Head, we stand or fall—
Our Life, our Surety and our All."

It used to be said by an excellent theologian that any man who understood the two Covenants of Works and Grace was a master in theology. Yet, oh how few Christians there seem to be who really understand the Covenant of Grace! "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." We fell, not by our own fault, but by Adam's fault. And we rise not by our own virtue, but by virtue of our union with Christ! If you are in Christ, Believer, you are safe while Christ stands. You cannot drown the body until you drown the Head. My foot may be deep in the streams, but until the billows roll over my brow, my foot is not drowned—and until Christ shall perish, no soul that is one with Christ can be destroyed, for He said to His disciples, "Because I live, you shall also live." Did time permit, I might enter into some more of those sublime mysteries which make the core and pith of the comfort of the Christian, but I forbear. May the Spirit of God glorify Christ by taking these things of Christ and revealing them to you and making them personally yours!

And to close—the Holy Spirit will continue all your life, if you are a Believer in Christ, to further His work in you *by writing all that concerns Christ upon your experience and your life.* I long to see in the Church more men and women who have Christ so glorified in them that their faith never staggers—who have neither doubts nor fears, who know whom they have believed, who are persuaded that He is able to keep that which they have committed unto Him, who leave all things to the Father's wisdom—and find everything in a perfect Savior! I long to see some of you, Brothers and Sisters, made partakers of our overflowing joy! I long to see your eyes flash with the joyous radiance of your Savior's Presence. I pray that you may be so full of joy that when you speak, you may cheer the downcast and lift up the countenances of the sad. I want you to have added to this an intense and fervent love—love which shall perform impossibilities, which shall dare anything for Christ, which, instinct with zeal, shall thresh the mountains and beat them small, and shall winnow the wheat from the chaff upon the threshing floor. I pray that you may have that mighty consecration of spirit which shall make you altogether unearthly, that as you have borne the image of the earthy, you may also bear the image of the heavenly and that as you have been conformed to the first Adam in the curse, and in all the infirmities and griefs of this mortal life, you may be conformed to the Second Adam in His pure unselfish love for man, His noble, all-daring, all-consuming love for His Father and for His cause.

I am persuaded that the Spirit does not glorify Christ in us so much as He would if we gave ourselves up more fully to the Savior. As one said on a certain occasion, there is a fleet lying in the river, richly-laden, but it cannot come up because the river is blocked up with ice. So I think I see my Master's love lying out far down the river and it would gladly come to my poor soul to enrich me and make me holy and heavenly, but alas, the coldness of my heart, like ice, blocks up the channel and I get not what I might obtain! Come, heavenly love, and melt the ice! Flow,

streams of Grace, and dissolve every barrier! Come, Jesus, come into my heart and let Your treasures be mine forevermore! Oh that I could stir some Believers here to seek more than is generally enjoyed by Christians! May God give you the seraphic earnestness of a Whitefield, the deep piety of a Martyn and the lovely spirit of a Newton or a Cowper! May He fill you to the brim with Himself till you shall be like a city set upon a hill that cannot be hid—and like unto candles in the house that enlightens all around!

[Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon on various aspects of the Covenant of Grace are as follows—#19, Volume 1—DAVID'S DYING SONG; # 93, Volume 3—GOD IN THE COVENANT; #103, Volume 2—CHRIST IN THE COVENANT; #212, Volume 4—THE NEW HEART; #233, Volume 5—FREE GRACE; #251, Volume 5—THE NECESSITY OF THE SPIRIT'S WORK; #277, Volume 5—THE BLOOD OF THE EVERLASTING COVENANT; #456, Volume 8—THE STONY HEART REMOVED; #517, Volume 8—THE RAINBOW; #714, Volume 12—A SAVIOR SUCH AS YOU NEED; #1046, Volume 18—COVENANT BLESSINGS; #1129, Volume 19—THE HEART OF FLESH; #1186, Volume 20—THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT; #1289, Volume 22—THE HEART FULL AND THE MOUTH CLOSED; #1451, Volume 25—THE COVENANT PLEADED; #1840, Volume 31—THE BOND OF THE COVENANT; #1886, Volume 32—GOD'S REMEMBRANCE OF HIS COVENANT; #1921, Volume 32—CLEANSING—A COVENANT BLESSING; #1942, Volume 33—SALT FOR SACRIFICE; #2092, Volume 35—GOD'S OWN GOSPEL CALL; #2108, Volume 35—PERSEVERANCE IN HOLINESS; #2200, Volume 37—THE COVENANT PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT; #2316, Volume 39—TWELVE COVENANT MERCIES; #2427, Volume 41—"THE ARK OF THE COVENANT"; #2438, Volume 41—"TWO IMMUTABLE THINGS"; No. 2506, Volume 43—GOD'S LAW IN MAN'S HEART and No. 3048, Volume 53—THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE COVENANT—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

But, alas, there are some here who know not my Master at all, who are strangers to His love! There is Christ looking down upon you with tearful eyes and He bids you come to Him. That blood which you have hitherto despised will wash away your every sin. Only cast yourself upon Him. Look up into those languid eyes, for they are full of pity. That streaming blood flows to every soul that trusts in Jesus. Read the mystery of that pierced heart—there is love alone written there. Study the anguish of that poor martyred body, for in every pang you can learn the story of His compassion. And as you see Him bowing His head and hear Him saying, "Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit." He asks you, every one, to commend your spirit to Him. Do it, do it now, God helping you—and Christ will thus be glorified!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GALATIANS 2:15-21; 3.

Galatians 2:15-21. *We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the Law: for by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid! For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the Law am dead to the Law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved*

me, and gave Himself for me. I do not frustrate the Grace of God: for if righteousness comes by the Law, then Christ is dead in vain. Paul is arguing against the idea of salvation by works, or salvation by ceremonies. And he shows, beyond all question, that salvation is by the Grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Mark the strength of the Apostle's argument in the 21st verse—"If righteousness comes by the Law, then Christ is dead in sin." That is to say, there was no need for Christ to die—the Crucifixion was a superfluity if men can save themselves by their own good works. Paul is very emphatic about the matter. He puts it as plainly as possible: "If righteousness comes by the Law, then Christ is dead in vain."

Galatians 3:1, 2. *O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received you the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith?* "When the Spirit of God came upon you, and renewed you—when He endued some of you with miraculous gifts—did this power come by the works of the Law, or through your believing the Gospel? 'Received you the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith?'"

3. *Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?* "Is this work to be partly God's and partly your own? And if He has begun it with a basis of gold, are you to perfect it with your poor dust and clay? Are you so foolish as to attempt to do this?" [See Sermon #1534, Volume 26—Salvation by Works, a Criminal Doctrine—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

4, 5. *Have you suffered so many things in vain? If it is yet in vain. He therefore that ministers to you the Spirit, and works miracles among you, does He it by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith?* They knew very well that the miracles came as the result of faith and were an attestation and seal of the Gospel of Faith, and not of the works of the Law.

6, 7. *Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know you therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.* He was the father of the faithful—that is of the believing—not of those who trust in their own works. These are only like Ishmael, who must be cast out of the chosen family—but the true children, the real Isaacs, are those who are born according to the promise of Grace. [See Sermon #1705, Volume 29—THE HEARING OF FAITH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

8. *And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In you shall all nations be blessed.* That is, "in you, because you are the father of Believers. You are a sort of head and prototype of men who believe in Me and so, 'in you shall all nations be blessed' and in your Seed, too, as you shall be the father of the Christ, shall all nations be blessed."

9-11. *So then they which are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continues not in all things which*

are written in the book of the Law to do them. But that no man is justified by the Law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. If then, even those who are just live by faith, how can any expect that they shall live by their works? [See Sermons #814, Volume 14—LIFE BY FAITH and #2809, Volume 48—FAITH—LIFE—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

12. *And the Law is not of faith: but The man that does them shall live in them.* The Law says nothing about faith. It speaks only about *doing*—"You shall do My judgments, and keep My ordinances, to walk therein: I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore keep My statutes, and My judgments: which if a man does, he shall live in them: I am the Lord."

13. *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.* There is the key of the mystery! Christ is our Substitute. He fulfilled the Law's demands by His perfect obedience and He suffered the Law's utmost penalty by His death upon the Cross. And now, all those who believe in Him are forever justified because of what He did for them. [See Sermon #873, Volume 15—CHRIST MADE A CURSE FOR US; and #2093, Volume 35—THE CURSE AND THE CURSE FOR US—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

14, 15. *That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Brethren, I speak after the manner of men. Though it is but a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed.* If it is legally drawn up, signed, sealed and witnessed.

15. *No man disannuls, or adds thereto.* There it stands and an appeal can be made to it in any court of Law where it may be produced.

16, 17. *Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He says not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to your Seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the Covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the Law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of no effect.* That is clear enough. The Covenant made with Abraham and his Seed cannot be affected by anything that was said or done on Sinai. Whatever the Covenant of Works may be, or say, or do, it comes in more than four centuries after this glorious Covenant of Grace had been signed, sealed and ratified! Therefore it cannot be affected, it must stand fast forever.

18. *For if the inheritance is of the Law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.* So, then, we know it is by promise and God must keep His promise—and we must believe it. It must be true and if we do believe it, we shall prove it to be true and it will be fulfilled in every jot and tittle to every believing soul.

19-22. *What purpose, then, does the Law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the Law then against the promises of God? God forbid! For if there had been a Law given which could have given life, verily righteousness would have been by the Law.*

But the Scripture has concluded all are under sin. Or, "shut us all up under sin." The Law has come and proved us all guilty, and shut us all up as in a great prison from which we cannot escape by any power of our own. [See Sermons #1145, Volume 19—THE GREAT JAIL—AND HOW TO GET OUT OF IT and #2402, Volume 41—UNDER ARREST —Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

22-24. *That the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the Law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Therefore the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.* [See Sermon 1196, Volume 20—THE STERN TEACHER——Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] It whipped us to Christ and taught us that we could not be saved except by Christ.

24-28. *That we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* Yet some foolish people still talk about our Jewish origin! What would that matter even if it were true? "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free." All these distinctions are done away with and Christ is All—and Believers, whether Jews or Gentiles—"are all one in Christ Jesus."

29. *And if you are Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise,* So that all the blessings which God promised to Abraham belong to you who are Believers in Christ! And you may take them and rejoice in them! But if you are without faith in Christ, then are you without the one essential thing which gives you an interest in the Covenant of Grace!

—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.

JOTHAM'S PECULIAR HONOR
NO. 3063

A SERMON
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"So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God."
2 Chronicles 27:6.

THIS is a very singular expression which is used here concerning Jotham who is one of the kings of Judah who are commended as having done that which was right in the sight of the Lord. All of them had their faults, yet they were the best monarchs that sat upon the throne of Judah—and concerning Jotham it is mentioned as his peculiar honor that he "became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God."

I want to draw your attention to this ancient king and specially to point out to you, first, *the peculiar circumstances of Jotham's life.* Secondly, *the peculiar distinction of his character.* And then thirdly, *the peculiar honor of his career.* He "became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God."

I. So let us commence by considering THE PECULIAR CIRCUMSTANCES OF JOTHAM'S LIFE.

And to begin with, *he was the son of a good father* and I should suppose, from the mention of his mother here, of a good mother, too. This is a good beginning for a young man and yet, mark you, there are many who have been trained in the ways of godliness who have not continued to walk in them. How often does it seem as if children were dead set against the very things which their parents have loved and although one would almost have expected that they would have gone in the right way, yet since Divine Grace does not run in the blood, we have deplorable proofs of human depravity even in those who can trace a long line of Christian ancestry. However, it was no small advantage to Jotham that he had godly patents. But it would have been no permanent and eternal advantage to him—it would rather have involved him in greater responsibility without corresponding benefits if it could not also have been said of him that "he prepared his ways before the Lord his God."

And note, next, that *he did not commit the great fault of his father, Uzziah.* Uzziah was a good man, an excellent man in many respects, but in his latter days, he conceived the idea that he would be a priest as well as a king and he therefore thrust himself into the place that was meant for only the priests. The priests, in great alarm, hastened into the Temple of the Lord where Uzziah had gone to burn incense upon the altar of

incense and vehemently protested against his intrusion into their holy office. He was very angry with them, but suddenly the deadly leprosy was white upon his brow, for God had smitten him for his daring intrusion—and the priests thrust him out of the Temple that he might no longer pollute the sanctuary of the Lord. "Yes," we read, "he, himself, hurried also to go out because the Lord had smitten him." Now, if a father—and especially a professedly godly father—has committed a great fault, it may be a temptation to his son to fall into the same evil. But in the case of Jotham, it was not so. He regarded his father's sin rather as a beacon to warn him away from that rock on which Uzziah's life had been wrecked—and so, when he was put upon the throne as regent for his father and Uzziah had to be shut up in a house apart as a leper who could not be allowed to mingle with his family and his subjects, Jotham took that as a daily lesson to himself and he walked the more carefully and humbly before God, preparing his ways as his father Uzziah had not done on that unfortunate, unhappy day when he went into the Temple to offer incense.

It is a great mercy for us when we have seen others sin, if we use their shipwrecks as beacons for ourselves. What fascination should there be in sin? When one bird sees another fall into a snare, we wonder that it should, itself, be so foolish as to fall into the snare that it can see. Yet we have known men who have seen the sins of their parents and the consequent sorrow, thereon, who have fallen into the same sins themselves! Dear Christian young people, if God has called you, by His Grace, and you have had professing Christian friends whose imperfections you could not help seeing, and seeing with sorrow, also, the evil effects of their wrong-doing—do not run into the same courses yourselves—but let the painful circumstances which have happened in your own family lead you the more carefully, like Jotham, to prepare your ways before the Lord your God!

Jotham also was *quite a young man when he came into the position of power.* For some years he occupied the place of his father, nominally holding the position of regent, yet really acting as the actual monarch. And now, at the age of twenty-five, we find him sitting upon the throne of Judah. How necessary it is, especially in young people, that the heart and the ways should be prepared before the Lord their God! Yet I retract the expression that it is "especially" necessary for young people to do this, for I have lived long enough to observe that the greatest faults that are ever committed by professedly Christians are not committed by young people. Most painful is it to me to remember that the worst cases of backsliding and apostasy that I have ever seen in this Church, have been by old men and middle-aged men—not by young people, for somehow or other, the young people, if they are truly taught of God, know their weakness and so they cry to God for help. But it often happens that more experienced people begin to think that they are not likely to fall into the faults and follies of the young. I care not how old a man may be—even if seven centuries had passed over his head—if he began to trust in himself, he would be a fool and soon he would have a

grievous fall! Yes, even if he had lived as long as Methuselah and all that while had been advancing in the Divine Life so that he could even fancy that he had reached perfection—the moment he thought so he would be in imminent danger! And the instant he began to think that he should never fall, he would be the very one, above all other men, who would be likely to fall into sin. They are the strongest who are the weakest in themselves. They are the richest who know how poor they are apart from God. They have the most Grace who know how utterly empty they would be of Grace if the Lord should ever withdraw His hand from giving it to them. Growing Christians think nothing of themselves, but full-grown Christians know themselves to be less than nothing.

Notwithstanding that there are peculiar dangers associated with youth and especially with youth placed in a prominent position, here was an instance of a young man and a king—and yet, for all that, a saint of the right kind—one who "prepared his ways before the Lord his God." It must be a hard matter to be a king and to be a saint at the same time. The combination has very seldom occurred and when it has, it has been a prodigious triumph of Divine Grace. So young man, if God shall put you into a place of great responsibility where you will need much Grace to keep you from falling, ask Him for the necessary Grace and He will give it to you. Do not ask for an eminent position—let your prayer rather be, "Lead me not into temptation." An eminent position always has a measure of temptation connected with it, so you are justified in praying to be preserved from it. Still, if the position is one which it is your duty to take, take it and trust to God's Grace to keep you there in safety. You are just as safe if God has put you on the cross of St. Paul's as you would be on the pavement below—quite as secure on the top of a mast as you would be in the cabin of the vessel if God, in His Providence, has called you to occupy that position! But, since there is, in itself, a great danger in the lofty pinnacle, you have the more reason to ask for the necessary Grace that you may carefully prepare your ways before the Lord—so that you may not bring the greater dishonor upon His name because of the prominence of the position you are called to occupy. King Jotham was a young man and a great man—yet, for all that, he was a saintly man.

Remember, also, that *he lived in very evil times.* The second verse of this chapter tells us that his own people, whom he had to govern, "did yet corruptly." And the parallel passage, in 2 Kings 15:35, says that they "sacrificed and burnt incense still in the high places." Their king's good example was not sufficient to reclaim them from the iniquities in which they had so long indulged. It was a great thing for the nation to have a king who worshipped Jehovah, but it was a sad thing that the people still continued to practice their idolatrous rites in the high places which they were forbidden to do. It is not an easy thing for a man—even a king—to live above his surroundings. And all men are more or less the creatures of circumstances. They are influenced for good or evil by the people around them—and the most of them fashion their consciences according to the consciences of other people with whom they come in contact. Even

down to a few years ago, there were undoubtedly good men in America who did not think it wrong to buy and sell and hold slaves. The general conscience of the people around them was only up to that level and their own conscience was not sufficiently enlightened to lift them above their surroundings. They did not see that no man has a right to the labors of another man without adequate payment and that every man has a right to his own liberty. Their conscience had no more light than there was in those who lived around them. When a man lives in a feverish district, he must have a good sound constitution and be in vigorous health if he is not to feel some of the evil influence by which he is surrounded. If he does not actually take the fever, there is a feverishness, a lethargy and a condition of malaise about him which he would not have felt if he had been in a more healthful and bracing atmosphere.

Yet Jotham appears to have been, through Divine Grace, a man full of spiritual health although he lived in a land that was spiritually fever-stricken. He dwelt in the midst of people who were corrupt and yet was himself not corrupt, "because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God." Some of you young people do not know much about this experience because you live, as it were, in a greenhouse with Christian parents and with the means of Divine Grace all around you. You are like plants in a conservatory—you ought to grow fast. But there are others here who know what the chilly atmosphere of the world means and who know only too well that after they have been communing with God a little while within these walls, they will have to go where they will hear the voice of blasphemy and profanity—and see a thousand things which grieve their spirits day by day and hour by hour. If that is the case with you, my Friends, you ought, above all else, to prepare your ways before the Lord your God! I charge you, my Brothers and Sisters, if your occupation takes you among ungodly men—and there are some lawful occupations that will call us where we shall certainly meet with little or nothing that will help us, but much that will hinder us—you must be careful, above all men, to keep a diligent watch upon yourselves and to prepare your ways before the Lord your God! Your Lord does not pray the Father to take you out of the world, but He does pray that He will keep you from the evil that is in the world. And in accordance with His prayer, it ought to be the great aim of your life that you may so live as not to be dragged down to the low level of ungodly men—yes, and not even down to the level of common Christianity—for the level of ordinary Christianity, at this day, far too closely resembles that of the Church in Laodicea which was so nauseous to the Lord. May you, Beloved, be a people separated unto God to walk in holiness before Him and to adorn the Doctrine of God your Savior in all things! But if it is to be so with those of you who are placed in circumstances similar to those of Jotham, king of Judah, you must do as he did—you must prepare your ways before the Lord your God.

Once more, as Jotham's surroundings at home were bad, so they were a little further afield, for *the adjoining kingdom of Israel was utterly polluted with idolatry and all manner of evil.* And Jotham was obliged,

more or less, to feel the influence of that ungodly neighboring nation. Wherever he looked, he saw very few who prepared their ways before God. Every man went his own way and sought his own wealth or pleasure and oppressed the people around him. But Jotham, like—

"the seraph Abdiel, faithful found
Among the faithless, faithful only he—

prepared his ways before the Lord his God." Oh, that such Grace as that might be found in abundance in all Christians, that they might seek to walk in the right road in God's name—not running with the multitude to do evil, but choosing the straight and narrow way which leads unto life eternal with strong resolve determining, the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, that let others do as they will, as for them and their house, they will serve the Lord and their ways shall be prepared before Him!

While there were so many unfavorable circumstances that might have been a hindrance to Jotham, there was one fact that must have been very helpful to him. *There were some notable Prophets living in Judah in his day.* Isaiah, Hosea and Micah must all have been well known to Jotham. Isaiah wrote the biography of his father Uzziah, for it is said, in the chapter before that from which our text is taken, "Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, did Isaiah the Prophet, the son of Amoz, write." Jotham therefore knew Isaiah and I should not wonder if it was one of the greatest helps to the growth of his spiritual life—to be able to talk with such a man so full of love and the Light of God, with such a clear foresight of the coming of Christ and such far-reaching visions of the Glory of the blessed Gospel day! I should not wonder if Jotham often got away from the people and got away from the court—and talked alone with this holy man of God. If he did, it was the natural means which God generally uses for the strengthening of His people. You will be wise, you young Christian professors, if you cultivate Christian companionship! Try to live with those who live with God and sit at the feet of these who sit at the feet of Christ. God may speak through them to your soul, so give heed to what they say—it may be that in giving heed to them, you will be listening to the voice of God Himself! If God does not lack a messenger to deliver His message, let not the messenger lack a hearer to receive the message! Rest assured that you will be most likely to grow in Grace when you are earnestly and zealously attending upon the ministry of the Word. The messages of the Lord's chosen Prophets probably greatly strengthened the good resolutions and the deep-seated principles of Jotham, and so helped him to prepare his ways before the Lord his God.

This must suffice concerning Jotham's circumstances—they are certainly instructive and suggestive to us.

II. Now, secondly we are to consider THE PECULIAR DISTINCTION OF JOTHAM'S CHARACTER. It is said that "he prepared his ways before the Lord his God." What does that sentence mean?

Certainly it means, first, that he *resolved to do what God bade him.* He made God's Law, God's will, to be the rule that was to govern his life. He desired that what he did should be right in the sight of the Lord. He did

not trouble about being thought to be right by neighboring kings, nor was it his chief care to be thought to be right by the people over whom he ruled. He was not ambitious to be regarded as right by the heathen nations that were near him, but he did want to be right in the sight of God. He had selected as the rule by which he was to regulate his conduct, God's standard of right, equity, truth and righteousness. Jotham recognized Jehovah as being his God and he understood that he was bound to obey God—that the first objective of his life ought to be to please Him who first gave him life and who had continued to sustain him in life. It is a grand thing when a man comes to this decision—that the rule of his life shall be the will of God—that from that day forward, God the Holy Spirit, working in him to will and to do according to God's good pleasure, he will judge that to be right which God commands and that to be wrong which God forbids—and that all other rules shall only be rules to him in proportion as they stay in a line with this rule. And that whatever else may be the guide of others, though it may be a matter of custom, or prescription, or law, or example of the highest kind, he will not yield to it.

The worst of it is that there are so many who have a number of petty masters whom they try to serve. One says, "I would not do anything that is not customary to people in my position." Another says, (and this is a great thing with most men), "I should not like to be regarded as singular or unfashionable." Another asks, "What would society say?"—that wonderful tyrant of these latter days! Yet another says, "But my father always did as I am doing," thus putting his father in the place that ought to be occupied by his God. Another says, "But, you know, my practice is in accordance with the Council of such-and-such a Church." Or, "It is in accordance with the decisions of such-and-such a Synod"—as if Councils, or Synods, or anything else had any right to rule over us except in so far as their regulations are in harmony with the will of the Lord our God! It is grand to feel that you are free from all these fetters and that you can say, "O Lord, I am Your servant! You have loosed my bonds and no earthly or hellish power can now make my spirit bow down before it. Your will commands me, but no other will does. My knees bow before Your Omnipotent majesty. With awe and reverence I worship You and desire to be subservient in all things to Your great behests, O Jehovah. But as for these, Your creatures, what are they that I should fear them? Who are they—like the moths that swiftly pass away and the worms that soon perish—that I should tremble at their frown, or court their smile?" God said He, alone, should be the Christian's Master—and the rule of his conduct should be the will of the Lord as revealed in the teaching of this blessed Book. Happy will Christians be, and strong in the Lord will they become, when they get as far as that!

But that is not all—that is only the beginning! Jotham had set up the true standard. He desired to do what was right in the sight of the Lord. But the next thing was that *he realized God's Presence and so acted like a man who was living consciously in God's Presence.* According to the text, he "prepared his ways before the Lord his God." Beloved, do you

and I always realize God's Presence in this way? Suppose that at this very moment it flashed upon your mind that God was looking into your heart? Could you say that you are loving and thinking of such things as you would be glad to be loving and thinking of while you were conscious that God was looking upon you? Where have you been today? It is not my place to answer the question for you. Where have you been today? Have you been in such places that you would be glad for God to see you there? Have you been in such a frame of mind that you would be glad for God to see you in that frame of mind? Have you spoken to others in just that spirit and tone that you would like God to hear? He did hear it—remember He was there. But would you have done as you have done had you been fully conscious, as you ought to have been, that God was there? You know that you sometimes do things that you would not like others to see you doing and you are startled when somebody finds you so acting. But should it be so? Should it be so? Of course I do not mean that any of the ordinary work that any of us are doing is of that character—the work that we are doing about the house or in our business should not be a cause of shame to us. I suddenly came upon one of our friends the other day, just as she was whitening the front steps. "Oh, dear," she said, "Mr. Spurgeon, I am sorry you caught me doing this." "My good woman," I said, "I hope that when the Lord comes, He will find me at work about my proper duties just as I have found you. Never mind about your hands—they are as good to shake as ever they were! Let us go into the house and have a little talk together." There is nothing to be ashamed of or to blush at in such work as that! But I would be ashamed and expect others to blush if I found them cheating, or doing wrong in some other way, or idling their time away as some do. Ought we not to live as though we were expecting the Lord Jesus Christ to come any minute, or as if we knew, as we do know, that God sees us and knows all about us every moment?

But that is not all that we gather concerning Jotham's character. He had accepted the right standard and he had set that standard in the right light. But now he went still further, for *he was thoughtfully and carefully considerate.* I think that is the gist of the meaning of the expression, "He prepared his ways before the Lord his God." That is to say, he did not go and live in what I may call a careless, happy-go-lucky, hit-or-miss, neck-or-nothing, over-head-and-heels kind of way of living as some people do! They rush with desperate haste at the battle of life and never seem to give time for thought as to due preparation for the great combat. When any good impulse is upon them, away they go, in the right direction, at such a speed that you would think they were very eminent and zealous saints! But perhaps tomorrow there will be an evil impulse upon them and they will go just as fast in the wrong direction! They are so easily influenced by outside circumstances that they are turned either way by those who have power over them—and they are as thoughtless for good as they are for evil. They are heedless and reckless—fine enthusiastic people in their way, but they lack solidity—

they are without permanent principles. Like Reuben, being unstable as water, they shall not excel. If a tailor is about to make a suit of clothes, he looks carefully at the cloth before he begins to cut it. But there are some people who seem to use scissors without any thought at all—they cut out their life-garment at a chance! When a man goes into a certain trade, if he hopes to do business, he lays out his plans with considerable forethought and considers his projects with all proper care. If he is to be a successful man of business, he must exercise forethought. And in the Christian life, we also need much forethought. There ought to be a mapping out of the day, a mapping out of the year—in fact, a mapping out of life, itself, and a serious thinking over every part of it. We would often do much better if we did nothing at all. We would frequently make the most progress if we stood quite still. Our common proverb is quite correct, "The more haste, the less speed." It would be a wise plan for each one of us to pause a while, to put the hand to the brow and then to say, "Lord, let me hear a voice behind me saying, 'This is the way; walk you in it.'"

We need to be led where the path seems most plain. Did not the children of Israel make a great mistake in the case of the Gibeonites because it seemed very clear that they must have come from a far country? We generally make our worst mistakes in matters which appear to us to be so plain that we think we do not need direction from God concerning them. If we waited upon God in what we regarded as plain and simple matters—if we made that our rule with regard to them—we would be more likely to do right in the more difficult matters. It would be something like the old proverb, "Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves." I mean that if we always took our simplicities to God, we would be quite sure to take our difficulties to Him. I suppose Jotham used, when he was considering a certain course of action, to consider whether he could glorify God by that course of action. And if he thought, he could not, he would not take it. And when there was proposed to him any mode of doing a certain thing which had to be done, he looked carefully to see whether it was God's mode—and if it was not—he would not adopt that method of doing even the right thing, but would do the right thing in the right way.

But I think there is even more meaning than this in our text. In order to accomplish this preparation of his ways before the Lord his God, *Jotham must have been a man of prayer.* He could not have prepared his ways thus anywhere except at the Mercy Seat. He must have been in the habit of taking his daily troubles to his God and of seeking guidance from Him in his daily difficulties and of thanking Him for his daily mercies. He must have been in constant communion with his God or else he could not have ordered his ways aright before Him.

And I should also gather from our text that *Jotham was a very fearless, calm, collected, quiet-spirited man* who was not easily moved, for I find that the marginal reading is, "He established his ways before the Lord his God." He was not fickle-minded, carried about by every wind that blew, but having prepared his heart to serve the Lord, God was

pleased to give him a steadiness of heart so that he was established in the right way. He could say with David, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed." And the marginal reading there is "prepared." "My heart is prepared, O God." Jotham was steadfast in the right, way. What a grand thing it is, in our daily life, not to be so worried that we are almost driven to distraction and caused to do foolish things through unwise haste. And what a mercy it is to be kept calm and quiet in our daily walk before the Lord our God! O dear Friends, seek to be thus established before the Lord, so that whatever happens to you, your heart shall be so fixed that you shall not be afraid of evil tidings! You can never have power to move the world unless you have a fixed fulcrum for your lever. If your heart is fixed on God, you will be able to move the world, but the world will not be able to move you.

The real reason why Jotham's heart was prepared and established before God was because *his heart was right with God.* And how did his heart get to be right with God? Why, in the same way as yours and mine must—by being created anew! The heart of man, by nature, whether it is Jotham's heart or anybody else's, is a heart of stone. And God's Almighty Grace must make it a heart of flesh, or else a heart of stone it will always remain. If there is anything good in any man, it must have been placed there by a supernatural work of God the Holy Spirit. Job rightly said, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." Who can bring steadiness of heart out of an unstable heart like ours? Who can bring the preparation of our ways before God out of a heart that is, by nature, deceitful above all things and desperately wicked? Jotham earned the commendation in our text because he had been the subject of Sovereign Grace and continued still to be so. And if you and I think that we can prepare our ways before the Lord our God without first resorting to the precious blood of Christ for cleansing—and to the Holy Spirit for the renewal of our nature—we shall make a very great mistake. The Lord must first work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure and then we must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. But, not till He has thus worked in us can we work it out. [See Sermon #820, Volume 14—WORKING OUT WHAT IS WORKED IN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

III. Now, thirdly, we are to notice THE PECULIAR HONOR OF JOTHAM'S CAREER—"So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God."

I should imagine, first, that he was *mighty in resolve.* It is a grand thing to have a man of resolves who has a high purpose before him and who means to accomplish it. That is the only man who is worthy to be called a man. As for that poor creature who looks like a man, but who has not any mind or will of his own—who has his ear pulled, first this way, and then that way, by whomever likes to pull it—what is the use of such a creature on the face of the earth? But Jotham was not a man of that kind. He sought counsel of the Lord to know what he ought to do. He judged honestly and carefully, in the sight of God, what was the right thing for him to do. And when he found that out, he put his foot down

and said, "That is the thing that I am going to do." It was no use for any of his subjects to say to him, "But perhaps that is not a prudent thing for you to do." He believed that to be right is to be truly prudent. It was no use for any of them to say to Jotham, "But this course of yours may involve us as well as you in serious trouble." He knew perfectly well that if right sometimes brings trouble, wrong always brings ten times as much! And whenever doing right does bring trouble, it ought to be the delight of the right-hearted to endure that trouble cheerfully. Jotham was strong in resolution, as a man has a right to be when he knows that his resolution is a right one. And that man who has prepared his heart and his ways with a single eye to God's Glory, resolving only to do the right thing whatever may happen, is the man who has a right to say, "I will," and "I shall." And he is the man who in the long run will be respected by his fellow men.

Having ordered his ways before the Lord, his God, Jotham had another sort of strength which is a very valuable one—*he was mighty in faith.* He felt this, "I have sincerely desired to glorify God and to walk in His ways and I am sure that God will carry me through." When he felt that it was right for him to fight the king of the Ammonites, he did fight him in no half-hearted manner because he felt that if God had bid him fight, God would surely give him the victory! He went to all his work relying upon God! And oh, how strong is the man who is mighty in faith! You know that you cannot have faith in God about a thing that you know is wrong. If you have ever so slight a suspicion that you are in the wrong, you cannot trust in God concerning it. It is like a little stone in your boot—it may not kill you, but you cannot walk with comfort as long as it is there. And a little question—even a very little one—as to whether you are in the right, cuts the sinews of your strength and you go limping along, if you can go at all. If I were speaking to you as a member of a church in which I did not quite believe. If I had to twist my message so as to make it fit the creed that I professed to hold, I would feel wretched. I would not get into such a position as that! I would sooner break stones upon the road any day. But where I feel that I have satisfied the requirements of my conscience in all points and that if I do err, I do not err willfully, or with my eyes open about it, then I can speak with confidence and say, "I know that this is right and that God will help me through with it. It does not at all matter to me what it involves. If it should bring me to poverty or suffering, or draw down upon my head misrepresentation and contempt, it does not matter an atom. Wisdom will be justified of all her children. God never did forsake the right, yet, and He never will—it must conquer in the long run." If the follower of the right and the true should have to suffer, it shall be a joy to him for he will thus be all the more a follower of his Lord and Master—and of all the true servants of his God who have gone before!

As Jotham was a mighty man in resolution and in faith, he also became *mighty in prayer.* You know that you cannot pray to God with power about a thing that you are not certain is right. It is no use for me to ask the Lord to help me in a matter in which there is something that

will grieve His Holy Spirit. It must be a case that I can confidently bring before God if I am to secure His help in it. I am sure that some trades people could not show the Lord their books. And if they cannot do so—and they are getting into difficulties—who can help them out of them? But when all is straight and honest, and the loss, whatever it may be, is caused by no fault of theirs, or when the accusation that is brought against them is nothing but slander, then they can present their petition to God with a clear conscience. And they may rest assured that He will hear them and grant their requests. A man becomes mighty in prayer, as well as in resolution and in faith, whose ways are prepared before the Lord his God.

And such a man also becomes *mighty in action.* He has not that guilty conscience which is the very essence of cowardice. He has gone before God as a sinner and confessed his guilt—and he has been washed in the precious blood of Jesus and cleansed from every stain. His heart has been renewed by the Holy Spirit. And although he is not yet perfect, he is perfect in his intention to do the Lord's will! And feeling that he is right and that what he is doing is at God's bidding, he is a terrible man to oppose. He is such a man that no other shall be able to stand against him all the days of his life. He is of that seed royal that Haman will in vain seek to slay, for Haman will be hanged upon the gallows, but Mordecai will be in power in the palace! If a man has thus prepared his ways before the Lord his God, he will be mighty in all that he does and God will be with him.

And this, dear Friends, will make him *mighty against his foes* as Jotham was against the Ammonites. Oftentimes they will not even dare to attack him, for "when a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." They will watch him and go around him, as Satan went around Job, but they will find scarcely anything that they can truthfully say against him. Or if they do oppose him, it will be of no use, for he will live them down if he does not overcome them in other ways. If they bark at him, he will let them bark, for he knows it is the nature of dogs to do so. And he will go on his way all the same, as the moon does when the dogs bark at her at night. She never pauses in her course, but goes shining on her way!

If a man's ways are prepared before the Lord his God, he will be mighty, not only against his foes, but he will also be *mighty in the midst of his own people.* Even though Jotham's subjects would not follow him in all respects, they respected him and loved him and made great lamentation over him when he died. Let me say to you young men, if you want to have influence over your fellows, do not take to flattering them—and never try to show them how great your talents are, or to make them believe you are somebody of importance. We have seen plenty of flashes in the pan, but the darkness has been just as great afterwards. Believe me, there is no building up of character except upon sound principles! And there is no building up of influence except upon good character. You must seek God helping you by His Spirit to prepare and establish your

ways before Him—and then such influence as you ought to have will come to you. When a man tells me that he is very good, I do not believe it. There are certain people, nowadays, who are writing, printing and talking in order to convince us that they are wonderfully holy. I used to think that some of them were so till they said it themselves! But ever since they have said it, I have gravely questioned whether it is true. If anyone whom I met always told me that he was rich—well, if I had dealings with him in business, I would want him to pay cash for everything. And when a person tells me that he is holy—well, I trust him as far as I can see him and not much further, for really holy men seldom say anything about their own holiness. They have no need to do so, for it always shows itself. Gold glitters quite enough of itself to show what it is, so there is no need for us to say, "That is gold." You do not need to say of these lamps, "They are bright." They say that for themselves by saying nothing, but simply shining.

I have been preaching to you about a very wonderful example of a gracious man. I wonder whether all here wish to be like he? I am afraid there are some of you who never try to prepare your ways at all. And as for preparing your ways before the Lord, that idea has never struck you. And yet, my dear Hearer, what can be so safe a way of living as to live in the love of God? And what can be more unhappy than for a man to be out of gear with the Omnipotent Creator—to feel every day you live that you are forgetting God and are ungrateful to Him—and that He is angry with you? I hope that this thought will strike some of you to the heart and make you miserable until all that is altered! And the way for it to be altered is for you to submit yourself to God by repentance and by looking to Jesus Christ by faith. May His Holy Spirit lead you to do so now, and then you will begin to live the happiest of lives, for you will be preparing your ways before the Lord your God.

May God bless you all for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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

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

"AND IT WAS SO"
NO. 3064

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 31, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
DURING THE SUMMER OF 1871.

"And it was so."
Genesis 1:7.

You will find those words six times upon the first page of Scripture. God spoke and said, "Let there be a firmament." "And it was so." He said, "Let the dry land appear." "And it was so." He bade the earth bring forth grass, "And it was so." He ordained the sun and moon for lights in the firmament of Heaven. "And it was so." Whatever it was that He willed, He did but speak the Word, "and it was so." In no single case was there a failure. There was not even a hesitation, a pause or a demand for a more powerful agency than the Divine Word. In each case, Jehovah spoke, "and it was so." Nor is this first week of Creation the only instance of the kind, for in no case has the Word of God fallen to the ground—whether of promise or of threat—the Word has been confirmed and fulfilled. "As it was in the beginning, it is now, and ever shall be, world without end." Whatever the mighty God decrees, foretells, declares, or promises shall, before long come to pass.

I shall ask you to accompany me in a mental voyage down the stream of history to show that *this has been the case as far as all history is concerned up till now.* "And it was so." The Lord's will has been Law. His Word has been followed by fact. *Dictum factum,* as the Latins say. We shall then endeavor to show that with an Immutable God, *it will be so continually in the great and in the small—in the affairs of the world—and in our own personal matters.* What God has promised shall come to pass! And at the winding-up of all history, it shall be said, "God said this and that, and it was so."

I. We stand at the fountainhead of human history and hear the Lord declare to our parents that in the day in which they should break His commands and eat of the forbidden fruit, they would surely die. "And it was so." They died that moment. That *spiritual* death which was the great and essential part of the sentence, was then and there fulfilled! The likeness and image of God was broken in them immediately and we are dead in trespasses and in sins by reason of their death. He also warned them when His wrath, as it were, glanced aslant from them to smite the soil on which they stood, that the earth would bring forth thorns and thistles to them, and that in the sweat of their face they should eat bread, and truly it has been so. The earth has yielded her harvest, but she has produced her thorns and briars, also. And though the curse of

labor has become a blessing, yet man's toil and woman's travail vindicate the Divine veracity.

When all flesh had corrupted its way, God repented that He had made man, and sent His servant Noah as a preacher of righteousness to threaten a universal flood. It did not appear very probable that the dense population of the earth could all be swept away and that the billows should rear their proud heads above the mountains—but it turned out that Noah was no fool and his prophecy was no raving. God had said that the world should be drowned "and it was so." The sluices of the great deep beneath were drawn up, the cataracts of Heaven descended and none escaped, save the few—that is eight—whom God enclosed within the ark.

A little further on the Lord appeared to His servant Abraham and told him that the wickedness of Sodom had been so great that the cry had gone up even to His Throne and the Lord communicated to His servant that He would go and see if it was altogether according to the cry thereof. And if so, Sodom would be destroyed. Abraham pleaded and his intercession almost prevailed, but as no righteous salt was found in the filthy cities of the plain, they were doomed to perish. They had given themselves to strange flesh and a strange judgment must, therefore, come upon them. Hell must fall out of Heaven upon such abominable offenders! "*And it was so*," for when the morning dawned, Sodom was utterly consumed and the smoke thereof went up to Heaven.

You know how God kept His Covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who were strangers with Him, dwelling in tents, looking for a better city, that is, a heavenly. Whatever promise was made to the Patriarchs was fulfilled to the letter! In all respects, *"it was so."* When they went down into Egypt, God declared that after 400 years He would bring them out and though the tribes appeared to be naturalized in Egypt and were rooted to the soil, yet God would bring them forth. And though Pharaoh took strong measures and thought to hold them fast, yet God had said that they should come out with a high hand and an outstretched arm—"and it was so." Let the wonders which He worked on the fields of Zoan, the plagues which overthrew the sons of Ham, the going forth out of Egypt and the terrors of the Red Sea when the depths covered all the chivalry of Egypt—let these remind you that God had spoken—and so it was. Pharaoh was hardened, but he was not able to resist the will of the Almighty! He stands forever in history as a memorial that none shall harden himself against the Most High and prosper, for the Lord does as He wills in Heaven and on earth and in all deep places! Has He said, and shall He not do it? "Is anything too hard for the Lord?"

I would not weary you, I think, if I were to dwell a little while upon the promise that God gave to Israel that He would lead the tribes through the wilderness and surely bring them to their inheritance. It appeared very unlikely that they would ever enter into Canaan, when, for 40 weary years, they wandered in the pathless wilderness. Yet the Jordan was crossed in due season and Jericho was taken. He said that they should, every man, possess his portion and each tribe its lot—"and it was so."

The Canaanites dwelt in cities that were walled up to Heaven and they dashed into the battle in chariots of iron, yet they were overcome, for God had said it—"and it was so." He cast out the heathen and planted the vine which He had brought out of Egypt. He overthrew Og and Sihon, "and gave their land for an heritage; for His mercy endures forever." Many a time, after Israel had been settled in the land, did they provoke the Lord to jealousy, so that He sent Prophet after Prophet, and their message was, "If you thus sin against the Lord, you shall be given into the hands of your enemies..."and it was so." But when they were sorely smitten, they repented and they cried unto God and He had pity upon them. And then He sent another of His servants with a gentle message, saying, "Turn unto Me, and repent, and I will deliver you." *"And it was so."*

In every case He kept His Word, whether for chastening them or delivering them. Evermore was He faithful. When, in the later period of their history, Sennacherib blasphemed the Lord, His servant Hezekiah took the cruel letter of Rabshakeh and laid it before the Lord in the Temple and cried mightily unto Him—and Isaiah came with the promise, "He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it." Who could put the hook into the nose of that leviathan? Who could turn him back by the way that he came? The Lord had said it should be done—*"and it was so"*—for that night the destroying Angel went through the host of Assyrians and there fell corpses on the plain as many as the leaves of autumn! Has God promised to rescue His children? Then be assured this, however numerous their foes, His Word shall not fail! Then came that dark day when Israel and Judah were threatened with captivity in a strange land. They sinned and, lo, "it was so." They were exiled far away. By the waters of Babylon they sat down and wept. They wept when they remembered Zion. But there came a promise to them—a promise which they had left all unread and forgotten in their Sacred Books, that after the lapse of 70 years they should return again and once more see the land of their fathers—"and it was so." God raised up for them a friend and a helper—and the captives came back again to their land.

Let us quote the grandest instance of all. The Lord promised, immediately after the Fall, that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. That promise had been succeeded by many others and those in Israel who knew the Lord waited for the coming of the Deliverer. The promise tarried long. Day and night devout man cried unto God, for their patience was sorely tried, yet they confidently expected the Messenger of God who would suddenly come in His Temple—and when the fullness of time was come, "it was so." The everlasting God was found living among men and they "beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth." It was the master-promise of all—the promise of the greatest gift that God has ever bestowed upon mankind! And that promise was kept, kept to the letter

and to the hour. He had said it should be, "and it was so," though it was a wonder beyond all wonders!

We might pursue our theme and show you that as far as all past events have gone, God's Word has been verified. But now, though we keep to history, we shall leave the large volume of the public records and ask you to take down from its shelf that little diary of yours, the pocketbook of your own life story—and then observe how God's Word has been true. You remember the warnings that you received in your youth, when you were told that the ways of sin might be pleasantness at first, but would end in sorrow. You were told that the cup might sparkle at the brim, but that the dregs thereof were full of bitterness. Did you test that statement in the days of your early manhood? Ah, then I know you cannot deny that it was as God had declared. He said, "The wages of sin is death"—"and it was so." He said it would be bitterness in the end thereof, "and it was so." He told you that the fascinations of sin were as destructive as they were alluring and truly, "it was so." If you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, you will blush as you answer the question, "What fruit had you then in those things whereof you are now ashamed?"

It fell on a day, as God would have it, that your eyes were opened to see your lost estate. And there was a voice which spoke in the Gospel and said, "If you will return unto Me, return. Only *confess the transgressions that you have* sinned against Me, and I will forgive you. Come and put your trust in My Son, and your iniquity shall be blotted out like a cloud and your transgressions like a thick cloud." Led by Sovereign Grace, you came to Jesus. You washed in the fountain of His blood, guided to it by the Holy Spirit. What is your testimony? You were promised salvation, pardon, peace. My testimony is—and it was so! Is not that yours also? Oh, the joy of believing in Jesus! Oh, the bliss of casting one's self into the Father's arms and pleading the merits of the Only-Begotten! There is a peace of God that passes all understanding which comes to our faith when we exercise it upon Christ! Peace was promised—"and it was so."

Since the time when you believed in Jesus, you have had many needs, both spiritual and temporal, but He has promised no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. What say you, Brothers and Sisters? Your needs have come—have the supplies also come? I am sure you will say, "it was so"—strangely so—but always so! As your day, your strength has been. The shoes of iron and of brass have had rough usage, but they have not worn out. The all-sufficient God has proved that His Grace is all-sufficient for us. Our personal history bears witness that with regard to the Providence of God and to the supplies of His Grace, He said that He would grant us enough, "and it was so." He told you that when you believed in His Word, He would hear your prayers. Three times He put it in varied form, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Brothers and Sisters have been to the Mercy Seat and tried whether God hears prayer, and it has been so—He did hear prayer! We believed His Word and in due time our faith has been turned to sight and the promise has been fulfilled. We

have read in God's Word that He would sanctify our trials to us and that, "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." What then, is my witness, after having been week after week and even month after month racked with pain and laid low with sickness? What have these things been to me? Have they worked to my good? Do they bring forth the peaceable fruit of righteousness? My truthful witness is, "and it was so." I feel persuaded that every Christian shall have to say of his afflictions that they have been blessed to him—"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Your Word," said one of old. And many in these modern times can say the same. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted"—the Lord said it would be—"and it was so."

Up to this hour it has always been true with regard to us, His people, that what the Lord has said, He has surely performed. We can—

"Sing the sweet promise of His Grace,
And the performing God."

Let me remind you that our history is only the common experience of all God's people and if there is anything uncommon in the stories of the saints, then there is only a more than usually clear confirmation of the Truth of God. Look at the martyrs—they suffered what we can scarcely bear to read of—yet the Lord said He would be with them. "And it was so." They wore the chain for Christ's sake and He promised to be their companion—*"and it was so."* They went to the stake or bowed their head to the axe and they were promised that even to the end He would be with them—"and it was so." Right along through all the history of the Church militant and, I might also ask the confirmation of the Church triumphant, too—the saints declare that "it was so." Christ has kept His Word to the letter! Not one good thing has failed of all that He ever promised to His people!

II. And now, having taken this very brief run through history, let me ask you to follow me when I say that, AS IT HAS BEEN IN THE PAST, SO IT WILL BE IN THE FUTURE!

It is always good reasoning, when we are dealing with God, to infer the future from the past. "Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice." Having the same God and the same promises, we may expect to always see the same results. As for the future, a large part of Scripture is as yet unfulfilled. Many persons try to interpret it, but the man is not born who can explain the Revelation. Yet, whatever God has there declared will be explained by the working out of His Providence—

"God is His own Interpreter,
And He will make it plain."

Whatever He has there promised, it shall be said of it, by-and-by, *"and it was so."* We learn that there is to be a wide spread of the Gospel. It is written, "All flesh shall see the salvation of God." "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." Therefore be assured that it shall be so! Let the missionary toil on and the devil rage on if he will—the devil shall be disappointed and the servant of God shall have his heart's

desire! God will honor His Church when she has faith enough to believe in His promises.

There is to be, in the fullness of time, a Second Coming of the Lord Jesus. He who went up from Olivet sent two of His angelic servants to promise that in the same manner as He went up into Heaven, He would return again. He shall surely come. Virgin souls who are awake and watching for the midnight cry will hear it before long. And when He comes, "the dead in Christ shall rise first"—there shall be a resurrection of the just at His appearing. So He has promised" and, "blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power." There are no bonds of death that can hold the saints in their graves when the Lord descends at the sound of the archangel's trumpet! God has said that they shall arise—and it shall be so. They shall, everyone of them, return from the land of the enemy and then will follow the millennial glory—we will not explain that splendor—but we know that it is promised, and that whatever has been foretold by God shall surely be! The saints shall possess the Kingdom and shall reign with Christ!

And Heaven and the eternal future in the Glory Land where the ever-blessed God shall reveal Himself unto His servants, "and they shall see His face; and His name shall be on their foreheads"—every golden word, every sapphire sentence which glows and sparkles with the Glory of the Most High and the loving kindness of the Infinite shall be fulfilled! It shall be said of the whole, "and it was so." Yes! And concerning the dread future of the lost—those awful words that tell of fires that burn and yet do not consume—and of a wrath that slays and yet men live beneath its power—verily, verily, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal!" These shall all be fulfilled! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one Word that God has spoken shall fail. Of doom or of glory, of promise or of threat, it shall be said, "and it was so." And when the end shall come and Christ shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, and the drama of history shall be ended and the curtain shall drop and God shall be All-in-All—all shall be summed up in this sentence, "He spoke, and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast," He said it, "and it was so."

I desire, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, for your consolation, to bring this Truth of God home to yourselves, if the Spirit of God will enable me. "It was so"—*this has been true and it shall be so to you.* God's promises shall all be kept *to you personally.* God will fulfill His Word to you in every letter. Observe there will occur cases in which there will be no visible help toward the fulfillment of the Divine Promise and no tendencies that way. But if God has pledged His Word, He will keep it. Note well that in the creation of the world there was nothing to help God. "With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him?" When He began to fit up the world for man and to furnish the house which He had made in the beginning, there was darkness and that was no aid. There was chaos and that was no help. Now you are troubled at the present time. Your condition is one of confusion, disorder, darkness—you see nothing

that could make God's promise come true, not a finger to help—no one even to wish you well. Never mind! God needs no helper. He works gloriously alone. See how the earth stands. What does it hang on? "He hangs the earth upon nothing." Look at the unpillared arch above it. There are no buttresses, no supports, no props to the sky—yet it has not fallen and it never will. "Trust you in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." And if He has given you a promise and you have laid hold upon it, though nothing should appear to aid its fulfillment, yet it shall be fulfilled! You will have to write, "and it was so."

Yes, and this shall be the case though many circumstances tend the other way. When there seems to be a conflict against God—not only no help, but much resistance—then do not fear. What does it matter to God? Though all the men on earth and all the devils in Hell were against Him, what does it matter? Though heaps of chaff contend against the wind, what does it matter to the wind? They shall be whirled along in its fury! What if the wax shall defy the flame? It shall but melt in the fervent heat! If all the world and all Hell should declare that God will not keep His promise, yet He will perform it and we shall have to say, *"it was so."* No opposition can stop the Lord!

But you may say, "This cannot be true, surely, in my case. I could have believed it on a great scale, but not for myself." Ah, does God speak Truth in great things, and lies in little ones? Will you blaspheme the Most High by imagining that in public acts of royalty He is true, but in the private deeds of His family He is false? What would be a worse imputation against a man than that? Who shall throw such a charge upon the eternal God? The Lord promised His servant Elijah that He would take care of him. Did He not make the ravens feed him? Did He not send him to the widow of Sarepta and multiply her meal and her oil? He was as true to him in the ravens' matter, and in the handful of meal matter, as when, in the business of the great rain, the Prophet bowed his head between his knees on Carmel and saw at length the heavens covered with clouds and the land deluged with showers! God will keep His Word in little things to you. Do not imagine that He forgets your little problems. The hairs of your head are numbered. A sparrow lights not on the ground without your Father. Are you not better than the sparrows which are sold at five for two farthings in the market? Will you not rest in your Father's care and believe that His promises shall be fulfilled and that your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure and you shall dwell in the land and verily, you shall be fed?

God's Word stands true even when our unworthiness is in the way. I know you have fancied, "If I were a great saint, God would surely keep His Word to me. But I, being a very grievous sinner, how shall He be gracious to me?" And do you think that God is good and truthful only to the good and true? Would you be so yourself? Surely we must deal honestly with all men, whoever they may be! Their character is no excuse for our unfaithfulness to our own promises. Our Lord Jesus has said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." And if you come to

God, He will not cheat you and say, "I said, 'Who confesses and forsakes his sins shall have mercy,' but I did not mean the promise for such an one as you are." No, Christ has said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out" and if you come to Him, though you are the blackest sinner out of Hell, yet Christ will not reject you, for it is not your character, but *His* Character that is to be considered in the promise! Even "if we believe not, yet He abides faithful—He cannot deny Himself."

Yes, and His promise comes true and we have to say of it, *"and it was so,"* even in cases of our own confessed incapacity to receive it. Take the case of Abraham, for that is typical of many others in this respect. He had the promise of a son and heir. And though, as for his own body, it was as dead and Sarah was well stricken in years, Abraham did not consider himself or Sarah, but believed the promise and, in the fullness of time, there was the sound of laughter in the tent, for Isaac was born! We err when we become so depressed by our own incapacity as to conceive doubts of God's faithfulness. The Lord gives the promise that the barren woman shall keep house—*and it is so.* Our desert-hearts shall have the blessing—it shall drop upon the pastures of the wilderness and the little hills shall rejoice on every side! Our weakness shall not hinder the fulfillment of the Divine Promise. God is able to bless us even when we feel only fit to be cursed. O empty one, God can fill you! O dried branch and withered tree, you that stand like an oak smitten by lightning, only fit for the burning—the Lord, the everlasting God—can quicken you and put fresh sap in you, and make your branches to bud again to the glory of His holy name! He promises and if you believe, you shall have to say, *"and it was so."*

It will be thus right on to the end of the chapter. A few days ago I stood by the side of a dear departing Brother who feebly lifted his hands from the bed and said just these few words, "Christ, Christ, Christ is All." And then he said, as I bade him "Good-bye," "We shall meet in Heaven. I shall go there soon and you will follow, but I hope it will be a long while before you do." I asked him whether that was quite a benediction and he said, "You know what I mean. The Church needs you." About half-past five this afternoon, he who rejoiced that he would soon be in Heaven entered within the gate of pearl! He had served us well as a deacon of this Church and now he sees the face of the Ever-Blessed. He believed, while here on earth, that it was bliss to be with Christ and he finds it so! He is saying, "The half has not been told me." Well, well, whether we live to old age, or depart in mid-life, or die in early youth, what does it matter? We shall find that passing across the river is delightful when at eventide it is light. And oh, the glory of the everlasting daybreak! The splendor of the sun that goes down no more! Oh, the bliss of beholding saints and angels, and seeing the King in His beauty! The messengers of God said that Heaven is blessed—and it is so—it is so! The voice from Heaven said, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," and it is so! [See Sermon #1219, Volume 21—A VOICE FROM HEAVEN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

I would leave a thought with those who are exercised with doubts and fears about the Lord's sure mercies. It is a very hard thing that we

should doubt our God, but we do. And therefore let us shoot arrows at unbelief. Note well that when God spoke in the Creation, "and it was so," there was only His power concerned. Supposing He had spoken and it had *not* been so? Then the only result would have been that God was proved not to be Omnipotent. But His might did not fail Him! His glorious attribute of power showed its majesty and what the Lord spoke was accomplished. Yet, in this instance, only one attribute was at stake. Now, when you consider any one of God's promises recorded in the Bible, there is more than one attribute engaged for its fulfillment—there are at least two—for there is the Divine Truth at stake as well as the Divine Power. If He said it should be and it is not, it is either that He would not or He could not—if He could not, then His power has failed. But if He would not when He promised, then His truth is forfeited! We have, therefore, a double hold when dealing with Covenant promises and may rest in two Immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie!

But sometimes, in certain promises, even more is observable. For instance, you who have known the Lord these 10 or 20 years, have been helped before. But suppose the Lord were to fail you now? Then not only would His Power and His Truth be compromised, but His Immutability also, since He would then have *changed* and would no longer be the same God today as He was yesterday! Three attributes are leagued upon your side—you have three sacred pledges for the fulfillment of the promise! Frequently you also have God's Wisdom brought into the affair in hand. You have been in great difficulty and you have seen no means of escape. But you have laid the case before God and left it there. He has inspired His servant David to say, "Cast your burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain you." Now, if He does not sustain you, there are four attributes at stake! His Power—can He do it? His Truth—will He keep His promise? His Immutability—has He changed? His Wisdom—can He find a way of escape?

Frequently, my Brothers and Sisters, the *Lord's honor is* also brought into the field in addition to the other attributes. You recollect how Moses put it when the Lord said, "Let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them." Then Moses said, "Why should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth?" See, too, how Joshua uses the same argument with the Lord—"The Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it…and what will You do unto Your great name?" Oh, that is grand pleading—that is grand pleading! Now if the Lord has brought you into deep waters and you have put your trust in Him and said, "I know that He will deliver me." If He does not do so, the enemy will say, "It is a vain thing to trust in God, for the Lord does not deliver His people." His honor is at stake and, ah, He is a jealous God! He will rouse Himself and go forth like a man of war to show Himself strong in the behalf of them that trust in Him!

In addition to all this, Divine Love is included in the issue. How did Moses put it? The people said, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness." And Moses argued thus with the Lord, "Did You bring all these people out of Egypt that they might die in the wilderness? Have You no love to them? Will You be cruel to the sons of men?" Even thus may we plead with the benevolence and pity of the Lord. "Will the Lord cast off forever? Will He be favorable no more?" Oh, no, that cannot be! Each child of His can sing—

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

"Is it so that He has taught me long after the sweetness of His Grace and yet will He deny it to me? Does the Lord tantalize men in this way? I could have been happy enough in my poor ignorant way as a sinner, but now that I have been made to taste of higher and sweeter things, I shall be doubly wretched if I may not enjoy them! If He makes men hunger and thirst, and then does not feed them, He is not a God of love." But He *is* a God of love and, therefore, He cannot treat His servants so! You remember Luther used to say that when he saw that God was in his quarrel, he always felt safe. "Your honor is at stake," he would say, "and it is no business of Luther's—it is God's business when God's Gospel is concerned." Every Divine Attribute is pledged as a guarantee that every Divine Promise shall be kept! Here faith may gather strength, and rest assured that the Covenant is sure in every jot and tittle! If one child of God who has put his trust in Jesus should perish, the everlasting *Covenant of Grace* would have failed, for this is a part of its stipulations, "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." And if I have come to Jesus and rested in Him and, after all, do not find salvation and eternal life, then the Covenant has become a dead letter to me—and this it shall never be! "Although my house is not so with God, yet has He made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure." He will not allow His promise to fail!

Last word of all, remember that the very blood of Christ is at stake in the matter of God's Promise. If a poor guilty sinner shall come and rest in Jesus and yet is not saved, then Jesus Christ is grievously dishonored—He has shed His blood in vain! Shall they perish on whom His blood is sprinkled? Has the Fountain, after all its boasted efficacy, become a mockery? Is there no power in the Atonement of Jesus to cleanse the guilty? Ah, Beloved, He said it would cleanse and it was so, it is so and it shall be so forever! They who rest in Christ shall not perish, neither shall anyone pluck them out of His hand. Each one of us, as we arrive in Heaven, shall add our testimony to the general verdict of all the saints and say, "It was so. He said it and He fulfilled it. Glory be unto His name!" If any soul comes to Jesus at this hour, he shall find eternal life. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Such is the Gospel. The Lord grant His great blessing!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

PSALM 107:33-43.

[The previous portion of this Exposition was published with Sermon #3061, Volume 53—THE RULE OF GRACE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

Verse 33, 34. *He turns rivers into a wilderness, and the water springs into dry ground; a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.* Hearken unto this, you who are men of understanding! God can soon take away from any people the privileges which they cease to prize. He sent barrenness upon the earth in the days of our first father, Adam, and He has long cursed with barrenness the very land in which this Psalm was written. He can give us what He pleases, and He can take it all away when He pleases. And, spiritually, God can easily turn a fruitful land into barrenness. The means of Grace, the ministry of His Word which was once very rich and fertile to you, may suddenly lose all its savor and all its fruitfulness. Yes, even His own Word, which may be compared to water springs, may suddenly seem to you to be but as dry ground. And your secret devotions, your reading of godly books, your conversation with gracious men and women—all of which were like wells of water—may seem to be dried up. If you walk contrary to God, He will walk contrary to you. "He turns a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." When the people of God fall from their steadfastness. When they wander from the paths of holiness, it is easy for God to let them know that the best means are only means—and that the best earthly supplies are barrenness, itself, apart from Him. God grant that it may never be so with any of us! But now see what happens when the Lord turns His hand the other way.

35. *He turns the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water springs.* He can make the sandy desert into a lake of water! He can make that which was barren as the desert of Sahara to become as fruitful as the Garden of the Lord. And if you are just now mourning your barrenness, believe in the Omnipotence of His Grace which can work such wonderful transformations as these for you. "All my fresh springs are in You," said the Psalmist. And so they are with us! Therefore, why should not those fresh springs now flow into our nature so as to make the dry ground into water springs?

36, 37. *And there He makes the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation; and sow the fields, and plant vineyards which may yield fruits of increase.* See, Brothers and Sisters, when God blesses us, then we begin to work for Him. When He works, we work. He blesses the barren land with fruitfulness and then we sow the fields and plant vineyards. We do not sit still because God is at work—no, rather, we obey the Apostolic injunction, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

38, 39. *He blesses them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; and allows not their cattle to decrease. Again, they are diminished and brought*

low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow. God has a great many rods and we get a great many smarts because of our many sins. If we were but saved from our sins, we would not need all these rods, "oppression, affliction and sorrow"—tribulation, anguish, pain and distress. I will not tell you the names of all of them, but they are very many and their strokes are very painful. May God grant that we may be rid of sin, for only so shall we be rid of many of these sorrows!

40. *He pours contempt upon princes, and causes them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way.* God makes very little of earth's biggest men—"He pours contempt upon princes." He has wonderful ways of making very poor those who are very rich in themselves. He makes those who were lords of all the fields to be exiles and wanderers in the wilderness where there is no way. Do not get proud, Brothers and Sisters, or else that may be your lot. He who is so near perfection that he need not pray, "God be merciful to me a sinner," may before long be so near desperation that he will not have to pray even the publican's prayer! Let none of us become too great, lest we soon be made very little.

41. *Yet sets He the poor on high from affliction and makes him families like a flock.* God always has an eye of pity for the poor, and especially for the spiritually poor. While "He pours contempt upon princes" with one hand, He is lifting the poor from the dunghill with the other!

42. *The righteous shall see it and rejoice.* When God's Providence and Grace are at work with men, the righteous shall see it, understand it and be glad.

42. *And all iniquity shall stop her mouth.* She is generally very noisy and boastful, but sometimes, when God's judgments are abroad, she is obliged to hold her tongue. "All iniquity shall stop her mouth." O Lord, stop it speedily, for she is making a great noise just now!

43. *Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the LORD.* Those who watch Providence will never be without a Providence to watch!

—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 THIRD BEATITUDE
NO. 3065

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 11, 1873.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."
Matthew 5:5.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the Beatitudes are as follows—#422, Volume 7—THE PEACEMAKER and #2103, Volume 35—THE HUNGER AND THIRST WHICH ARE BLESSED—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

I HAVE often reminded you that the Beatitudes in this chapter rise one above the other and spring out of one another and that those which come before are always necessary to those that follow after. This third Beatitude, "Blessed are the meek," could not have stood first—it would have been quite out of place there. When a man is converted, the first operation of the Grace of God within his soul is to give him true poverty of spirit, so the first Beatitude is, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." The Lord first makes us know our emptiness and so humbles us. Then next He makes us mourn over the deficiencies that are so manifest in us. Then comes the second Beatitude, "Blessed are they that mourn." First, then, is a true knowledge of ourselves and then a sacred grief arising out of that knowledge. Now, no man ever becomes truly meek, in the Christian sense of that word, until he first knows himself and then begins to mourn and lament that he is so far short of what he ought to be. Self-righteousness is never meek. The man who is proud of himself will be quite sure to be hard-hearted in his dealings with others. To reach this rung of the ladder of the Light of God he must first set his feet upon the other two. There must be poverty of spirit and mourning of heart before there will come that gracious meekness of which our text speaks.

Note too that this third Beatitude is of a higher order than the other two. There is something positive in it as to virtue. The first two are rather expressive of deficiency, but here there is a something supplied. A man is poor in spirit—that is, he feels that he lacks a thousand things that he ought to possess. The man mourns—that is, he laments over his state of spiritual poverty. But now there is something really given to him by the Grace of God—not a negative quality, but a positive proof of the work of the Holy Spirit within his soul so that he has become meek. The first two characteristics that receive a benediction appear to be wrapped up in themselves. The man is poor in spirit—that relates to himself. His mourning is his own personal mourning which ends when he is comforted. But the meekness has to do with other people. It is true that it has a relationship to God, but a man's meekness is especially towards

his fellow men. He is not simply meek within himself—his meekness is manifest in his dealings with others. You would not speak of a hermit who never saw a fellow creature as being meek. The only way in which you could prove whether he was meek would be to put him with those who would try his temper. So that this meekness is a virtue—larger, more expansive, working in a wider sphere than the first two characteristics which Christ has pronounced blessed. It is superior to the others, as it should be, since it grows out of them. Yet, at the same time, as there is through the whole of the Beatitudes a fall parallel with the rise, so is it here. In the first case, the man was poor—that was low. In the second case, the man was mourning—that also was low. But if he kept his mourning to himself, he might still seem great among his fellow men. But now he has come to be meek among them—lowly and humble in the midst of society—so that he is going lower and lower! Yet he is rising with spiritual exaltation, although he is sinking as to personal humiliation, and so has become more truly gracious.

Now, having spoken of the connection of this Beatitude, we will make two enquiries with the view of opening it up. They are these—first, *who are the meek?* And, secondly, *how and in what sense can they be said to inherit the earth?*

I. First, then, WHO ARE THE MEEK? I have already said that they are those who have been made poor in spirit by God and who have been made to mourn before God and have been comforted. But here we learn that they are also meek, that is, lowly and gentle in mind before God and before men.

They are meek before God. And good old Watson divides that quality under two heads, namely, that they are submissive to His will and flexible to His Word. May these two very expressive qualities be found in each one of us!

So the truly meek are, first of all, *submissive to God's will.* Whatever God wills, they will. They are of the mind of that shepherd on Salisbury Plain, of whom good Dr. Stenhouse enquired, "What kind of weather shall we have to-morrow?" "Well," replied the shepherd, "we shall have the sort of whether that pleases me." The doctor then asked, "What do you mean?" And the shepherd answered, "What weather pleases God always pleases me." "Shepherd," said the doctor, "your lot seems somewhat hard." "Oh, no, Sir!" he replied, "I don't think so. For it abounds with mercies." "But you have to work very hard, do you not?" "Yes," he answered, "there is a good deal of labor, but that is better than being lazy." "But you have to endure many hardships, do you not?" "Oh, yes, Sir!" he said, "a great many. But then I don't have so many temptations as those people have who live in the midst of towns, and I have more time for meditating upon my God. So I am perfectly satisfied that where God has placed me is the best position I could be in." With such a happy, contented spirit as that, those who are meek do not quarrel with God! They do not talk as some foolish people do of having been born under a wrong planet and placed in circumstances unfavorable to their development! And even when they are smitten by

God's rod, they do not rebel against Him and call Him a hard Master, but they are either dumb with silence, and open not their mouth because God has done it or, if they do speak, it is to ask for Grace that the time they are enduring may be sanctified to them, or they may even rise so high in Grace as to glory in infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon them! The proud-hearted may, if they will, arraign their Maker. And the thing formed may say to Him who formed it, "Why have You made me thus?" But these men of Grace will not do so. It is enough for them if God wills anything! If He wills it, so let it be—Solomon's throne or Job's dunghill—they desire to be equally happy wherever the Lord may place them, or however He may deal with them!

They are also *flexible to God's Word.* If they are really meek, they are always willing to bend. They do not imagine what the Truth of God ought to be and then go to the Bible for texts to prove what they think should be there—they go to the Inspired Book with a candid mind and they pray with the Psalmist, "Open You my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law." And when, in searching the Scriptures, they find deep mysteries which they cannot comprehend, they believe where they cannot understand and where, sometimes—different parts of Scripture seem to conflict with one another—they leave the explanation to the Great Interpreter who alone can make all plain. When they meet with Doctrines that are contrary to their own notions and hard for flesh and blood to receive, they yield themselves to the Divine Spirit and pray, "What we know not, teach You to us." When the meek in spirit find, in the Word of God, any precept, they seek to obey it at once. They do not cavil at it or ask if they can avoid it, or raise that oft-repeated question, "Is it *essential* to salvation?" They are not so selfish that they would do nothing unless salvation depended upon it—they love their God so much that they desire to obey even the least command that He gives, simply out of love to Him. The meek in spirit are like a photographer's sensitive plates—as the Word of God passes before them, they desire to have its image imprinted upon their hearts. Their hearts are the fleshy tablets on which the mind of God is recorded. God is the Writer and they become living Epistles, written not with ink, but with the finger of the living God! Thus are they meek towards God.

But meekness is a quality which also relates largely to men and I think it means, first, that *the man is humble.* He bears himself among his fellow men not as a Caesar who, as Shakespeare says, does "bestride the narrow world like a Colossus," beneath whose huge legs ordinary men may walk and peep about to find themselves dishonorable graves, but he knows that he is only a man and that the best of men are but men at the best. And he does not even claim to be one of the best of men. He knows himself to be less than the least of all saints and, in some respects, the very chief of sinners. Therefore he does not expect to have the first place in the synagogue, nor the highest seat at the feast—he is quite satisfied if he may pass among his fellow men as a notable instance of the power of God's Grace and may be known by them as one who is a great debtor to

the loving kindness of the Lord. He does not set himself up to be a very superior being. If he is of high birth, he does not boast of it. If he is of low birth, he does not try to put himself on a level with those who are in a higher rank of life. He is not one who boasts of his wealth, or of his talents. He knows that a man is not judged by God by any of these things—and if the Lord is pleased to give him much Grace and to make him very useful in His service, he only feels that he owes the more to his Master and is the more responsible to Him. So he lies the lower before God and walks the more humbly among men.

The meek-spirited man is always of a humble temper and carriage. He is the very opposite of the proud man who you feel must be a person of consequence—at any rate to himself—and to whom you know that you must give way unless you would have an altercation with him. He is a gentleman who expects always to have his top-gallants flying in all weathers. He must always have his banner borne in front of him and everybody else must pay respect to him. The great "I" stands conspicuous in him at all times. He lives in the first house on the street, in the best room, in the front parlor—and when he wakes in the morning, he shakes hands with himself and congratulates himself upon being such a fine fellow as he is! That is the very opposite of being meek and, therefore, humility, although it is not all that there is in meekness, is one of the chief characteristics of it.

Out of this grows gentleness of spirit. *The man is gentle.* He does not speak harshly. His tones are not imperious, his spirit is not domineering. He will often give up what he thinks to be lawful because he does not think it is expedient for the good of others. He seeks to be a true brother among his brethren, thinks himself most honored when he can be the doorkeeper of the House of the Lord, or perform any menial service for the household of faith. I know some professing Christians who are very harsh and repellent. You would not think of going to tell them your troubles. You could not open your heart to them. They do not seem to be able to come down to your level. They are up on a mountain and they speak down to you as a poor creature far below them. That is not the true Christian spirit—that is not being meek. The Christian who is really superior to others among whom he moves is just the man who lowers himself to the level of the lowest for the general good of all! He imitates his Master who, though He was equal with God, "made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a Servant." And in consequence, he is loved and trusted as his Master was, and even little children come to him and he does not repel them. He is gentle towards them, as a loving mother avoids all harshness when dealing with her children.

In addition to being humble and gentle, *the meek are patient.* They know "it must be that offenses come," yet they are too meek either to give offense or to take offense. If others grieve them, they put up with it. They do not merely forgive seven times, but 70 times seven! In fact, they often do not feel as if anything had been done that needed any forgiveness, for they have not taken it as an affront. They consider that a mistake was

made, so they are not angry at it. He may be angry for a moment—he would not be a man if he were not. But there is such a thing as being angry and yet not sinning—and the meek man turns his anger wholly upon the evil and away from the person who did the wrong—and is as ready to do him a kindness as if he had never transgressed at all! If there should be anybody here who is of an angry spirit, kindly take home these remarks and try to mend that matter, for a Christian must get the better of an angry temper. Little pots soon boil over and I have known some professing Christians who are such very little pots that the smallest fire has made them boil over! When you never meant anything to hurt their feelings, they have been terribly hurt. The simplest remark has been taken as an insult and a construction put upon things that never was intended. And they make their brother offenders for a word, or for half a word, yes, and even for not saying a word! Sometimes if a man does not see them in the street through being short-sighted, they are sure he passed them on purpose and would not speak to them because they are not so well off as he is. Whether a thing is done or is left undone, it equally fails to please them. They are always on the alert for some cause of annoyance and almost remind one of the Irishman at Donnybrook Fair, trailing his coat in the dirt and asking for somebody to tread on it, that he may have the pleasure of knocking that somebody down! When I hear of anybody like that losing his temper, I always pray that he may not find it again, for such tempers are best lost. The meek-spirited man may be naturally very hot and fiery, but he has had Grace given to him to keep his temper in subjection. He does not say, "That is my constitution and I cannot help it," as so many do. God will never excuse us because of our constitution—His Grace is given to us to cure our evil constitutions and to kill our corruptions! We are not to spare any Amalekites because they are called constitutional sins, but we are to bring them all out—even Agog who goes delicately—and slay them before the Lord who can make us more than conquerors over every sin, whether constitutional or otherwise!

But since this is a wicked world and there are men who will persecute us, and others who will try to rob us of our right and do us serious injury, the meek man goes beyond merely bearing what has to be borne, for he *freely forgives the injury that is done to him.* It is an ill sign when anyone refuses to forgive another. I have heard of a father saying that his child should never darken his door again. Does that father know that he can never enter Heaven while he cherishes such a spirit as that? I have heard of one saying, "I will never forgive So-and-So." Do you know that God will never hear your prayer for forgiveness until you forgive others? That is the very condition which Christ taught His disciples to present—"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." If you take your brother by the throat because he owes you a hundred pence, can you think that God will forgive you the thousand talents which you owe Him? So the meek-spirited man forgives those who wrong him—he reckons that injuries are permitted to be done to him as trials of his Grace, to see

whether he can forgive them—and he does so, and does so right heartily. It used to be said of Archbishop Cranmer, "Do my lord of Canterbury an ill turn and he will be a friend to you as long as you live." That was a noble spirit, to take the man who had been his enemy and to make him henceforth to be a friend. This is the way to imitate Him who prayed for His murderers, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." And this is the very opposite of a revengeful spirit. There are some who say that they have been wronged and they will retaliate. But "retaliation" is not a Christian word! "Revenge" is not a word that ought to be found in a Christian's dictionary—he reckons it to be of the Babylonian dialect and of the language of Satan. His only revenge is to heap coals of fire upon his adversary's head by doing him all the good he can in return for the evil that he has done.

I think that meekness also involves *contentment.* The meek-spirited man is not ambitious. He is satisfied with what God provides for him. He does not say that his soul loathes the daily manna. And the water from the Rock never loses its sweetness to his taste. His motto, is, "God's Providence is my inheritance." He has his ups and his downs, but he blesses the Lord that his God is a God of the hills and also of the valleys. And if he can have God's face shining upon him, he cares little whether it is hills or valleys upon which he walks. He is content with what he has and he says, "Enough is as good as a feast." Whatever happens to him, seeing that his times are in God's hand, it is with him well in the best and most emphatic sense. The meek man is no Napoleon who will wade through human blood to reach a throne and shut the gates of mercy on mankind. The meek man is no miser, hoarding up, with an all-devouring greed, everything that comes to his hands and adding house to house and field to field so long as he lives. The meek man has a laudable desire to make use of his God-given talents and to find for himself a position in which he may do more good to his fellow men. But he is not unrestful, anxious, fretful, grieving, grasping—he is contented and thankful.

Put those five qualities together and you have the truly meek man—humble, gentle, patient, forgiving and contented—the very opposite of the man who is proud, harsh, angry, revengeful and ambitious. It is only the Grace of God, as it works in us by the Holy Spirit, that can make us thus meek. There have been some who have thought themselves meek when they were not. The Fifth Monarchy men, in Cromwell's day, said that they were meek and that they were, therefore, to inherit the earth—so they wanted to turn other men out of their estates and houses so that they might have them—and thereby they proved that they were not meek! For if they had been, they would have been content with what they had and let other people enjoy what belonged to them. There are some people who are very gentle and meek as long as nobody tries them. We are, all of us, remarkably good-tempered while we have our own way. But the true meekness which is a work of Grace will stand the fire of persecution and will endure the test of enmity, cruelty and wrong—even as the meekness of Christ did upon the Cross of Calvary.

II. Now, in the second place, let us think of HOW THE MEEK INHERIT THE EARTH.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." This promise is similar to the Inspired declaration of Paul, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." So first, it is the meek man who inherits the earth, for *he is the earth's conqueror.* He is the conqueror of the world whenever he goes. William the Conqueror came to England with sword and fire, but the Christian conqueror wins his victories in a superior manner by the weapons of kindness and meekness. In Puritan times there was an eminent and godly minister named Mr. Deering, who has left some writings that are still valuable. While sitting at a table one day, a graceless fellow insulted him by throwing a glass of beer in his face. The good man simply took his handkerchief, wiped his face and went on eating his dinner. The man provoked him a second time by doing the same thing—and he even did it a third time with many oaths and blasphemy. Mr. Deering made no reply, but simply wiped his face and, on the third occasion, the man came and fell at his feet and said that the spectacle of his Christian meekness, and the look of tender, pitying love that Mr. Deering had cast upon him, had quite subdued him. So the good man was the conqueror of the bad one! No Alexander was ever greater than the man who could bear such insults like that! And holy Mr. Dodd, when he spoke to a man who was swearing in the street, received a blow in the mouth that knocked out two of his teeth. The holy man wiped the blood from his face and said to his assailant, "You may knock out all my teeth if you will permit me just to speak to you so that your soul may be saved." And the man was won by this Christian forbearance! It is wonderful what rough natures will yield before gentle natures. After all, it is not the strong who conquer, but the weak. There has been a long enmity, as you know, between the wolves and the sheep. And the sheep have never taken to fighting, yet they have won the victory and there are more sheep than wolves in the world today. In our own country, the wolves are all dead, but the sheep have multiplied by tens of thousands. The anvil stands still while the hammer beats upon it, but one anvil wears out many hammers. And gentleness and patience will ultimately win the day. At this present moment, who is the mightier? Caesar with his legions or Christ with His Cross? We know who will be the victor before long—Mohammed with his sharp scimitar or Christ with His Doctrine of Love. When all earthly forces are overthrown, Christ's Kingdom will still stand. Nothing is mightier than meekness! And it is the meek who inherit the earth in that sense.

They inherit the earth in another sense, namely, that *they enjoy what they have.* If you find me a man who thoroughly enjoys life, I will tell you at once that he is a meek, quiet-spirited man. Enjoyment of life does not consist in the possession of riches. There are many sick men who are utterly miserable and there are many poor men who are equally miserable. You may have misery or you may have happiness according to

your state of *heart* in any condition of life. The meek man is thankful, happy and contented—and it is contentment that makes life enjoyable. It is so at our common meals. Here comes a man home to his dinner. He bows his head and says, "For what we are about to receive, the Lord make us truly thankful." And then opens his eyes and grumbles, "What? Cold mutton again?" His spirit is very different from that of the good old Christian who, when he reached home, found two herrings and two or three potatoes on the table and he pronounced over them this blessing, "Heavenly Father, we thank You that You have ransacked both earth and sea to find us this entertainment." His dinner was not so good as the other man's, but he was content with it and that made it better! Oh the grumbling that some have, when rolling in wealth, and the enjoyment that others have when they have but little, for the dinner of herbs is sweeter than the stalled ox if contentment is but there! "A man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses," but in the meek and quiet spirit which thanks God for whatever He pleases to give.

"Oh!" says someone, "but that is not inheriting the earth—it is only inheriting a part of it." Well, it is inheriting as much of it as we need and there is a sense in which the meek do really inherit the whole earth. I have often felt, when I have been in a meek and quiet spirit, as if everything around me belonged to me. I have walked through a gentleman's park and I have been very much obliged to him for keeping it in such order on purpose for me to walk through it! I have gone inside his house and seen his picture gallery—and I have been very grateful to him for buying such grand pictures and I have hoped that he would buy a few more so that I might see them when I came next time. I was very glad that I had not to buy them and to pay the servants to watch over them—and that everything was done for me! And I have sometimes looked from a hill upon some far-reaching plain, or some quiet village, or some manufacturing town, crowded with houses and shops, and I have felt that they were all mine, although I had not the trouble of collecting the rents which people, perhaps, might not like to pay. I had only to look upon it all as the sun shone upon it and then to look up to Heaven and say, "My Father, this is all Yours and, therefore, it is all mine, for I am an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ." So, in this sense, the meek-spirited man inherits the whole each.

He also inherits it in another sense—that is to say, *whatever other men have, he is glad to think that they have it.* Perhaps he is walking and gets weary. Someone comes riding by and he says to himself, "Thank God that man does not need to walk and get tired as I do. I am glad there is somebody who is free from that trial." He works very hard and perhaps earns very little, but he lives next door to a workingman who has twice his wages and he says, "Thank God that my neighbor does not have such a pinch as I have. I should not like to see him in such a plight as I am in." Sometimes, when I am ill, someone comes in and says, "I have been to see somebody who is worse than you are," but I never get any comfort out of such a remark as that. And my usual answer is, "You have made

me feel worse than I was before by telling me that there is somebody worse even than I am." The greater comfort for a meek man is this, "Though I am ill, there are plenty of people who are well." Or this, "Though I am blind, I bless God that my dear Brothers and Sisters can see the flowers and the sun." Or this, "Though I am lame, I am thankful that others can run." Or this, "Though I am depressed in spirit, I am glad that there are sweet-voiced singers." Or this, "Though I am an owl, I rejoice that there are larks to soar and sing, and eagles to mount towards the sun." The meek-spirited man is glad to know that other people are happy—and their happiness is his happiness! He will have a great number of heavens, for everybody else's Heaven will be a Heaven to him! It will be a Heaven to him to know that so many other people are in Heaven, and for each one whom he sees there, he will praise the Lord. Meekness gives us the enjoyment of what is other people's, yet they have none the less because of our enjoyment of it!

Again, the meek-spirited man inherits the earth in this sense—*if there is anybody who is good anywhere near him, he is sure to see him.* I have known persons join the Church and after they have been a little while in it, they have said, "There is no love there." Now, when a Brother says, "There is no love there," I know that he has been looking in the mirror and that his own reflection has suggested his remark. Such persons cry out about the deceptions and hypocrisies in the professing church—and they have some cause for doing so—only it is a pity that they cannot also see the good people, the true saints who are there! The Lord still has a people who love and fear Him, a people who will be His in the day when He makes up His jewels. And it is a pity if we are not able to see what God so much admires. If we are meek, we shall the more readily see the excellences of other people. That is a very beautiful passage, in the second part of "The Pilgrim's Progress" which tells that when Christiana and Mercy had both been bathed in the bath and clothed in the fine linen, white and clean, "they began to esteem each other better than themselves." If we also do this, we shall not think so badly as some of us now do of this poor present life, but shall go through it thanking God and praising His name—and so inheriting the earth.

With a gentle temper and a quiet spirit, and Grace to keep you so, you will be inheriting the earth under any circumstances. If trouble should come, you will bow to it as the willow bows to the wind and so escapes the injury that falls upon sturdier trees. If there should come little vexations, you will not allow yourself to be vexed by them, but will say, "With a little patience, they will all pass away." I think I never admired Archbishop Leighton more than when I read a certain incident that is recorded in his life. He lived in a small house in Scotland and had only a manservant beside himself in the house. John, the manservant, was very forgetful and, one morning when he got up before his master, he thought he would like to have a day's fishing, so he went off and locked his master in. He fished until late in the evening, forgot all about his master, and when he came back, what do you think the bishop said to him? He

simply said, "John, if you go out for a day's fishing again, kindly leave me the key." He had had a happy day of prayer and study all by himself. If it had been some of us, we would have been fuming, fretting and getting up a nice lecture for John when he came back—and he richly deserved it—but I do not suppose it was worthwhile for the good man to put himself out about him. The incident is, I think, a good illustration of our text.

But the text means more than I have yet said, for the promise, "They shall inherit *the earth,"* may be read, "they shall inherit *the land,"* that is, the promised land, the heavenly Canaan! These are the men who shall inherit Heaven, for up there they are all meek-spirited. There are no contentions there! Pride cannot enter there. Anger, wrath and malice never pollute the atmosphere of the Celestial City. There, all bow before the King of kings and all rejoice in communion with Him and with one another. Ah, Beloved, if we are ever to enter Heaven, we must fling away ambition, discontent, wrath, self-seeking and selfishness! May God's Grace purge us of all these, for as long as any of that evil leaven is in our soul—where God is, we cannot go.

And then, dear Friends, the text means yet more than that—we shall inherit this earth by-and-by. David wrote, "The meek shall inherit the earth and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." After this earth has been purified by fire. After God shall have burned the works of men to ashes and every trace of corrupt humanity shall have been destroyed by the fervent heat, then shall this earth be fitted up again, and angels shall descend with new songs to sing and the New Jerusalem shall come down out of Heaven from God in all her glory! And then upon this earth, where once was war, the clarion shall ring no more! There shall be neither swords nor spears and men shall learn the arts of war no more. The meek shall then possess the land and every hill and valley shall be glad, and every fruitful plain shall ring with shouts of joy, and peace, and gladness throughout the long millennial day! The Lord send it and may we all be among the meek who shall possess the New Eden, whose flowers shall never wither and where no serpent's trail shall ever be seen!

But this must be the work of Grace. We must be born-again, or else our proud spirits will never be meek. And if we have been born-again, let it be our joy, as long as we live, to show that we are the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus with whom gracious words I close my discourse—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." So may it be, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 5:1-12.

Verse 1. *And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain.* For convenience and quietude and to be out of the way of traffic He went up

into a mountain. Elevated Doctrines would seem most at home on the high places of the earth.

1. *And when He was set.* For that was the mode of Eastern teaching.

1. *His disciples came unto Him.* They made the inner ring around Him and others gathered around them.

2. *And He opened His mouth and taught them.* Chrysostom says that He taught them even when He did not open His mouth! His very silence was instructive. But when He did open His mouth, what streams of wisdom flowed forth! He "taught them." He did not open His mouth to make an oration, He was a Teacher, so His aim was to teach those who came to Him. And His ministers best follow their Lord's example when they keep to the vein of teaching. The pulpit is not the place for the display of oratory and eloquence, but for real instruction—"He opened His mouth, and taught them."

2, 3. *Saying, Blessed.* The Old Testament closes with the word "curse." The New Testament begins here, in the preaching of Christ, with the word, "Blessed." He has changed the curse into a blessing. "Blessed."

3. *Are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* This is a paradox that puzzles many, for the poor in spirit often seem to have nothing—yet they have the Kingdom of Heaven, so they have everything! He who thinks the least of himself is the man of whom God thinks the most. You are not poor in God's sight if you are poor in spirit.

4. *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.* They are not only poor in spirit, but they are weeping, lamenting, mourning. Worldlings are frivolous, frolicsome, light-hearted and loving everything that is akin to mirth—yet it is *not* said of them, but of those that mourn, that "they shall be comforted."

5. *Blessed are the meek.* Not your high-spirited, quick-tempered men who will put up with no insults—your hectoring, lofty ones who are always ready to resent any real or imagined disrespect. There is no blessing here for them! But blessed are the gentle—those who are ready to be thought nothing of.

5. *For they shall inherit the earth.* Some say that the best way to get through the world is to swagger along with a coarse impudence and to push out of your way all who may be in it. But there is no truth in that idea. The truth lies in quite another direction—"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

6. *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.* The course of these Beatitudes is like going downstairs. They began with spiritual poverty, went on to mourning, came down to gentle-spiritedness and now we come to hunger and thirst. Yet we have been going up all the time, for here we read, "They shall be filled." What more can we have than full satisfaction?

7. *Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.* "The merciful" are those who are always ready to forgive, always ready to help the poor and needy, always ready to overlook what they might well condemn—"they shall obtain mercy."

8. *Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.* When the heart is washed, the dirt is taken from the mental eyes. The heart that loves God is connected with an understanding that perceives God. There is no way of seeing God until the heart is renewed by Sovereign Grace. It is not greatness of intellect, but purity of affection that enables us to see God.

9. *Blessed are the peacemakers.* Not only the passively peaceful, but the actively peaceful who try to rectify mistakes and to end all quarrels in a peaceful way.

9. *For they shall be called the children of God.* They shall not only be the children of God, but men shall call them so! They shall recognize in them the likeness to the peace-making God.

10. *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* They have it now, they are already participating in it for, as Christ was persecuted and He is again persecuted in them, as they are partakers of His sufferings, so are they sharers in His Kingdom.

11, 12. *Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.* You have an elevation by persecution—you are lifted into the peerage of martyrdom, though you occupy but an inferior place in it, yet you are in it. Therefore, "rejoice and be exceedingly glad."

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

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THE EVERLASTING COUNSELOR
NO. 3066

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 1907.

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

"Has your Counselor perished?"
Micah 4:9.

THIS question is addressed to the Church of God, for in the context it is written, "And you, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, unto you shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem. Now why do you cry out aloud? Is there no king in you? Has your Counselor perished? For pangs have taken you as a woman in travail." The poor Church of God had lost its way—it was doubting with regard to its direction. It knew not where to turn—to the right hand or to the left. In an agony of deep distraction, it bowed its head in fell dismay and thought that its King had disappeared and its Counselor perished. Forth comes the Prophet Micah, full of the Spirit, and addresses this question to the tried children of God, "Has your Counselor perished?"

We have before us a question implying three things. First, *a Doctrine,* namely, that our Counselor has not perished. Secondly, *a reproof,* for we sometimes act as if our Counselor had perished. And, thirdly, *an encouragement* for, however we may be situated and whatever may have perished—our Counselor has not perished.

I. First, then, here is A QUESTION IMPLYING A DOCTRINE, namely, the Doctrine that the Church of God has a Counselor and that that Counselor has not perished.

In olden times, the Lord's people, whenever they were in a difficulty, could always find direction. Any man who doubted whether he should build his house, or whether he should go to war, or whether in any matter of his business he should do this or that, could at once receive instruction and advice by referring to the high priest who wore the ephod. And, being moved by the Spirit, the high priest spoke with his hand on the Urim and Thummim and gave an authoritative answer. Thus David told Abiathar to bring the ephod, and when he asked the Lord, "Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul?" the Lord said, "They will deliver you up." So in other critical periods of the history of the saints, you will find it recorded that they were constantly in the habit of going to the priest and seeking for direction. Some of us may bewail the loss of such priests. We may be thinking, "I know not which way to go. I have no direction, I have no means of obtaining guidance." O Christian! Has your Counselor

perished? Ah, no! The Doctrine is assuredly taught us in Scripture that the Church of God still has an Infallible Guide!

There are some things, Beloved, in which we do not need a guide. Concerning morality, for instance, we need no other guide than that of the Sacred Volume. Wherever our course has two phases to it and the one is morally wrong and the other morally right, we have no need of a counselor. We only need, by the help of God's Spirit, to come to the Bible and we can always see which road to take. Whenever a thing is a sin, we need not appeal to Christ to know whether we shall commit it, for we are taught to avoid even the appearance of evil! If we consider that a thing is wrong, we have no right to do it, even though it might tend to our advantage in worldly affairs. We must not do evil that good may come, for if we were to do so, then indeed our damnation would be just! We have no occasion to ask whether we should go the road of sin or the road of righteousness. Is there not a sign clearly pointing, "This is the way"? When we see that it is the path which Christ has marked out, in which the holy Prophets have gone and that wherein Apostles followed, we know we ought to walk in it!

But the difficulty is when two things may be both right and we do not know which to choose—when there are two courses which seem to us to be indifferent as to moral propriety—when there is no Law against either and we can do as seems best to us without staining our profession as Christians, or forgetting to honor God in all our ways. We are in a great difficulty then. We know not what to do. We are resolved we will not commit a willful sin. Through Divine Grace we are determined that we will not sin to rid ourselves of our embarrassments, but we are in such a strait we do not know what to do. How are we to tell? Is there any means left in the Church of God whereby a distressed and entangled traveler on the road to Heaven may ascertain his way in the dubious paths of Providence, when it is left to his own choice?

We answer—Yes, there is. The Counselor has not perished. There are still appointed means whereby the members of the Church of Christ, individually, have found guidance. These means are not what some take them to be. For instance, they are not by casting lots. Mr. John Wesley very frequently cast lots to know what he should do. Now, I care not who it was that did so, it is all the same to me—it is tempting God. For a man to twist a piece of paper and say, "Black, I go. White, I stay," is tempting God's Providence. I remember a case that happened in the country when 12 jurymen were almost equally divided as to the guilt of a certain prisoner—and they had the impudence to appeal to God in the matter—and to toss up, "heads or tails," whether the person was innocent or guilty! They were Christians, too, and they thought they were appealing to God for they said that the lot was the end of contention. It is true that lots have been sanctioned in olden times. God has acknowledged lots and has blessed them, but we know of nothing to countenance lots now. We have no right to think we can appeal to God in such a manner! God by his Providence can direct it and no doubt He does. "The lot is cast into

the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." Still, God will take care that the direction will be such a painful one that we shall be chastised for our presumption in daring thus to appeal to Him. We do not believe in such things—"we have a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place."

Again, there are some persons who think they are counseled by God when they certainly are not. They will even come to their minister to ask his advice concerning things—when they have already made up their minds what they will do. We have heard a story of a good minister who was applied to by a young woman, to know what she should do in a certain matter. He could perceive full well that she had made up her mind, so he said, "Go outside and hear what the bells say." The bells of course chimed in her ears, "Do it! Do it!" She went home and did it! A little while later, she found she had got into disgrace by doing it, so she came back to the minister and said, "Sir, you have advised me wrong." "No, I did not," said the minister. "You did not interpret the bells right—go and listen again." She went outside and the bells said, "Never do it! Never do it!" There are many persons whom we might advise to listen to the bells, for they never seek counsel till they have made up their minds! They call it a guidance of Providence, whereas the truth is that they determine beforehand what they will do—and if our advice happens to suit them, they take it—but if not, they prefer their own opinion and give their inclination the benefit of a doubt.

Having thus exposed some of the fallacies in respect to guidance, you will ask me to tell you how our Counselor really does guide us. I will try to explain this to you briefly. There were two or three different manners whereby the Lord guided the children of Israel when they were passing through the wilderness which may serve to show us the methods of His counsel. One of them was the fiery cloudy pillar of His Providence. Another was the Ark of the Covenant which always went before them. Another was the advice of Hobab, the father-in-Law of Moses, who knew the best places to pitch the tents. And yet again they had the priest with Urim and Thummim who told them what they were to do. Each of these things has a spiritual meaning.

First of all, *the fiery cloudy pillar of God's Providence is often a very precious guide to God's people.* Beloved, there may be those among you who will not be able to understand my meaning and yet, if you live long enough, you will review with pleasure, in your old age, the Truth of God I am setting forth. Many a time when the night was dark, the hosts of Israel moved forward by the light of that pillar of fire. There was a necessity for them to proceed in one direction because there was no light in any other. So you will often find Providence going before you. Just now, you are in a dilemma. You are saying, "Which road shall I take?" Suddenly Providence stops one of the roads up. Well, you don't need a guide, *then*, because there is only one road to go! You are saying, "Which of two situations shall I take?" One is taken by somebody else and there

is only one left—so that you have no alternative but to follow the cloud! Look at that pillar of Providence and you will find it will guide you better than anything else! Seek, when you're in difficulty and you know not what to do, to come before God and say to Him, "O Lord, show me by Your Providence what to do. Let events so turn out that I cannot avoid doing that which would be for the best. If there are two doors and I know not which is the proper one, shut one of them up, Lord, even though it should be the one I like best—and then I must go through the other—and so I shall be guided by Your Providence."

But instead of that, my Hearers, we often run before the cloud and, as the old Puritans had it, "They who ran before the cloud went on a fool's errand and they soon had to come back again." *Follow* the cloud, Beloved! Ask Providence to give you direction. You have not, perhaps, looked to God in the matter, to see His hand in Providence. Good Mr. Milllet (of the Orphan Home) says, "In regard to placing out my children in situations for life. In regard to what servants I shall take into my house and whom I shall receive in my family, I always go and seek direction of God and exercise faith in His Word that, even in these little matters He will direct and guide me. And when I do so, I do not hear a voice from Heaven, but I hear something tantamount to it, in Providence, which teaches me that such-and-such a thing I ought to do, and that such-and-such a thing I ought not to do." Do not expect, Beloved, to hear voices, to see visions and to dream dreams, but rather look at Providence—see how God's wonder-working wheels turn round and, as the wheels turn, so do you! Whichever way His hand points, go there and thus God shall guide you, for your Counselor has not yet perished!

Again, there is not only the fiery cloudy pillar of Providence, but there is, next, *the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord resting in the Believer's heart which often guides him.* You know that the Ark is the type of Jesus, and Jesus often leads a Christian by His Holy Spirit immediately exercised upon the heart. Perhaps when you have read the lives of some eminent Quakers, you have laughed at what they conceived to be the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit "moving" them as they said, to go to certain places. Never laugh at that, Beloved. There is more in it than some of you imagine—some of you who are not moved by the Holy Spirit and who cannot understood it. Your nature is so hard and stubborn that you do not feel that gentle influence, that touch of God's hand moving you to do a thing. But it is not a fancy, mark you—they who know most of spiritual life will attest its reality. I myself, sometimes, (I speak honestly what I know. I testify what I have felt) have been moved to do certain things from altogether unaccountable reasons, not knowing in the least degree why I was to do them, or understanding why such things would be profitable. Perhaps a text has come forcibly to my mind and I have been obliged to take a certain course which I found, afterwards, was for the best.

I remember one incident which was a turning-point in my life and led me to this place. I had determined that I would enter a college. I had

made up my mind and resolved to see the principal. In fact, I had waited at his house some time to see him. But, by Divine Providence, though I waited in his house, he was shown into one room and I into another. He never knew that I was there and I never knew that he was there! So there we sat waiting for each other all the time—and I left without seeing him. I went home and the text came into my mind, "Do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not." Day after day, week after week, I could neither rest, sleep, nor do anything without those words ringing in my ears, "Do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not." And as I pondered them, I thought—I know what this means. I have been thinking of great things for myself, but I will no longer seek them. So I made up my mind the other way, and I said, "By God's Grace, I will never go there." Then I found rest for my spirit, by following God's Word. I shall never doubt, as long as I live, that it was a Divine impulse—nor shall I ever cast away that thought from my mind. At any rate, it was such an impulse that my conscience could not be easy till I obeyed it. And you, Christians, who look at the inner life—you who live in much fellowship with God—will have Divine impulses. You will have Divine moving of the Holy Spirit. You will, at certain seasons, be moved to do a certain thing—and I beseech you, if you are so moved, however strange it may seem to yourselves, if you hear the whisper of the Spirit within you—go and do it at once!

There is a remarkable anecdote of an old Christian man who was stirred up, one night, to go to a certain house on a certain street. And though it was 15 miles away and it was eventide, he saddled his horse and rode with all haste to the place. He arrived at the city. The lamps were glistening and as he crossed the bridge, he paused at the sound of the river murmuring in his ears, as if to break the solemn stillness of the night. Still he felt a sacred impulse within him urging his steps forward till, at length he reached the street and the house. When he had arrived at the door and knocked, he waited a long time before there was an answer. Presently, down came a haggard-looking man who asked, "What are you after?" "Friend," said he, "I am told to come and see you at this hour of the, night. Why, I cannot tell. I know the Lord has some message for your soul." The man started. "Bless God," he said. "I had this halter around my neck five minutes ago to hang myself. Verily you were moved to come here." Then he cast the rope aside and exclaimed, "Now I know that the Lord has not forgotten me, because He has sent His servant to deliver me out of the hand of the enemy." If this is not a case of being moved by the Holy Spirit, I leave it to those who are so incredulous, or rather, so credulous in their unbelief, as to doubt it! There are such things, Beloved. They may not often happen in so remarkable a manner but, depend upon it, such things are occasionally experienced. The Counselor has not perished and He does speak to the heart! He does put Divine impulses there. He does move the soul. He does make us do things of which we would not have dreamed. And thus a strong necessity may be laid upon our circumstances, or it may be laid upon our will,

while our understanding is in either case kept in the dark, so that we are led in a way we think not, to prove that our Counselor has not perished!

But there was another mode of guidance. I told you that the children of Israel were guided by Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses. He knew the places where to pitch their tents. He knew where the palm trees grew, he knew the shady side of the rock, he knew where the rippling rills flowed from beneath the rocky mountainside. He knew the best place of shelter from their foes. *Hobab guided them and he was a type of the Gospel ministry.* And those whom God has called to that honorable service will often be the means of guiding God's people. We have known many come to God's House seeking guidance and have heard them say that the minister described their case exactly. And they have gone away and said, "Although nobody could have told him about me, really, if I had told him all about myself, he could not have spoken more pointedly at me than he did." Have I not had hundreds of cases of that sort? Why, I have had letters written to me telling me not to be so personal, when I never knew anything whatever of the person who felt offended! What? Do any of you object to my being personal? As long as I live I will be personal to all of you! And if there is an error in any man's conduct, or judgment—by the help of God I will show him where he is wrong! Personal preaching is the best kind of preaching. We are not going to avoid personalities! We are striving to reach individual cases as much as possible, that every man may hear the Word of God in his own tongue—and hear it speaking to his own heart.

But how singularly, at times, you have heard your case described! You have gone to the House of God and sat down in the pew, and the minister has gone into the pulpit and taken a text just adapted to yourself. He begins to tell you what your exact position is and then he tells you the way you should go. You cannot help saying as you retire, "That man is a Prophet." Yes, and so he is, for as you will remember, I have often told you this is the way to find out a true servant of the Lord. Daniel was acknowledged to be a true servant of the Lord because he could tell the king both the dream and its interpretation. The astrologers could only tell the interpretation after they had been told the dream. Many can give you advice when they know your case, but the true servant of the Lord does not need to be informed about your case—he knows it beforehand. You come up here unobserved by your fellow creatures, but what you have done in your closet, that the Lord has told His servant! What you have done in your business, that He has revealed to him in secret communion and it will be made manifest to your conscience. He will tell you your dream and the interpretation of it, too! And you will say, "Verily, he is a servant of the Lord God of Israel." That is the way to tell a true Prophet of the Lord. And I beseech you believe no other. Do not go to the astrologer or the soothsayer who wishes to know your experience before he will open to you the future—but go where your experience is unfolded and where you have all your difficulties grappled with and removed! The Counselor has not perished! Though speaking not in visions, He still

leads His people by Providence, by Divine impulses on the mind and by a holy ministry which is the oracle of the most high and living God! Still does the gracious Counselor deign to counsel His people!

And the children of Israel were also guided in another way—when the priest inquired of the Lord by the Urim and Thummim. There is a sacred mystery about this, "of which we cannot now speak particularly." Still, I doubt not that by this ordinance, God put a very high honor upon the priesthood and conferred a great privilege on His people. Now *the peculiar privilege of this dispensation* is not the Urim and Thummim—*it is the gift of the Holy Spirit.* This is the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ to all His disciples, to all who believe on His name! Ah, Beloved, you know not much of counsel and guidance if you have not yet received the Holy Spirit! Observe how it is written, "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 is truth, and is no lie, and even as it has taught you, you shall abide in Him."

Do you ask me, "How does the Spirit of God guide us?" I answer, not by making fresh Revelations as the Swedenborgians pretend, but by shining upon the Word that has been revealed of old—and by shining in our hearts. So the Spirit witnesses with our spirits. So does He apply to us the promises. So does He open the Scriptures to our understanding and He opens our understanding to understand the Scriptures!

The blessed Spirit also makes intercession for us on earth even as Christ makes intercession for us in Heaven. Then He takes of the things of Jesus and shows them unto us. And He guides us by the old paths where we see the footprints of Patriarchs and Prophets, Apostles and martyrs. Such is the Doctrine implied in the inquiry of my text, "Has your Counselor perished?"

II. Then, secondly, THIS QUESTION SUGGESTS A REPROOF—"Has your Counselor perished?"

It is a reproof because the child of God does not believe, doctrinally, that his Counselor has perished, but he does so practically. He at times runs of his own accord instead of waiting for the guidance of God. At other times he is afraid to move forward, even when the finger of Him who "is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working," has clearly pointed the way and made the vision so plain "that he may run that reads it." How often does the child of God nurse his difficulties as Asaph did when he said, "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me." But then he adds, "until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end." O Beloved, remember how Habakkuk, in a time of danger, stood upon his watch and sat upon his tower to see what the Lord would say to him! Remember what Hezekiah did with the letter which he received from the hand of the messengers of Sennacherib, king of Assyria! When he had read it, "he went up into the house of the Lord and spread it before the Lord." Alas, alas! That, your lives should be constantly vexed with trifling cares instead of "casting all your care upon

God." The knowledge that "He cares for you" ought to drive all your anxious cares away!

One reason why many of us are slow to take counsel of the Lord is this—we *are not thoroughly emptied of our own conceits.* Let me remind you of that memorable passage in the history of the children of Israel when they came to Kadesh and were proceeding along the borders of Canaan. The spies were sent forth by Moses to bring in their report of the land. And of the twelve, only two brought in a cheering report. The other 10 discouraged the hearts of the people with a pitiful tale of walled cities and their giant population. In vain does Moses admonish them, "Dread not, neither be dismayed." In vain does he assure them, "The Lord shall go before you, He shall fight for you." In vain does he call to remembrance the wonders which the Lord had done in Egypt before their eyes! Faint-hearted and desponding in this thing, they did not believe the Lord their God!

Look again and you shall behold the counterpart. They were not more timid than they were presumptuous. The heart that is prone to resist is equally liable to presume. No sooner has the commandment been given to return into the wilderness than they gird on, every man, his weapons of war and go presumptuously up the hill to fight with the Amalekites and the Canaanites—and so they were smitten and fled before them. Who would imagine that the people who cringed at the mention of the sons of Anak yesterday, would dare to fly in the face of the Commandment of God on the morrow? With more humility they would have been braver men. Ah, Beloved! How closely we resemble those Israelites in measuring ourselves by ourselves! One day we feel so faint that we can attempt nothing for God. And another day our hearts beat so high that we could presume on anything! The young convert in particular will often complain that he is too weak in faith to pray—and then again he will boast that he feels so strong in faith that he could preach! The oldest of you have never yet learned the full meaning of these precious words, "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Ah, you may make a deal of ceremony about laying your great troubles before Him, but you do not seem to understand the length and breadth of "everything"—every little thing as well as every great thing! Paul could go into particulars and say, "Whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do." You seek counsel in foul weather but not when the sun shines. You consult the weather instead of watching "the cloud" to regulate your movements.

The reproof is intended to rebuke our folly as well as our sin. "Has your Counselor perished?" What would you think of a captain out at sea, near a coast where there are many rocks—as on the British coast which is exceedingly dangerous—if he should say, "Now, sailors, reef your sails. You must be kept still on the ocean, for there are so many rocks, we don't know which way to go"? Imagine him as he walks up and down the deck in melancholy anxiety and says, "Sailors, we can't go on. I don't know which way to steer. I can't tell what to do!" What would the sailors

say? “Sir, are all the pilots dead?” “No, they are not.” “Then run up a signal and fetch a pilot.” That is the way to steer through your difficulties but, very often, you are pacing up and down the deck and saying, “Oh, I shall never be able to steer through this narrow channel! I shall never be able to escape these dangers. I shall never be able to avoid that rock.” But run up the signal and fetch the Pilot! That is the way, for our Counselor has not perished. There is yet a Pilot on shore—He will see your signal and as sure as, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, you make known your requests unto God, He will guide you by His counsel—and afterward receive you to Glory!

But you often act as if you had no Counselor. You run to one friend and then to another friend and you ask their advice. But let me tell you that if you asked advice of the creature all day long, to however many different counselors you went, you would have as many different pieces of advice! We have heard of a man who, in order to test the doctors and ascertain whether they were true, wrote, I think, to 400 of them for a prescription, giving them all the same case. And I think he had 380 different prescriptions, many of them diametrically opposite to one another—and not above two of them at all like each other in the smallest degrees. Astonishing, is it not, that there should be such division? But there is equal division of opinion when you come to ask advice of your friends. One says, “I would do it.” *Another* says, “I would not do it.” Some of old said, “This is the blind man.” Others said, “He is like he.” There were those, again, who denied his identity. But there were some who said, “The best way is to go to the blind man himself.” And he said, “I am he.” It is the wisest plan to go to the Master and ask *Him,* instead of going to our fellow men! You may go round and round and round and take all the advice you like, but you will obtain no guidance, nor direction. Rather follow the example of the disciples who went to Jesus when they were in difficulties. He will guide you through the desert and bring you safely to Heaven.

“But,” says one, “how may I draw near to this great Counselor, for I am in deep distress?” Ah, then the question comes to you with full power as a reproof! Are you asking how you may find Him? What? Does He not abide with you? Do you not live with Him? Has your Counselor perished? Is He gone? Has He forgotten you? Or do you cease to remember Him—your Friend, your bosom Companion? Do you not hold to Him to walk with you and lodge with you? Do you not live in Him? Verily, this is a reproof to you, for you have lived as if your Counselor had perished! And if you ask, O Christian, how you may draw near, even to His seat, let me tell you there is the sacred ladder of prayer and faith up which you may climb, even to Heaven, and talk with Jesus! Let your difficulties be ever so great, go and tell them to your Lord!

You say, “Why, He knows them. There is no necessity for telling them to Him.” I would have you all, when you are in doubt, go and tell the Lord what you are in doubt about. Go and cross-examine yourselves in prayer. Draw out your confessions. Tell Him all your circumstances. Do not say,

"I need not utter them with my mouth, for He knows them"—but tell Him all about them! It will do you good and it will ease your aching hearts. God likes His people to make a clean breast of it. Speak it in plain English to God. Don't go quoting human prayer-books, but breathe out the plaintive melody of your own sighs. Tell Him, "I am in such-and-such distress and I ask Your gracious guidance." Don't go around in circles, but go straight to the point. Tell Him what it is and when you have confessed your difficulty, the Lord will help you. Cast the anchor out and let the Pilot come on board. After that you may ship your anchor again and let the Almighty God of Jacob take the tiller, guide you over the stormy billows and land you in the haven of peace! The Counselor has not perished!

Here, then, is a reproof which may be often of use to us. When we observe the temper and the conduct of Christian people we frequently think them ill-advised, as if they had no Counselor. Why so timorous and so craven-hearted when duty calls? Why is zeal so wild and so little tempered with discretion? Why does adversity cast you down so much? Why does prosperity make you vaunt yourselves and behave so unseemly? The answer to such questions, I suppose, is not to be found in any wanton disrespect to the Word of God, or the statutes of His mouth, but you draw not near to the Lord as your Counselor—you hold not sweet fellowship with Him! You may spell over His ancient oracles with diligent care and yet, if you have no communion with your Counselor, if you order not your cause before Him and fill your mouth with arguments, then the reproof belongs to you, "Has your Counselor perished?" He is an ever-living Advocate! His secret is with them that fear Him. Our blessed Master did not leave His disciples like orphans, to shift for themselves. Why, then, should you perplex yourself with strange fears and forebodings? Why run here and there to one and another for advice? "Has your Counselor perished?"

III. Now, lastly, here is a word of comfort to the desponding. THE QUESTION IS INTENDED FOR ENCOURAGEMENT. "Has your Counselor perished?"

There are many things that have perished. There is one of you now lamenting the loss of a dear, pious father. And another is groaning over the corpse of a mother. The yet unburied body of a husband lies within your house. Or perhaps your dead child is yet unconfined and you have come here to seek some cordial for your griefs. Well, these have perished—objects of your sweet affection! As a dream they have passed away and lo, they are not! The place that knew them once shall know them no more. You may weep, Mourner, for Jesus wept! Yet you may not despair. If they are gone, your Counselor has not perished. You have lost some friends, but your Counselor is not dead. Some of the private soldiers are slain, but the General is alive! Some of the common people have fallen prey to a disease, but the Counselor still lives. If anyone had met poor Little-Faith and said to him, "Well, Little-Faith, you have been met by the robbers—what have you lost?" "Oh, he would have said,

"thank God! Thank God! Thank God!" "What for, Little-faith?" "Why, I have lost a great many things, but look here! I have not lost my jewels!" One of you goes home from business to your private house. As you go, you have to take a large bag with £500 in it. Going along, somebody comes behind you and steals your handkerchief. What do you say when you get home? "I did not like to lose the handkerchief, certainly, but never mind, the £500 are safe! I am glad they did not steal that." So it is with you—some of your earthly comforts have been taken from you, but do not despair. "Has your Counselor perished?" "No, He has not. He is still my Counselor and He has not ceased to love me, nor has He ceased to live for me. His affection is not abated. His Grace is unchanged. His understanding is unsearchable. He knows the way that I take."

But another says, "I have not lost my friends by death. I could almost wish I had. But, Sir, they have deserted me. I am a minister. I had deacons who stood by me once, but now they have turned their backs upon me. I had an affectionate church, but there are some who, like Diotrephes, have loved the pre-eminence and turned against me." Is that your state, Brother? I can pity, if I cannot sympathize with your trouble. I have not felt the same, for my people love their pastor and gather round him in every possible way. But I can tell you this for your comfort, your Counselor has not perished! What though your principal supporter is determined that you should leave the place? What if your familiar friend with whom you went to the House of God in company has betrayed you? Your Counselor has not perished! I think again I hear a whisper from one who says, "I am not a minister, but I am engaged in seeking the welfare of my people. I had helpers once. I thought I was doing good, but one by one they have all left and I am left alone, faint and cheerless." You may wish them back for they were good men, but console yourself with this thought—your Counselor is not gone and He is able to support you! We have heard of an ancient orator who, when he was speaking, had only one auditor. All who had come to listen at the commencement went away—but he still kept on with his oration. When he closed, the question was asked him, how he could keep on when there was only one person to hear him. "It is true," he said, "I had only one auditor, but that auditor was Plato, and that was enough for me." So, you may have only one Friend, but that one Friend is Jesus and He is enough—a host in Himself—"The Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God!" O deserted Soul, you who walk in solitary places—you who have neither friend nor helper—your Counselor has not perished!

And you sons of poverty, bereaved of your wealth. You children of indigence, bereft of all that you had. You whose health is weak and whose spirits are low and desponding—though you have lost wealth, health and friends—yes, though you are a total wreck now, there still remains one blessed reserve, "Has your Counselor perished?" No! Jesus lives! Write that down—Jesus lives! Then let every Believer in Jesus make his own application of that Truth of God! A great minister is dead, but Jesus lives! A kind friend is dead, but Jesus lives! My property is

gone, but Jesus lives! My comfort has failed, but Jesus lives! And because He lives—He, Himself, has said it—I shall live also. "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." Then trust Him and give no quarter to fear or despondency. Your life is secure! He will preserve you!

O my Friends, my Friends, how much I mourn that there are some of you who are without a Guide! Oh, that I could picture that sad thought so that you might see your own unhappy case—without a Guide! See yonder desert? It is in the midst of Arabia. There are no trees, no shrubs, no cooling streams—nothing but the hot sky above and the burning sand beneath! And there is a man wandering there in awful solitude! Do you see him? He looks haggard, warn, forlorn. He is gazing on the ground to see if he can find a camel's track, that he may follow it. He runs here and there seeking a path of escape, but he runs in vain! He turns round and round in a perpetual circle, while the fiery desert still encompasses him. Why does he wander thus? Because he has no guide! Watch him a while longer. He casts his eye around, but there is no hope. Deluded by the mirage for a moment, he thinks there are green plains around him, but alas, the vision mocks his hope! Stooping down to drink, he fills his mouth with hot sand. O Man! Why are you so foolish as to pursue the phantom? Because he has no guide! Watch him again. He lays himself upon the ground, the subject of despair. He groans and casts his eyes up at the death-bird wheeling in the air, expectant of his prey, for he has scented him from a distance and is come to devour him! Why does he not rouse himself? Because he has no guide!

And now he is dead, the vulture is upon him and his flesh is cleared away by the horrid bird. And as you go through the desert, there is nothing but a bleached skeleton to tell the harrowing tale. Why did that man die? Because he had no guide! And so shall the wicked perish! But the righteous "shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind drives away."

God give you His Holy Spirit, that you may receive the instruction, listen to the reproof and enjoy the comforts of this Counsel evermore!

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

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

A BOLD CHALLENGE JUSTIFIED
NO. 3067

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 1, 1871.

"Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, yes rather, who is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us."
Romans 8:34.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon, upon this passage are as *follows—#256, Volume 5—THE BELIEVER'S CHALLENGE; #1223, Volume 21—JESUS, THE SUBSTITUTE FOR HIS PEOPLE and #2240, Volume 38—A CHALLENGE AND A SHIELD—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.*]

ALL through this very wonderful chapter the Apostle seems to be piling up, in heaps upon heaps, the many marvels of Divine Grace. I might quote from the old classic fable of the giants who piled the mountains, one upon the other—Pelion upon Ossa—and I might say that even so has Paul done here. He has piled mountain upon mountain of wondrous Grace in his description of the way to Heaven! And now he seems to have climbed to the top of them all and to have transformed them into a kind of Tabor or Pisgah. And as he stands there, he exults in the Lord! He waves the palm branch of triumph. He boasts with holy boasting. And he challenges all his enemies to attack him—"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, yes rather, who is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us."

I. Here, first of all, is A SOLEMN QUESTION—a very solemn question if it were put to all here present—"Who is he who condemns?"—for I am afraid that some of my hearers, if they asked that question, might have a speedy answer—"It is your own conscience that condemns you; it is the Word of God that condemns you; it is Christ Himself who condemns you. It is God, the Judge of All, who condemns you because you have not fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you in the Gospel—you have not believed in Jesus Christ." But Paul is speaking as a Believer in Christ and for him to ask the question, or for any other Believer to ask it, is a very different thing, for he may say what others must not, "Who can lay anything to *my* charge? Who is he that can condemn *me*, now that I have believed in Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior?"

Now, Beloved, one answer that might be given to this question, "Who is he who condemns?" is that, *there are many who would if they could* for probably no Believer in Christ is without his enemies. There are few good men and women who are not slandered. The majority of God's people have been persecuted in some way or other—and some of them have had to lie in prison year after year. Many more have been condemned to die and yet, inasmuch as slanderers and persecutors have no right to condemn the man of God, he may challenge his slanderers and his persecutors and say, "You may profess to condemn me if you please, but I count your condemnation to be no more potent than the whistling of the wind. You would condemn me if you could, but you cannot really do so." Satan, our arch-enemy, would condemn us if it were in his power. Only fancy him for a moment sitting on the Judgment Seat. If we had the devil to judge us, he would soon bring to our recollection our many faults, follies and failings—and condemn us for them. But, O you fiend of Hell, God has not made you the judge of His saints! You may cast foul insinuations against them, but the Lord says to you concerning each one of them, "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" Satan has no right to judge us and no power to condemn us! So when he speaks the worst he can about us, we laugh him to scorn, rejoicing that God will shortly bruise him under our feet!

But, Beloved, *sometimes our own conscience condemns us.* The best man here will, at times, have painful memories of the past and to look at the past, except through the glass made red by our Savior's precious blood, is to look upon despair—for our past transgressions would drag us down to Hell were it not for the Atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Yes, and we need not look back far to have this sad view, for the sins of any one of the best days we have ever lived might cause us to tremble! The sins of our holy things are black enough to cause us great sorrow. Did you ever pray a prayer that you could not have wept over afterwards? Have you ever preached a sermon with which you could feel content? Is not sin mixed with all that we do? But here is the mercy, that our conscience is not set upon God's Throne to judge and to condemn us, although we do well to listen to the voice of conscience and to give heed to its admonitions. The Apostle John reminds us that, "if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart and knows all things." And that, "if any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." With all our imperfections and our consciousness of guilt we rejoice that—

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins.
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains."

It looks like a bold question for any man to put so unreservedly, "Who is he that condemns?" But *there is really only One who can condemn.* Our characters may have been pulled to pieces by a thousand accusers, but they could not condemn us. When a prisoner stands in the dock, he need

not be afraid of anybody except the judge and jury. It does not matter what you or I may believe about him—nobody but the 12 men in the box can give the verdict against him or in his favor. These are the persons before whom he has cause to tremble but before none besides. So whoever may pretend to condemn us, there is only One who can really do so—and that is the Judge—and what is His name? O Christian, what a comforting fact is this to you! Your Judge is your Savior! And it is not possible to conceive that He who died and rose again, and entered into Heaven—and every day pleads for us—can ever use His blessed lips to pronounce condemnation upon any one of His own people! "Oh," you say, "but He must do it as He is the Judge! He must not show any favor on the Judgment Seat." That is a correct remark and I have been sorry whenever I have heard a preacher say that. It is a consolation to think that the Judge will be our Friend. Why, Beloved, we must not imagine that Jesus will judge partially and give His verdict in our favor because we are His friends. No, but here is our comfort—He who is our Judge, beyond everybody else, knows the whole truth about us and He would not justify us at the last if we really ought to be condemned. Ah, no, He is too just to do that! But He knows that every Believer is so completely justified that he cannot be condemned. He knows, as nobody else does, how the Believer was justified—what blood it was that washed the Believer white! And what righteousness it is that has made the Believer "accepted in the Beloved." He knows His own and He knows the way in which He has justified His own and, therefore, as an Omniscient, Infallibly just Judge, He knows that the sentence which will be passed upon the Believer, which is a sentence of acquittal, is the only one that could be passed!

"Who is he who condemns? Christ who died." So the fact stands that whatever there may be in store for others in connection with the coming Day of Final Judgment and the banishment of the condemned to Hell, all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ will never be condemned! Under no possible or conceivable circumstances can they ever be condemned, for they who are once forgiven and justified always shall be forgiven and justified in time and throughout eternity! There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus—and there never shall be! [See Sermon #1917, Volume 32—IN CHRIST NO CONDEMNATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

II. Our second point is THE GROUND OF THIS HOLY CONFIDENCE.

It was holy confidence that made Paul ask, "Who is he who condemns?" And he has given us the reasons for his confidence, but I shall first call your attention to what he has *not* given as the ground of confidence.

He does not say, "Who is he who condemns?—for we have never sinned." That would be a very good ground of confidence if it were true, for if we had never sinned, nobody could condemn us. God is not unrighteous, so He does not condemn an innocent man. But there is not one glorified person in Heaven who will ever dare to plead that he never

sinned, for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." We have all gone astray from God like lost sheep. Everyone of us has gone the downward road. By the works of the Law we can never be justified, for the Law only brings to us a knowledge of sin and proves to us that our fancied perfection can never be the ground of our confidence.

Neither does the Apostle ground his confidence on the fact of his repentance. Some people seem to have a notion that although sin is a very evil thing, yet if repentance is sincere and deep, it will suffice to wash out the sin. But Paul does not say, "Who is he who condemns?—for I have felt the plague of sin and hated it, and wept over it and turned from it." He makes no mention whatever of his repentance as a ground of his confidence! He *had* truly repented, yet he never dreamed of relying upon his repentance as a reason for his justification in the sight of God!

Nor does he say that he puts any dependence upon a long life of holiness. From the time of his conversion, Paul had been an example to all the flock, so that he could even write, "Be you followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." Yet he does not say, "Who is he who condemns?—for I have lived a blameless life among you all, and none can convict me of sin." Not a word of that sort does he utter! I know that some of you seekers after salvation fancy that those good Christian people whom you very much admire must get a great deal of comfort out of the good lives that they lead. But I can assure you that this is not the case with any of them. They will all tell you that they have not the least confidence in themselves, or in their own works, but that their confidence is found in quite another direction!

Paul does not say that his confidence was based upon the fact that he had practiced great self-denial and had been a most devoted missionary of the Cross of Christ. It is true that he had been beaten, and stoned, and shut up in prison, and that he had been quite willing to lay down his life for his Lord, but he makes no mention of all that as the reason why he felt that he could not be condemned. What do you think was Paul's opinion of all the good works he had ever done, and of all that he had suffered for the name of Christ? This is what he says, "I do count them but dung," (he could hardly have used a more opprobrious word than that), "that I may win Christ and be found in Him." A good man, when he was dying, said that he was gathering all his good works and his bad works together in one bundle and flinging them all overboard. In his estimation, the one set was about as good as the other as a ground of confidence in the sight of God—and he meant to be rid of the whole and to put his trust somewhere else. And believe me, dear Hearer, as I stand here before you, I know whom I have believed—and I have not only a hope of eternal life, but I know that I have eternal life within my own soul! But, if you ask me whether I base my confidence of my salvation upon the fact that these many years I have preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ, I tell you, "No, I place no reliance upon my own preaching as any ground of merit in the sight of God." And if I am asked whether, having experienced much of the Grace of God, I build my confidence on my

experience, I answer, "No, in no wise. Infinitely better than anything within me or of me is the Rock upon which my soul rests, or else I should be resting upon a shifting quicksand which would be my destruction." On Christ and what He has done, my soul hangs for time and eternity! And if your soul also hangs there, it will be saved as surely as mine shall be! And if you are lost trusting in Christ, whoever you may be, I will be lost with you—and I will go to Hell with you! I must do so, for I have nothing else to rely upon but the fact that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived, died, was buried, rose again and went up to Heaven—and still lives and pleads for sinners at the right hand of God!

I have thus shown you that the Apostle's confidence was not founded upon anything of himself. Now I want to explain to you the reasons why he knew that he was not condemned and never should be. He had four pillars to his confidence.

And the first great massive pillar was this—"*It is Christ who died."* But Paul, you have broken God's Law, so He must punish you. He replies, "God cannot punish me. He cannot even condemn me." But Paul, you helped put Stephen to death—your hands were red with the blood of the martyrs! You hunted the saints of God and delighted to put them to death—and yet you say that God cannot condemn you for that and never will? "Yes," says the Apostle, "He never will. He never can!" And why? "Because Christ died." But Paul, what has Christ's death to do with *your* guilt? His answer is, "All my sins, however many or however black they may have been, were laid upon Christ and He stood in my place in the sight of God. And in my place He suffered that which has rendered full satisfaction to the Law of God for all my evil deeds, thoughts and words. The sufferings of Jesus were the sufferings of my Substitute. He bore, that I might never bear, the wrath of God on account of my sin." Do you see this, poor sin-burdened soul? If Jesus Christ died in your place, God cannot condemn you! If Jesus Christ did really suffer in your place, as your Substitute, where would God's honor and justice be if He should punish the sinner for whom Jesus had died as Substitute? That can never be!

The comfort of the text lies here. Paul says, "It is Christ who died." That is to say, it is the Son of God who died and there must be infinite merit in the Atonement which was presented by the sufferings of so august a Person. Paul says, "It is *Christ* who died." That word signifies "the *A*nointed One"—the Divine Person who was sent by the Father and anointed by the Holy Spirit—and who Himself undertook to suffer in the place of His people. He did not do it of His own will alone—He was authorized to do it—appointed and anointed to do it! God put His Son into that place, as the Prophet Isaiah says, "All we like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned, everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Now, if Christ was Substitute, and if God appointed Him and anointed Him as my only Substitute, to suffer in my place, where in the whole Universe can there be found any reason why

God should first punish Christ and then punish me? The only question is—Did He so die in *my* place? The answer to that question is this—If I believe in Christ, I am one of those for whom He died as Substitute. If I trust Him with my whole heart. If I rely alone upon Him as my Substitute and Savior, I have the mark and sign upon me that He suffered in my place, that He offered a full and complete Atonement for my sin and, knowing this, I dare to say as confidently as the Apostle Paul said it, that Christ died for me! Who can ever condemn the sinner for whom Christ died as Substitute and Savior? Is not this a good foundation to have under my feet? May I not stand here securely and, knowing that Jesus died instead of me, may I not feel assured that I can never die and that I can never be sent to Hell—for Jesus Christ has suffered all that I ought to have suffered?

But the Apostle had a second reason for feeling sure that he should not be condemned, and that was that Christ had risen from the dead. *"Yes rather,"* he says, *"who is risen again."* Now, if Christ had not risen from the dead, He would have been proved to be an impostor. If He had not risen from the dead, it would have been clear that He was not God, or the Son of God. But His rising from the dead proved that He was both God and the appointed and anointed Savior. Christ's death paid the debt that His people owed to Divine Justice—and when He came out of the prison of death in which He had been detained for a while, it was, so to speak, God's receipt by which He said to the whole universe, "My Son has paid the debts of all His people; therefore I let Him go free." Jesus was the Hostage for all His chosen ones and until the last farthing of the tremendous price of their redemption had been paid, He must lie in the prison of the tomb. But when it had been certified by Infallible Justice that the great transaction was finished and the redemption of His people was fully accomplished, then Christ was set free and "He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." Now see, Believer, what is the effect of this glorious Truth of God! How can God ever condemn you after He has accepted Christ as your Substitute—after He has publicly accepted Him by raising Him from the dead in the presence of men and angels? God cannot so belie himself! It is not possible that after He has accepted the Substitute, He should afterwards condemn those for whom that Substitute bled and died!

Paul had those two pillars—the death and Resurrection of Christ—but he added a third. He says that *Christ is at the right hand of God.* This is another weighty reason for our feeling that we never can be condemned, for the right hand of God is the place of power and the place of majesty! Christ at the right hand of God is there as King. And as King He is able to defend His people against all their adversaries. False accusers, therefore, shall be driven away by the power of His Omnipotent arm. While Christ is King, at the right hand of God, what accuser shall dare to impeach us in the courts of Heaven? Christ's sitting at the right hand of God proves that His great redeeming work is done! If He had not completed it, He would not be sitting down. But it is done and done

forever! Finished in that matchless loom is the perfect Robe of Righteousness that we are to wear forever! The last throw of the sacred shuttle of His untold agony has been made. Dyed is the wondrous garment that we are to wear, for it has been dipped in His precious blood. And when it was finished, the Divine Worker "sat down at the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies are made His footstool." For Christ to sit at the right hand of God is a continual certificate from the Father that He is satisfied with the substitution of His Son instead of us and satisfied with us as we are represented in Him. Every moment that Christ is at the right hand of God, every Believer is safe. For Christ to be in Heaven and for the people for whom He died to be in Hell is utterly impossible! For Christ to be there as our Representative and yet for those whom He represents to be cast out from the favor of God would be a monstrosity, a blasphemy which cannot be imagined for a single instant! The Head is glorified, so the members of His mystical body shall never be condemned. They must be eternally saved because He is at the right hand of God! Look up, then, Christian! You looked down into the tomb and saw Him there paying your debts. You looked round to the garden from where He rose and saw that your debts were all discharged. Now look up to the Heaven where He dwells with His Father—and see yourself "accepted in the Beloved."

The Apostle had yet one more ground of confidence for he says that Christ *"also makes intercession for us."* And if any doubt could linger until now, surely this must expel it! When Jesus pleads for His people, His pleas are Omnipotent and God will nearer deny to His Son the reward of His soul-travail. I suppose that in Heaven Christ pleads for His people vocally, but it is not at all necessary that He should, for His very Presence there is an irresistible plea. If someone were pleading before an earthly court and if he had been an old soldier, and had rendered valiant service to his country, if he were to bare his chest and show the scars of the wounds that he received in battle, he would not have to say much, for his scars would plead better than any words could. And Jesus in Heaven lifts His hands and feet, and shows His pierced side. His scarred Person still adorned with the marks of His passion and death is an everlasting and overwhelming plea. If Jesus pleads for me, can His Father reject me? If so, He must also reject His Son! He must refuse the authoritative requests of His only-begotten and well-beloved Son! He must deny to Jesus that which He well deserves—and that He can never do. O Believer, if you still have any doubts about your acceptance in Christ, let them fly before this fourth mighty blow, "who also makes intercession for us."

I am not going to keep you here much longer, but I want to remind you that the main difficulty with some of you seems to be that you do believe these great Truths of God, but you do not fully realize what is contained in them. I am speaking now only to you who really do believe

in Jesus. You are resting upon Him alone—you know you are. Unless you are awfully deceived, each one of you can say—

"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness."

Well, Beloved, do not let me merely say this and you simply hear it, but believe it, enjoy it, drink it in, live on it! You are not condemned by God and, therefore, the opposite of that is true—you are accepted by God, you are Beloved of God, you are dear to God—you are pure and precious in God's sight. Let that blessed thought get into your brain and when it is there, pray to God to let it get down deeper, even into your heart and soul, and then say as Paul did, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." And "there is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Why do I see you hang down your head and look as gloomy as an owl? You might well look so if you were condemned or if there were any threat of your being condemned—but there is no such fear if you are a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ!

I sometimes hear preachers say that we are in a state of probation, but I should like to know who is in such a state as that. Certainly the sinner is not, for he is already lost! And the saint is not, for he is saved and can never be lost. The sinner is already condemned and the saint is already justified! We are not waiting for the verdict for it has already been given! It is recorded concerning every Believer that he is justified and that the claim he makes that he is a child of God is a true one and that all the glorious inheritance in the land of the blessed is his and he may claim it at once as his own, for it all belongs to him! So, up with you child of God! Up with you, bird of the day! Eagle of God, will you sit day after day moping in the dark when you might soar up into the light and gaze even at the sun? Up with you, son of the morning! Up with you, child of light! Away from all your gloomy doubts and fears! You have a million a year for spending money, given to you by the God of Grace, so will you go on spending a few pence a day, like a beggar who needs to be careful even of his farthings? You are forgiven! Then live as a forgiven man should. What if God smites you every now and then with trouble? Can you not say, as one did long ago, "Smite, Lord, as hard as You will, for there is now no anger in Your blows and, therefore, I can bear them without complaining"? Are you suffering severe losses and carrying heavy crosses? They ought to seem very light to you now! As long as you are forgiven, what does anything else matter? Go to a man in Newgate, condemned to die, and take him a free pardon. Tell him that by the favor of his sovereigns, he is to live! And do you think he will begin murmuring because some little thing is not just as he would like it? Oh, no! He will say, "It is enough for me that my life is spared." Now you are forgiven! You are God's child! You are on the way to Heaven, so "fret not yourself because of evil-doers." Murmur not against the Most High. Take your harp down from the willows and sing unto the Lord a new song, for He has worked marvels of mercy for you!

And then, in the light of this wonderful love of God to you, so live at home and abroad that others shall ask, "What makes this man so happy? What makes this woman so glad?" I will not say to you who are forgiven—Sing with your voice all the day, though I would have you praise the Lord with joyful lips as much as you can. But let the bells of your hearts go on ringing all day! Sometimes when I think of what the Lord has done for me, I feel myself to be like a church steeple that I saw some few months ago. There had been a wedding in the place and the bells were pealing out a merry chime. And as they rang, I distinctly saw that steeple reel and rock, and the four pinnacles seemed to be tossing to and fro—the whole tower seemed as though it would come down as the bells pealed out again and again. And sometimes when my soul pulls the big bell—"Jesus loved you and gave Himself for you, and you are accepted in Him, you are God's own child, and on your way to Heaven, and a crown of eternal life is yours"—I feel as if this crazy steeple of my body would rock and reel beneath the excessive joy and be scarcely able to hold the ecstatic bliss which the love of God creates within my soul! And then do I sing—

"In the heavenly Lamb, thrice happy I am,
And my heart it does leap at the sound of His name!"

Oh, I would that everyone of you had that joy! And surely everyone shall have it who will have it in God's way! If you believe in Jesus Christ, you shall be absolved from all your guilt. If you will but trust yourself to Him, whoever you are, He will take your sin and lift it off from you—and cause you to be accepted, as all His people are!

God give to all of you the Grace to believe in Jesus and to go your way rejoicing, for His name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 20:1-18.

Verse 1. *The first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher, and saw the stone was taken away from the sepulcher.* Her love for her Lord made her rise early and helped her to overcome the fear which would have prevented many from going out "when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher." There are fears which some cannot shake off in the dark—and those fears would be apt to become intensified in going to a sepulcher in the dark. But love wakes early to try to find Christ and love can see in the dark when looking for Jesus! Mary little expected to find the tomb of Jesus rifled and the stone rolled away—she was so surprised at what she saw that she hurried away to tell the story to other friends of her Lord.

2. *Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid Him.* This was the language of ignorance and unbelief. She had forgotten that the Lord had said that He would rise again the third day. Or else she had never

understood the meaning of His words. So, instead of saying "He is risen," she said, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid Him." Unbelief often reads things wrongly—it reads sorrow into facts that should create joy. Nothing could have made Mary happier than to believe that her Lord had risen from the dead—and nothing ever made her more sorrowful than feeling that she must say, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid Him."

3, 4. *Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulcher. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulcher.* They wanted to know what had really happened, so they resolved that they would go and see. The woman's message surprised them and troubled them, "So they ran both together." A good many people seemed to be running that morning. Had the disciples known the whole truth, they might have taken to dancing for joy, but their fears quickened their footsteps!

5. *And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen clothes.* So that he knew that they had not taken away the body of Jesus, for if they had, they certainly would not have taken off the linen clothes. It would have been very difficult and would have taken considerable time to unwrap the cold grave-clothes when they were bound to the body by the ointments that had been used—"He saw the linen clothes."

5. *Yet went he not in.* Perhaps out of reverence or, possibly, out of deference to the older man. He would give him the preference and let him enter first.

6. *Then came Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulcher and saw the linen clothes.* They were evidently both struck with that sight. It indicated that there had been no haste, no hurry by thieves, but deliberate action of quite another kind.

7. *And the napkin, that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.* As one has well said, there were the grave-clothes left as the furniture for the Believer's last bed, and there was the napkin, "in a place by itself," to wipe away the tears of mourners. The chief lesson is that this act had been done at leisure by someone who was in no hurry whatever! He had put together the linen clothes and wrapped up the napkin, and laid it "in a place by itself."

8. *Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulcher, and he saw, and believed.* That is a great deal for John to be able to say concerning himself, for Mary had not yet believed. Possibly Peter had scarcely believed, but John had. He felt certain that the Lord had risen. He remembered His words and He correctly interpreted the fact now before him—"He saw, and believed."

9. *For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.* They did not understand it. Even John himself did not until then. The rest of the disciples had never put that interpretation upon our Lord's words which was the clear and simple meaning of them, namely,

that He would rise from the dead. I should not wonder if there are other words of Scripture with regard to the future which we would comprehend if we took them exactly as they stand in the Word—but we have put other meanings upon them and, consequently, see no further into them.

10. *Then the disciples went away again unto their own homes.* Having ascertained that the body of Jesus was not there, and John having come to the conclusion that the Lord had indeed risen from the dead, He and Peter went away home prayerfully to wait and see what would happen next.

11. *But Mary stood.* She was not going home. Love cannot leave the place where it lost its objective. It will continue to search there. "But Mary stood."

11. *Outside of the sepulcher weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down and looked.* Some can weep, but never look. Do not act so, Beloved, but look for comfort even when your heart is breaking. "As she wept, she stooped down and looked."

11, 12. *Into the sepulcher and saw two angels in white.* The resurrection color, the color of joy and gladness! "Two angels in white."

12. *Sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.* I have no doubt that the angel who sat at the feet was quite as content to sit there as the other was to sit at the head. If any two of you are sent upon the Lord's business, do not pick and choose as to where you shall be, or what you shall do. "One at the head, and the other at the feet." I am afraid that if they had been men, instead of angels, both would have wanted to sit at the head, and the feet would have been neglected. This sight seems to remind one of the Mercy Seat where the cherubim stood facing each other and covering the Mercy Seat with their outspread wings.

13. *And they said unto her, Woman, why do you weep? She said unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.* Grief has not many words. It is apt to repeat itself, as the Lord Himself did in Gethsemane when He prayed three times using the same words.

14, 15. *And when she had said thus, she turned herself back and saw Jesus standing and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus said unto her, Woman, why do you weep?* Christ often repeats the words of His messengers as if to endorse them. The angels said, "Woman, why do you weep?" The angels' Master said the same. I pray Him, tonight, not only to give me the right words to say, but also to say it, Himself, to your hearts. But Jesus added another question to the angels', "Woman, why do you weep?"

15. *Whom do you seek? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said unto Him, Sir, 'if you have borne Him from here, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.* Did it occur to her that, possibly, the gardener objected to having a corpse in the garden and that, therefore, He had come early in the morning and taken it away? We can hardly

imagine what she thought, but when people are in great grief, they often think a great many things which they would not think if they were quite in their right minds! What strange delusions, what singular images of monstrous shape will pass through the heart of grief! God help us to be clear-minded and not to think what we should not like to say! Still, Mary was a brave woman, for she said to the gardener, "Tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away."

16. *Jesus said unto her, Mary. She turned and said unto Him, Rabboni! Which is to say, Master.* She said, "My Master, my Rabbi, my Teacher, my Leader, my dear Master." And I expect she said it with great exultation. She delighted to have her Master again, to have her Teacher again for, to be without her Teacher and without her Lord was a terrible bereavement to that gentle, teachable heart! I suppose she was about to lay hold upon Christ, to grasp Him by the feet, lest He should again go away from her.

17. *Jesus said unto her, Touch Me not.* Or, as the words may be read, "Hold Me not; detain Me not."

17. *For I have not yet ascended to My Father.* "I have to go away from you, so do not imagine that you can hold Me back. No, the time for such communications with Me is past, for I am now in another condition. I will communicate with you spiritually but, for that, you must wait a little—"I have not yet ascended to My Father.'"

17. *But go to My brethren.* He had never called them that before. "Brethren," He had called them, but not with the emphatic, "My." "Go to My brethren."

17. *And say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God.* Thus Christ explained to them that the Father, who is God, was God to Christ and God to them. The Father of Christ and their Father also.

18. *Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord.* That was a very different message from her first one. Then she came and said, "He is gone! The tomb is empty. The stone is rolled away." Now she comes with the joyful tidings, "I have seen our risen Lord."

18. *And that He had spoken these things unto her.* Sometimes we have to deliver the message of stern justice which is one of doom to the guilty, but oh how sweet it is to be able to come with the message of the Gospel!—

"He lives!—The great Redeemer lives!"

He lives to plead for sinners! So, sinners, come and trust Him, for He will manifest Himself to you as surely as He did to these disciples, though not in exactly the same form!

—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.

UNKNOWN DEPTHS AND HEIGHTS
NO. 3068

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 1907.

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

"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon Christ's cries from the Cross (in addition to those mentioned later) are as follows: #2562, Volume 44—CRIES FROM THE CROSS; #2803, Volume 48—THE SADDEST CRY FROM THE CROSS; #2344, Volume 40—CHRIST'S DYING WORDS FOR HIS CHURCH; #2311, Volume 39—OUR LORD'S LAST CRY FROM THE CROSS and #2644, Volume 45—THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

IT needs a tongue as eloquent as that which uttered these words to fitly describe the scene before us. Christ, the King of kings, and yet the sorrowful Substitute for sinners, has been stripped naked. The mocking soldiers have unconsciously fulfilled the Scripture which said, "They parted My raiment among them, and for My vesture they did cast lots." He has been thrown roughly to the ground. His legs and arms have been stretched out upon the transverse wood. Rough hands have grasped the cruel nails. Stern blows have been dealt with the heavy hammer—He now begins to know the physical sufferings of crucifixion. He looks down to the faces of the men who have been putting him to exquisite torture and to bitter shame and utters not a single word of complaint, much less of accusation or of vengeance. And He breathes a prayer, "Father, forgive them"—My murderers, the rough men who have stripped Me, the cruel men who have nailed My hands and pierced My feet—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Brothers and Sisters, the sayings of Christ upon the Cross have a deeper meaning than that which appears upon the surface. They were texts of which His eternal life should be the sermon—they were no common words. As no Word of Scripture is of private interpretation, no Word of the Savior upon the Cross loses its force and significance in later times. What He said then, He is saying now. What He said then was but the utterance of a sentence which shall roll through the ages and which shall prevail with God through time and throughout eternity. "Father, forgive them," was the prayer of a dying Man, but it was not a dying prayer. "They know not what they do," was the plea of lips that were about to be closed, but it was no plea which was doomed to silence—it is heard in Heaven today, as much as when Jesus first offered it on Calvary from His Cross!

The text seems to me to be of great depth. I shall not attempt to fathom it tonight, but reserve it for some future sermons, only tonight exploring two of its parts, rather flitting like a swallow across its surface, than like the leviathan stirring its depths. [Mr. Spurgeon carried out this intention with Sermons #897, Volume 15—THE FIRST CRY FROM THE CROSS and #2263, Volume 38—CHRIST'S PLEA FOR IGNORANT SINNERS—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

There are two things in the text, *the unknown depths of sin*—"They know not what they do." And *the unknown heights of mercy,* as manifested in Christ's dying plea—"Father, forgive them." May God grant His blessing while I shall endeavor to set forth both, according as the Spirit of God shall enable me to do so!

I. And first, my Friends, it appears from the text that THERE ARE UNKNOWN DEPTHS IN HUMAN INIQUITY. "They know not what they do."

You will tell me, perhaps, that Christ applied this remark to His murderers who did not know that He was the Son of God, for if they had known Him to be the Messiah, "they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory." And it might have been said to them, "You did it ignorantly in unbelief." I grant you that this was the immediate meaning of Christ's words, but I think, to return to what I have already affirmed, this saying is true of the entire human family—whenever any of us sin, we know not what we do. Do not misunderstand me. There is no man in the world who has not enough perception left to teach him the difference between right and wrong. Even upon the natural conscience of man there is engraved so much of the Law of God that his conscience either accuses or excuses him. I can scarcely think that there is any race of bushmen, or that there is a single tribe of aboriginal savages who have altogether lost that "candle of the Lord which searches all the inward parts of the belly." They know enough to leave them without excuse, so that if they perish, they perish through willful sin. Yet I must admit, at the outset, that it is possible for the conscience to become so blind through prevailing customs, so seared through lengthened habit and so preserved through absolute ignorance, that men may sin and yet know not what they do. There may be some in whom the judgment has left its seat—they have become maniacs so far as any moral judgment is concerned. They sin with both their hands and, perhaps, write down that very sin as being righteousness, and their obscenity as being a sacrifice acceptable to God! There are none such, however, here. I think in a land like this, with an open Bible, with a preached Gospel, with the Presence of the Spirit of God, I need not address such an assembly as this as not knowing what they do in that sense. If you sin, my Hearers, you sin against light and knowledge. You sin knowing that you do wrong. You put out your hand to touch the accursed thing knowing that it is accursed. You sin willingly and many shall be your stripes, seeing that you know your Master's will and do it not! But still, of the whole human race it is nevertheless true that when they sin, "they know not what they

do." Let me show you, as briefly and forcibly as I can, how this is the fact.

Who among us knows, to the full, the real meaning and nature of sin? I can give some description to you of what sin is, but I question, Brothers and Sisters, whether even the most enlightened of us know the whole of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Sinner, I address myself pointedly to you. Do you know that when you sin, you call God a fool? You say that His Law is not the best thing for you, that He has made a mistake and has asked you to do that which would not conduce to your happiness. You call God a fool—is that nothing? Do you know that when you sin, you call God a liar? He tells you that sin is a bitter and an evil thing. You say, "No, it is sweet. It is pleasant. At any rate, I will taste it." You give the lie to the Eternal God! Is that nothing? Whenever you sin, you call God a tyrant. You do, in fact, avow that He has given Laws which are hard and arbitrary, which He ought not to have given and which you are determined to break because you feel that they are not for your happiness—they do not promote your comfort! And is this nothing? Is this nothing—to call the all-wise God a fool, the truthful God a liar and the good and generous God a tyrant?

But there is more than this in your sin. Every time a man sins, he aims a blow at the crown of God. He refuses to let God be the King but puts his hand, his wicked hand, upon the diadem of Deity and would dash the crown from God's head if he could. No, more! He aims a blow at God's very existence. The language of sin is, "No God!" And every time a sinner sins, he tries to get rid of God—and his aim and drift is to stop the Eternal One and to put the King of kings out of His own universe. Is this nothing? Is this nothing? Does not even this, feeble though the explanation is, make sin to be exceedingly sinful? Verily, when we sin, we know not what we do! I can hardly believe that there is a man or woman in this assembly who would, in cold blood, stand up and say, "I defy God! I will do my best to drive Him from His throne. Yes, and to drive Him from existence!" And yet, Sinner, every time you curse, or lie, or swear, or break God's Law in any way whatever, you do, in fact, do all these things and I think I may say you know not what you do.

Let us now shift the kaleidoscope and get another view of this great and solemn Truth of God. *Some of us know what we do if we judge of sin by its loathsomeness in God's sight.* There is no man living who knows how much God hates and abhors sin! You may detest the loathsome toad. You may give way to a wicked disposition and hate some enemy till you cannot live till that enemy is slain. But you cannot loathe the toad, you cannot hate your foe so thoroughly as God abhors and hates sin! Wherever sin is, there is God's utmost hate, anger and ire. He cannot endure it! His eyes cannot light upon it without burning it up and His hand is always longing to smite it to the death. Why, look Sirs, God had a choice archangel—a glorious being whose wings were like the beams of the rising sun, whose stature was like a great snow-clad mountain and whose beauty was as a fair field girt with flowers. He sinned and God

spared neither him nor the angels that followed him in his rebellion, but cast them down to Hell and reserved them "in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." Angelhood could not save an angel—angelic stature, a seraphic voice and a cherubic flight could not save Satan and his hosts when the stain of sin had fallen on them! How much, then, must God hate sin?

When God had made the world, He smiled and said, "It is good." The morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy, for the world was very good and God's own heart was glad at the sight of the new-made world. But when Adam sinned, God did not spare Eden, with all its perfections of beauty! And later, when the iniquity of man was fully ripe, He did not spare the round world itself, but bade the floods leap up from their cavernous darkness and bade the clouds burst their swaddling bands, and the earth was covered with a flood, for "it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart."

No, if we still want to see more clearly how God hates sin, let us see how sin came upon His own Son, His only-begotten, His well-beloved Son. It came there, not by any deed of His own, but because He took our iniquities upon Himself and, therefore, was numbered with the transgressors. And did His Father spare Him? Far from it! He smote Him with the rod, He scourged Him with the lash, He pierced Him to the heart with His sword. He gave up His darling to the power of the dog, and "Lama Sabachthani?" was a sorrowful proof that God hates and loathes sin, let it be wherever it may. [See Sermon #2133, Volume 36—"MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Now, Sirs, would you go and press to your bosom and dandle and pamper and pet that thing which God loathes and hates? I think not. If we ever had, before our eyes, God's hatred of sin and this were revealed to our heart by the Holy Spirit, we would long to be rid of it and, therefore, I say that when we take hold of it and embrace it, we know not what we do.

Again, *what man among us knows sin in its awful consequences?* Is there a mother here who would go home tonight and ask herself the quickest way to damn her child's soul? Is there a father here who would take counsel with his own wickedness as to the readiest method of sending his son to Hell? I think not. And yet, when the father is a drunk or a swearer, what does he do but do his worst to ruin his child? And when the mother is prayerless, Godless, Christless, does she not do her utmost to murder her child's soul? Verily, we in our relationships, when we go into sin, know not what we do! What master could sit down wantonly to undermine the spiritual health of his workmen? What citizen would wish to become the deadly upas tree dropping poison from all its branches? What man of influence would wish to be the basilisk whose eyes should tempt men to their destruction? Not one! And yet when you commit iniquity—and especially those of you who occupy the responsible position of parents, or masters, or ministers, or employers in any way—

you do your best to destroy the souls of others! So I can truly say, "Surely you know not what you do."

Do you know, Sinner, that every time you sin, your sin affects the whole world? Let me not stagger you. It is only our finite vision which prevents us seeing the effect of even one thought upon the entire universe. The word I am speaking, just now, sets in motion a wave in the air which reaches your ears. It will abide in your memory, to a certain degree, throughout eternity. In limiting the sphere of my voice to your ears, I have set eternity pulsating—you shall think these things over either in the waves of fiery Hell, or in the fields of glorious Heaven. Eternity has been affected by the speech of a man! And so it is with what you do—there is an effect produced on earth, in Heaven, in Hell by whispered blasphemy or by an unseen lust—you cannot sin alone! You are part of a universe—you cannot disentangle yourself from the meshes of the net of society. You are in the ship of the universe and you cannot get out of it. You cannot even be thrown out of it, as Jonah was cast out of the ship into the sea. Your sin is dragging other men down to Hell, or else the Grace that is in you is helping to lift up others towards God and Heaven. Mind that when you sin, for from this day on I think that you will hardly be able to say as, perhaps, you may have done before, that you know not what you do.

But Sinner, let me speak to you solemnly—to you—about something in which no imagination is needed. Do you see that man yonder? What is he doing? I see a pearly gate within which I mark the splendors of unutterable bliss and hear the hymns of the Paradise of God! What is that man doing? He is putting bolts and bars upon that gate to shut himself out. Do you call him a madman? Sinner, that madman is you! Your sins are shutting you out of Heaven. Do you see yonder man? He is carrying wood on his weary shoulders and stooping to the very ground as he bears his burden. For what purpose is he carrying that fuel? It is to make a bed of fire on which he shall lie and swelter in flames forever! Do you call him a madman? Sinner, that madman is yourself! What is Hell but the laying on upon your back of a whip whose knots you have yourself tied? What is it but the drinking of a cup of gall, every drop of which was distilled from your own sin? These are awful things to say, but I feel that when I look at what Hell is, in all its horrors, and what the loss of Heaven is, with all its dreadful darkness, I must say to you when you sin, surely you know not what you do! The man who puts himself to death with the halter, or drives the knife into his heart, or throws himself into his watery grave may have some present griefs which may, to him, though not to us, seem to be an excuse for fleeing from them. But you, when you sin, are a suicide without excuse because you flee from good that stands before you to an evil that has no mixture of benefit or mercy! You leap into the fire yourself—a fire which you have yourself kindled and which your own blasphemous breath has fanned! Oh, may God teach us, when we sin, what we have really done, that we may not do it

again and that, by His Grace, we may be led to the precious blood of Christ to have the guilt of it washed away!—

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins.
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains."

Only once more upon this point and then I will leave it. "They know not what they do." *Sinner, do you know that when you sin, eternity is involved in every act?* Faith binds me to eternal bliss—sin and unbelief fetter me to everlasting woe. I think I hear the voice of a spirit which has been these last ten years in Hades. Listen! Listen! There is a cry, a groan, but now the words are audible—"Fool that I was to come here! Here I am tortured in indescribable agony that is to go on forever—and for what? For a few hours of giddy mirth, for a few silly jokes that I might indulge my pride rather than submit to the Free Grace of God. Why am I here? Because I would serve Satan—and God knows that it was a bitter service and what little sweet it had is all forgotten now." Do you hear this man as he speaks to himself? "Oh, if I could ever escape from this dreadful dungeon, it would be a Heaven to me! If these awful fires could be quenched, if this gnawing worm would but die, then I would be content! If after ten thousand, thousand, thousand years I could hope to make my escape from this pit of woe, it would set all the bells of my heart a-ringing for very joy at the bare possibility that, at last, I might escape! But what is it that I see written before me? Forever! Forever, on my chains! Forever, branded on my limbs of pain! Forever, on yon waves of fire! Forever, in the angry gaze of an incensed Deity! Forever, in those hungry depths which seem to yawn to suck me into deeper woe! Forever, forever, forever, forever!" O drunkard, swearer, whoremonger—when you sin the next time, remember that the deed you do entails everlasting consequences which will run on forever, forever, FOREVER! Surely, when you have sinned in the past, you must have been ignorant of this overwhelming Truth of God—you could not have known what you were doing!

But have I some here who say that they do know what they are doing? They have been so faithfully warned, so affectionately dealt with, so earnestly prayed for that when they sinned, they sinned willfully, knowing what they did. O my dear Hearers, that is true of some of you! I have often felt, when I have come out of the pulpit, that you would be without excuse in the Day of Judgment. God knows that I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God—Divine Sovereignty in all its absoluteness and the sinner's responsibility in all its fullness! I have preached to you the Doctrines of Grace, but I have not, therefore, kept back the demands of God upon you. And I know that should you perish, it will neither be for want of preaching, nor of weeping. Well, Sirs, if you do perish with the Gospel preached in your ears, you perish fearfully indeed!

Room there! Room—make way you priests of Modoch! Stand back, you followers of Ashtaroth, you worshippers of Baal, stand back! Give up

your choice seats, the highest places in the synagogue of Hell! Make room, for here comes a man who read his Bible and heard the Word faithfully preached! Give him the choicest place. Now cannibals, pirates and all you poor beings who sinned, but knew not what you did, make room, for here comes a man who sinned with God before his very eyes and blindly rushed upon the spear of the Almighty when the light of Heaven was shining upon his eyeballs! Make room for him, I say! Get up, you who have been guilty of murder and of the shedding of blood in lands where Christ was never preached! Get up and give your place to this man! "What?" they say, "have you become like one of us?" Yes, we say, not only like one of you, but deeper than your depth, more fiery than your flames, more horrible than your horrors shall be the dread, the doom, the destruction of this man of whom it could not be said, "He knew not what he did." God have mercy upon you, my Hearers! May His Sovereign Grace be extended toward you. May the lines of His election embrace you, the blood of Christ's redemption wash you, the voice of His effectual calling awaken you and the power of His Grace preserve you! Or alas, woe unto you, Newington! Woe unto you, Southwark! If the Gospel preached unto you had been preached in Sodom, it had continued unto this day! And if in Tyre and Sidon—they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes!

I have thus tried, in all simplicity, as God's servant, to expound Christ's plea—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

II. Now, very briefly—but oh, may God grant that it may be with the unction of the Holy One—let me speak upon THE UNKNOWN HEIGHTS OF GRACE.

If there were any men in all the world who under the Covenant of Works, or under that mingle-mangle covenant which some preach, which is half Law and half works, and neither Law nor works—if there were any men who should have been excluded from the Election of Grace it was those men who nailed the Savior to the Cross! And yet, mark this, while Christ did not mention by name the best of the Pharisees, He did mention, before God, particularly and personally, those degraded men who with many an addition of cruel mockery, nailed Him to the Cross! "Father, forgive *them."* He did not say, "Father, forgive Pontius Pilate, for he sinned unwillingly." He did not say, "Father, forgive Judas, for he repented and cast down his ill-gotten gain in the Temple." But He said, "Father, forgive *them."* There they are—the mark of the nails has not yet gone out of their hands—there is the print of the head of the nails in the center of their palm even now. Look, the blood of Jesus is on their clothes—the very blood which spurted forth from the Redeemer's hands when they drove the nails through them! Yet He prays, "Father, forgive *them."* There they are—they are grinning at their ghastly work and saying, "Aha! Aha!" and joining with the ribald crew and thrusting their tongues into their checks, saying, "He saved others, Himself He could not save." And yet there is heard, above the clamor of their iniquity which appeals to God for justice, the cry of the Savior, "Father, forgive them."

There is no consciousness of need of forgiveness in them. Their hearts are hard as nether millstones. They laugh at the prayer itself. "Forgive?" they say, "we have done many a worse piece of work than this! We need not be forgiven." They are as cold as ice and stern as steel—and hard as the granite rock. And yet Jesus prays, "Father, forgive them." There are no past good works to recommend them—they never did a good thing in their lives—they are soldiers who have slain, every man, perhaps his hundred men! They have learned to split a little infant on the blade of their swords. They know how to rip up, and tear, and cut off a head and gouge out eyes—they are men whose deeds of blood must be written in fire, but whose deeds of goodness have never yet come to light! And yet Jesus cries, "Father, forgive them." They are men who if the Gospel were preached to them, would reject it. If Christ were offered to them, they would refuse Him. If they were moved by some qualms of conscience, they would stifle them. If they were wept over by the minister, they would ridicule his tears. If they were pleaded for by the Church, they would laugh at the pleas and yet the Savior says, "Father, forgive them." Amid such splendors of Grace, where shall I find words to fitly describe them? Language, you are a dull, cold thing in such a case as this! Words, you have not strength enough to carry the mighty meaning of my soul just now! Was there ever Grace like this, except, when Jesus prayed for me and said, "Father, forgive *him"?* And when He prayed for you, my Brother, and you, my Sister, and said, "Father, forgive *them"?*

O my Hearers, when Jesus pleads for us, it is not because there is anything in us why He should plead! It is not because we flee to Him that He pleads for us! It is not because we long for mercy and value it that He pleads for us. He prays for us long before we pray to Him! He died for us before we knew anything about our death in sin. And He lived and pleaded before His Father's Throne when we were cursing, blaspheming and defying Him. Ah, Souls, I would that you could get rid, once and for all, of any idea that Jesus Christ needs anything in you to move His heart of compassion towards you! Where He loves, He loves for His own sake, not because of the worthiness of the object of His love. The source of Grace is in the God of Grace, not in the receiver of Grace! The reason for pardon is not in the penitent, but in the Pardoner. The ground of acceptance is not in our faith, but in Christ, the Author and Finisher of that faith—and hence it is that the Gospel is adapted to the worst of sinners—to the scum, the chaff, the off-scouring, the parings, the filth, the vileness, the rottenness, the stench, the offal of the world! Oh, if we had a Gospel that was half Grace and half human goodness, then the good, the upright, the educated, the refined, the moral would have some degree of hope! But the poor outcast would have none. But now, tonight, I preach a Gospel which comes right down to you, just where you are, in the bog, the mire, the slough, next door to Hell, lying at Hell's gate—not like Lazarus when the dogs licked his sores at the rich man's gate, but lying at the gate of Hell while Hell hounds lick your wounds—cast out from God, abhorred, detested, abhorrent to yourself, obnoxious to your

own conscience—such a sinner that you wish you had never been born, or that you had been a viper, a snake, a toad rather than have been a man! Yet can God's Grace reach even you and "unto you is the word of this salvation sent." I do believe that over such sinners as you Jesus pleads tonight, "Father, forgive them."

And now, my dear Hearers, is there something in you which seems to say, "Unite in that prayer"? Does the Spirit of God whisper in your soul, "Tonight is the hour of mercy. Jesus Christ is passing by—He is interceding for the transgressors"? Then I pray you say, "Father, forgive me." What? Shall my Master say, "Father, forgive them," and will not you pray for yourself? The adamant might melt, the steel dissolve—and will not you melt? Spirit of God, bring the fire and melt the heart! And now, poor Soul, say, "Father, forgive me. I did not know the full guilt of my sin, but I knew enough to make me so guilty that I deserve Your wrath. I have no merits, Lord. I have no righteousness. If You slay me, You are just. If You curse me, I deserve it. But Father, forgive me!" Do not use Christ's plea—that is His, not yours. He could say, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." You must use another plea. "Father, forgive me through Your Son's precious blood."

Oh, I think my soul would be ready to leap from earth to Heaven if I could but be sure that there was someone here who was saying in his heart, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and am no more worthy to be called Your son." Or if some heart were saying, "By His agony and bloody sweat, by His Cross and passion, by His precious death and burial, by His glorious Resurrection and Ascension, Father, forgive me!" Soul, your prayer is heard—"go, and sin no more. Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you."

Go home and tell your friends and your kinsfolk what God has done for your soul and, by-and-by, come here and tell us what God has done for you—and then come to this Communion Table and spiritually eat with us of His flesh and drink of His blood, "for His flesh is meat, indeed, and His blood is drink, indeed."

May the Lord add His blessing, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 136.

[Sermon #787, Volume 13—A SONG, A SOLACE, A SERMON AND A SUMMONS—
is a sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the whole of this Psalm,
although he used as a text, the refrain, "for His Mercy endures forever."—Read/download the entire
sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

This is, indeed, one of the chief songs of praise which we find in the Scriptures. And it is not surprising that such a poet as John Milton should have written that version of it that we often sing—

"Let us with a gladsome mind,
Praise the Lord, for He is kind:
For His mercies shall endure,

Ever faithful, ever sure."

Verses 1-3. *O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good, for His mercy endures forever. O give thanks unto the God of gods: for His mercy endures forever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for His mercy endures forever.* Here, you see, we have three titles of God, first as Jehovah, secondly as the Elohim, thirdly as the Adonai or Lord. By whatever name God is known, He is worthy of our highest praise. Whether it is the name referring to His Self-Existence, or the name relating to His Covenant engagements, or the name applying specially to His rule and governorship—in any and every capacity, let us praise Him. Notice that each of these three verses begins, "O give thanks." We are to praise the Lord for His greatness and to give Him thanks for His goodness. Our praise shall consist largely of the element of gratitude as we think of all that He has done for us. Although I lay no stress upon the fact of these verses being three and upon the names of God being three, yet it is very remarkable that throughout the Old Testament, even when there is no distinct allusion to the Doctrine of the Trinity, yet still the threefold praise is constantly being repeated, as if this sublime Truth of God lay latent, but yet was not unknown to those godly ones who dived deep into the mystery of the Triune Unity of God. Let us who have this Truth so clearly revealed to us, give thanks unto the Triune Jehovah with all the powers of our threefold nature—body, soul and spirit.

4, 5. *To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever. To Him that by wisdom made the heavens: for His mercy endures forever.* [See Sermon #1981, Volume 33—GOD THE WONDER-WORKER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The making of the heavens is a great marvel of wisdom and, inasmuch as that wondrous work sprang from the unaided wisdom of God, it is a subject for which we should unceasingly praise Him. When men invent some notable piece of machinery, they are generally long in bringing it to perfection and they usually borrow various ideas from those who have preceded them. But it was not so with God. By His own perfect Wisdom, He struck out the arch of Heaven and made all that it covers.

6. *To Him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for His mercy endures forever.* Once in the history of the globe, the earth and the waters were mingled together but, at God's bidding, the earth rose to its assigned position and the deeps received the sea and they have kept their places ever since, except when God caused the Flood to cover the whole earth.

7-9. *To Him that made great lights: for His mercy endures forever: the sun to rule by day, for His mercy endures forever. The moon and stars to rule by night, for His mercy endures forever.* What should we have been without light? Could any poor unhappy creatures ever have lived in a dark world? Let us praise God for the light! Let us bless Him for the sun—that great mercy, but let us not forget the lesser mercies—the moon and the stars which He also made. It is well, when we are praising God, to dwell upon all His bounties for, sometimes, mercies which appear

small from one point of view become all the greater from another point of view. Stars seem little to us, but what vast orbs they really are! Let us praise the great Creator for every kind of light that He has made, and let us especially praise Him for all spiritual light, and even for His ministers who are stars in His right hand. They are but little twinkling lights compared with the great Sun of Righteousness, but still, "He made the stars also." Therefore let Him have due praise for it, "for His mercy endures forever." So far, we have been reminded of the wonders worked by the great Creator. Now we are called upon to give thanks to the Lord for His deliverance of His ancient people out of Egypt.

10-14. *To Him that smote Egypt in their first-born: for His mercy endures forever: and brought out Israel from among them: for His mercy endures forever: with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm for His mercy endures forever: to Him which divided the Red sea into parts: for His mercy endures forever: and made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for His mercy endures forever.* It was a great miracle by which the Red Sea was divided. I suppose it was somewhere about eight or nine miles in breadth at the place where the Israelites crossed it, yet the sea rolled back and stood in a heap on either side and left a clear passage for the people through the very heart of the sea! God's mercy made a way for His people through the sea, and a path for them through the mighty waters. But it was no less a mercy to make them go through the sea. They had not been accustomed to any kind of travelling and certainly not to such travelling as that—through the heart of the sea—but the Lord inspired them with confidence, so that they went down into the very depths without fear and came up again on the other side! But God's mercy is always consistent with His justice, so there was very different treatment for the Egyptians.

15, 16. *But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea: for His mercy endures forever. To Him which led His people through the wilderness: for His mercy endures forever.* In this Psalm you have three leadings. There is, in verse 11, leading out—"Brought out Israel." In verse 16 there is leading through—"Led His people through the wilderness." And in the 21st verse we shall find that there is leading into—"And gave their land for an heritage." So God leads us out from the region of sin, He leads us through the wilderness of this life's trial and He leads us into the rest which remains for His people. "To Him which led His people through the wilderness: for His mercy endures forever." You are today, dear Friends, experiencing that kind of leading. Long ago some of you were led out of the realm of sin—now you are passing through this great and terrible wilderness wherein there would be thirst and hunger were it not for the heavenly water and manna. And we might fear the fiery serpents were it not for Him who was lifted up upon the Cross as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. Yet the Lord will safely lead you through the wilderness and give you the land of promise.

17. *To Him which smote great kings: for His mercy endures forever.* His mercy and His vengeance are quite compatible—the one has not done away with the other.

18-20. *And slew famous kings: for His mercy endures forever: Sihon king of the Amorites: for His mercy endures forever: and Og the king of Bashan for His mercy endures forever.* Here are four verses where we think that one might have sufficed. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, we often use only one verse when we ought to use four! Scripture sets us a better example—it frequently repeats its references to some one thing because in that one thing there are included many mercies. It would be well if the diligence in describing details which we use with regard to our troubles could be exercised upon descriptions of our mercies, for then we would imitate the Psalmist's style and say, "O give thanks to Him which smote great kings: for His mercy endures forever: and slew famous kings: for His mercy endures forever: Sihon king of the Amorites: for His mercy endures forever: and Og the king of Bashan." [See Sermon #1285, Volume 22—SIHON AND OG, OR MERCIES IN DETAIL—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

21, 22. *And gave their land for an heritage: for His mercy endures forever: even an heritage unto Israel His servant: for His mercy endures forever.* Here we have the same thought put into two verses, to show us how to dwell with lengthened notes and repeated Hallelujahs upon the goodness and mercy of God. Notice how many of these verses begin with, "And," as if every mercy had been linked to another which went before it and would be linked to another which would come after it. I like to see these *Ands*. They remind us that there is more to follow. After all that we have received from God, there is yet more to come! God has not come to the end of His mercies.

23, 24. *Who remembered us in our low estate, for His mercy endures forever: and has redeemed us from our enemies: for His mercy endures forever.* Redemption—what a grand note that is! What voice can ever reach its fullness and its loftiness! Let us praise the name of the Lord as we remember the price and the power with which He "has redeemed us from our enemies."

25. *Who gives food to all flesh.* There is food for you, then, poor hungry one! There is food for you, child of God. He "who gives food to all flesh," can certainly give food to all spirits.

25, 26. *For His mercy endures forever. O give thanks unto the God of Heaven: for His mercy endures forever.*

—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.

CLEANSING—WRONG OR RIGHT?
NO. 3069

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 31, 1874.

"If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands ever so clean; yet shall You plunge me in the ditch, and my own clothes shall abhor me."
Job 9:30, 31.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon on the same text is #1908, Volume 32—WASHED TO GREATER FOULNESS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

WE are all, by nature and by practice, unclean in the sight of God. However excellent or virtuous we may seem before man, we have all broken God's Law, for that Law requires perfection and we have been far from it. The Law demands spotless holiness towards God and perfect rectitude towards man and, in some point or other, we have all transgressed that Law—and we have therefore become polluted before the thrice-holy Jehovah. The great question which ought to arise in the mind of every one of us is this—"How can I be cleansed before God?"

I. We are called upon to remember, first, that TO BE CLEAN IN THE SIGHT OF GOD IS WORTH EVERY POSSIBLE EFFORT.

Job speaks of washing himself with snow water and trying to make himself clean. And this he speaks of right earnestly. However far from the hot plains in which he lived, Job might have to send for snowy water—whatever quantity of soap (for in the Hebrew there is an allusion to soap in the second clause)—however much nitre and soap he might have to take in order to wash himself perfectly clean, it was worth all the expense and trouble if only it could be accomplished.

And, dear Friends, we must be clean in the sight of God. We must desire to be clean in the sight of God for, *if not, we are the objects of His continual displeasure.* "God is angry with the wicked every day." This is a solemn Truth of God which is far too much forgotten in the present day. Many have tried to put the thought of it right on one side and held forth only the Doctrine of the Divine Benevolence. But while that Doctrine is blessedly true, these solemn declarations are equally true, "The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God." And, "He that believes not, is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." Now, if we were right-hearted towards God, this would seem to us to be a very dreadful thing. We little know how exceedingly hateful sin is to God. [See Sermon #3068, Volume 53—UNTOLD DEPTHS AND HEIGHTS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] You know that there are some things which you

and I sometimes see which are very disgusting and loathsome to us. I went into a railway station in Italy once, where I saw a man who had lost his arm and who by way of begging, exposed to us the stump of it and also a horrible ulcer from which he was suffering. I turned away sick at the sight and dreaded to go to that station again, for fear that I should be met inside the door of the waiting room by that horrible spectacle! But, depend upon it, no mutilation and no disease of man's body was ever so sickening to the most delicate taste as sin is sickening to God! He loves purity and, therefore, He must loathe impurity. He delights in those who are just and true and upright—and He cannot endure those who are unjust, false, or unrighteous. His holy soul abhors them as that strong expression of His in the prophecy of Zechariah proves—"My soul loathed them and their soul also abhorred Me." The sinner does not dislike God more than God dislikes him as a sinner. The sinless God cannot look with complacency upon him who is sinful—he is loathsome to the holy mind of God. So, surely, if we are right-hearted, we shall feel that anything and everything that we can do in order to get right with God and to become clean in His sight, we ought to do at once!

Let us also remember that *as long as we are unclean, we are in daily danger of the fires of Hell.* Do any of you know what Hell is? It is the leper colony of the universe! Just as in the olden times when the "black pest," or some other terrible epidemic ran through a town or village, they would build a house some miles away from the place and call it the pest house where they would put away all those who had the pest or plague—such is Hell, only a million times worse than any earthly pest house ever was! Hell is the pest house of the moral universe. You know that in countries where leprosy prevails, they shut up the lepers in a place by themselves, lest the terrible disease should pollute the whole district. And Hell is God's leper colony where sinners must be confined forever when they are incurable and past hope! And what are the pains of Hell? They are the natural result of sin. Sin is the mother of Hell. The pains and groans of lost spirits in Hell are simply the fully-developed flowers of which their sins were the seed. Bitter is the fruit, sour is the vintage of that vine of Sodom and Gomorrah which some men set themselves so diligently to plant—and so industriously to water. Sin bears its own sting within itself. The torments that are to come are the stings of conscience and the inevitable effects of remorse upon the soul and body of the man who will continue to be unclean in the sight of God! Lest, therefore, any of you should ever be shut up in that place of "everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power," I do beseech you to awaken yourselves and diligently seek to find out how you may be made clean in God's sight—

"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."

In addition to the eternal loss which all who are cast into Hell must sustain, also remember that *none can enter Heaven until they are pure.* Those holy gates are so closely guarded by angelic watchers that no contraband of sin shall ever cross the frontiers of Heaven. The angels look up and down and through and through. The man who presents himself there—if so much as a speck, or spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing is found upon him—cannot be allowed to enter! Just think for a minute how utterly impossible it must be for the impure to enter the courts of the thrice-holy God. You sometimes see, in the streets of London, wretched creatures in whom poverty, drunkenness and debauchery have so combined that even in their outward appearance, they present a truly horrible aspect. They are so foul, filthy and loathsome that I should not dare to describe them more fully. None of us would like to come near them—our flesh creeps at the very thought of them! Now, suppose that these shoeless, ragged, filthy, diseased creatures should present themselves at the gates of Buckingham Palace on some great occasion when all the princes of the blood and the peers of the realm were gathered there? Do even the most democratic of you think that the soldiers would be too squeamish if they were to tell them that they were unfit to enter such a place and to mingle with such company? "Why, no," you say, "of course they must at least be clean, or they can never enter the royal palace." Well then, it must assuredly be so in a still more emphatic sense with regard to the palace of the King of kings! Would it be possible for any to enter there defiled with sin, foul with fornications, adulteries, thefts, murders, infidelities, blasphemies, profanities and rebellions against God? It cannot be that the pure air of Heaven should ever be breathed by them, for it is expressly declared that "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles, neither whatever works abomination or makes a lie." All who are there are absolutely perfect! And you and I, if we would be with them, must be renewed in heart and converted unto God—and washed from every stain, and spot and speck of sin. It is clearly impossible that the thrice-holy God should have unrenewed, unclean sinners immediately under His own eyes, in His own courts. It is bad enough for Him to have them, for a time, in this little planet, floating in the vast sea of space. But He could not endure to have them up there amid the splendors of eternal Glory! That cannot, must not and will not be!

Once more, *every man will feel that it is worth his while to endeavor to be clean before God if he wants a quiet conscience,* for a truly quiet conscience is never possessed by any man until he has been washed in the precious blood of Jesus and so made "whiter than snow." Does anyone ask, "Can that be done?" I answer in God's own words. "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." This great miracle of mercy can be worked and nobody's conscience will ever be perfectly at peace till it is accomplished. There is a way of silencing conscience without that miracle being worked,

but it is like the way in which cruel tyrants sometimes silenced the martyrs. "Hold your tongue," the tyrant has said, "I will not listen to your heresy." But the brave man has still gone on speaking—he would not be silenced. And then the tyrant has cut his tongue out. I think I have known men cut out the tongue of their conscience, so that it could no longer speak. Perhaps some here have done it—torn it right out by the roots by going to the drink shop, by frequenting evil company, by taking up infidel ideas when they knew better. They knew that they could not, with a clear conscience, do what they wanted to do, so they resolved that they would tear out its tongue, so that it could no longer rebuke them!

O foolish Man, you could not have dome a worse thing for yourself than that, for he who quiets his conscience after that fashion is like one of whom I have heard who, one night, was unable to sleep because a faithful dog kept on howling under his window. He called out to it and bade it lie down, and went back to bed and tried to sleep, but still the howling continued. And at last, when the creature would not be quiet, he took his gun and shot it, in his anger. He ought to have known that the dog wanted to tell him that there were burglars who were trying to enter his house and that the faithful animal was doing its best to preserve its master's life. After the dog was dead and the man had gone to sleep again, the burglars entered his bedroom, stole everything of value that they could find and ended by staining their hands with the blood of the foolish man who had killed the poor creature that warned him of his peril! The devil is trying to destroy your soul and your conscience, like that faithful dog, gives the alarm, but you cry to it, "Lie down!" It does not lie down, however, and perhaps this very sermon is helping to wake it up, but you are determined that it shall be quiet and you will even kill it if you can! Well, if you do, you will then have sealed your own destiny by that very deed. The only proper way of quieting conscience is the method that a wise owner would have taken of quieting his dog. Supposing that man had gone downstairs and patted his dog on the head and praised it for being a good dog? Suppose that he had loosed its chain and taken it round the yard with him? Suppose, too, that he had taken that gun, with which he so foolishly killed his dog, and when, at last, he had discovered the villains who had come to rob him, he had set his dog on them, or even leveled his gun at them? That would have been far wiser than killing his dog and losing his own life! In such a fashion as that, go and lose your conscience and let your sins be destroyed—otherwise they will assuredly destroy you! The quieting of an awakened conscience can only be rightly done by getting rid of sin—and there is but one way to get rid of sin—of which I will speak before I have finished my discourse.

Thus much on the first point—to be clean in the sight of God is worth any and every effort.

II. Now secondly, ALL EFFORTS OF OUR OWN, MADE IN OUR OWN WAY, WILL CERTAINLY FAIL.

It is very curious what efforts people will make to get rid of their sins. *Some try to get clean by ceremonies.* Ah, Mr. Priest, is that good soap that

you are bringing with your bowl of water? "Yes," he replies, "the best Roman soap, or you can have a cake from Canterbury or Oxford if you would prefer it. How beautifully white your hands will look if you only use enough of this patent soap." So you say, but if you had your eyes opened, you would see that after all your washing, they are as black as night! The soapsuds get in your eyes, Sir, and therefore you do not see the dirt that is still on the sinner's hands. That is all that ever comes of mere ceremonies—they blind, but they do not cleanse.

Another thinks that he can obtain cleansing by religious observances. His form of washing with snow water is attendance at his usual place of worship. He goes there regularly. He would never be away if he could help it! When the proper time for service comes and having done that, he asks, "Will not that take away my sin?" No, Sir, not a spot, nor even half a spot! Some have given away large sums of money with the hope of thereby cleansing themselves from sin. But all the gold in the world can never form a golden ointment with which to cleanse iniquity. There are many who have tried to get cleansing by their moralities and their charities, but their efforts have all been in vain. Mr. Legality and Mr. Civility are said to be great hands at washing Blackamoors white, but I have very grave doubts as to whether the Blackamoors are not blacker after the washing than they were before!

Men have had the strangest notions as to how they might be cleansed from sin. Read John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*—which is, as you know, a record of his own experience—and you will see some very curious ideas of his concerning the way in which he hoped to wash himself from sin. Yet, his ideas are not any more curious than those of people who are now living. The other day I read a letter from a young farm laborer, describing the way in which, at one time, he hoped to get saved. He said that in the village where he lived, there were some young men who went to the Patagonian Mission and there got what he called, "massacreated." Of course, he meant to say that they were massacred. And he further wrote, "I thought that if the Patagonian Mission would have taken me and the natives would only have killed me, I would have gone joyfully and gladly, for I heard that they were all saints who died in that way and I would willingly have gone if I could have got to Heaven by that method." Yes, and so would I, and so would most of us when we were under the burden of sin. We would not have minded being killed and eaten if we might in that way have entered into eternal life, for a man who really feels the burden of sin is willing to try all sorts of extraordinary methods of getting rid of it! Look at the methods adopted by the heathen in order, as they hope, to get rid of sin. Go to India and look at the great car of Juggernaut, and see by what cruel means the people there hope to get rid of sin! And there are many other equally useless methods which the spiritual quacks are vainly puffing as unfailing ways of getting rid of sin!

But on the authority of the Word of God, we confidently declare that all human methods of seeking the cleansing of sin which men may

practice must end in failure, even as Job's did when he said, "If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands ever so clean; yet shall You plunge me in the ditch, and my own clothes shall abhor me." Yet, if God really means to save you, He will never let you be satisfied with any human plan of salvation, but He will, to use Job's expression, plunge you in the ditch and make you feel even blacker than you did before! How will He do that?

Sometimes the Lord does this *by bringing to a man's memory his old sins.* "There," says the self-satisfied man, "I am getting on now—how clean I am after that last wash!" And just then he recollects some sin he committed as a boy, or some foul deed which he can never wipe completely off the tablet of his memory. "Oh!" he cries, "that dreadful past sin of mine has not gone as I vainly hoped that it had—it is still there." So he is again plunged in the ditch and all his beautiful washing counts for nothing!

At another time, *the Lord permits the man to be greatly tempted.* He gets up in the morning and says to himself, "Now I really feel a great deal better than I have felt for a long time. I have firmly resolved to make a man of myself and I know that my resolutions are much stronger than they used to be." So he starts out very confidently. But presently there comes to him something that is stronger than his resolutions—and over goes the boastful man, generally failing in the very thing in which he fancied himself to be strongest! He soon discovers that he was only powerful as long as he had not a powerful adversary to contend with him. That is the way in which many a man has been plunged by God in the ditch.

Sometimes God will do it in another *way—by opening a boastful man's eyes to see the imperfection of his work.* He thinks, "I did that piece of work well. I am sure I did and I do not see how any Christian could do it better." When any man begins to talk like that, the Lord often makes him sit down and closely examine that work of which he is so proud. And as he looks at it, he sees that it is full of flaws. It is a beautiful vase, but just try to fill it with water. Ah, it leaks! The man looks at it and says, "Well, I never thought it was as faulty as this. It seemed to me to be perfect! Yet this beautiful vase that appeared to be so fair, leaks like a sieve." The man says to himself, "That good action of mine was done with a bad motive, so it is like a leaky vessel. While I was doing it, I was as proud as Lucifer over it. So it leaks—and after I had done it, I went away and boasted about it, so the vase kept on leaking." In that way the man gets plunged into the ditch and he sees himself to be blacker than he was before he had thus washed his hands with snow water!

Very frequently men have been plunged into the ditch *by being made to see the spirituality of the Law.* A man says, "I have not broken the Law. I have kept all the Commandments from my youth up. I never killed anybody. No one can say that I ever did." But where he finds it written, "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer," he cries, "Ah then I *have* been a murderer!" A man says very boldly, "I have never committed adultery! Who dares to say that I have?" But when he reads the words of Jesus, "I

say unto you, that whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart," then the man says, "I must admit that I am guilty, for I see that I have broken these commandments by my thoughts and looks, although I knew that I had not broken them by my actions. I did not know that the Law concerned itself so closely with looks and thoughts as well as with acts and words." But, indeed, that is the very thing with which the Law is concerned—and for which it condemns men! And when the self-satisfied man learns this solemn Truth of God, he says, "Then I am plunged in the ditch, and my own clothes abhor me, although I had washed myself quite clean."

Others are plunged in the ditch in this way—*they are made to realize the supreme holiness of God.* It had been the habit of a certain man to say, "I am as good as my neighbors, and better than most of them. Don't talk to me about Christian men and women—there's many a professing Christian not half as good as I am! Why, was I not kind to my neighbor when he was in distress? Did I not give a guinea to such-and-such a charity? Am I not ready at all times to stand up for the right?" So he talks. But when he gets a view of God, then, like Job, he abhors himself and repents in dust and ashes! And he says, "I thought I could compare myself with man, but I cannot compare myself with God! And as God and not man, is the standard of holiness, I am indeed plunged in the ditch. Yet I thought I had washed myself perfectly clean—that snow water and patent soap did seem to take the dirt off beautifully—but now I find that in the sight of God I am just as filthy as I can be." And when the Lord, the Holy Spirit, convinces a man of sin, the words of Job are none too strong—"My own clothes shall abhor me." You may sometimes have abhorred your clothes because they were so dirty that you were ashamed to be seen in them. But you must be dirty, indeed, when your very clothes seem ashamed to hang upon you! This is what the convicted sinner feels—that he is so foul that his very clothes seem to be ashamed of him, as if they would rather have been on anybody else's back than on the back of such a filthy sinner as he is!

"Ah," says someone, "you are exaggerating now." No, I am not exaggerating, at least as far as my own personal experience is concerned. I can well remember—though I did not then know that John Bunyan had used somewhat similar expressions—I can well remember when I was under deep conviction of sin, wishing that I had been a frog or a toad rather than have been a human being because I felt myself to be so foul in the sight of God. I felt that I was such a great sinner that the bread I ate might justly choke me and that the air I breathed might have righteously refused to give life to the lungs of such a sinner as I was. I felt, at that time, that if God spared me, it was only because He was boundless in compassion—and if He cast me into the hottest Hell, I could never murmur against the justice of His sentence, for I felt that I deserved any punishment that He might award me. When the Holy Spirit brings sinners to feel like this, it is a proof that He is leading them on the way by which He brings them to Christ. Oh, that the Lord would make

every guilty sinner here long to be clean in His sight! And also make each one feel what is certainly the truth—that all the means in a man's own power of making himself clean will turn out to be dead failures—for though he should take snow water and wash himself ever so clean, yet would he again be plunged in the ditch and his own clothes would abhor him!

III. The last point on which I have to speak is the best. It is this—THERE IS A RIGHT WAY OF GETTING CLEAN IN GOD'S SIGHT.

First, *it is an effective way.* He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be made clean. He shall be cleansed from all the foulness of the past—God will wipe it right out. He shall be cleansed as to his heart and his nature. To him God repeats that ancient promise, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." "How is this to be had?" By trusting to the Divine method of cleansing the filthy, for the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin everyone who believes in Him. There are millions upon the earth now whom the blood of Jesus Christ has completely cleansed—and there are millions more now hymning His praises in Glory who have had every spot of sin taken out of them by the application of His precious blood! O sinful Souls, if you could ever have made yourselves clean, Christ would not have needed to pour out His life's blood that you might be washed in it! If the cleansing bath could have been filled with human tears, or could have been filled by means of the incantations of a so-called priest, there would have been no need for Your wounds, O Emmanuel, and no need of Your indwelling, O regenerating and sanctifying Spirit! But because we could not be cleansed by any other means, the water and the blood flowed freely from the pierced heart of Jesus, the Divine Son of God! And now the ever-blessed Spirit waits to be gracious and to change the heart and renew the nature and make us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light!

This effective way of getting cleansed is also *an immediate way.* We have often sung—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One!
There is life at this moment for you"—

and it is true, for there is instant cleansing for anyone who looks to Jesus Christ. A sinner may have committed more sins than he could count in a million years and yet, as soon as he gives one believing look at Jesus Christ, all those sins are gone forever! You know that when a bill is paid, the receipt is written at the bottom and that puts an end to the whole debt. So, Sinner, the name of Jesus at the bottom of the whole roll of your indebtedness to God puts an end to it all! The man who thinks he has only a few sins may bring his little bill—and you who know that you have many sins may bring your big bill—but Christ's receipt avails for one as much as the other! Even if the roll of your guilt should be many miles long, it makes no difference to the efficacy of the blood of Jesus! If the list of your sins should be long enough to go right around the world—and just one drop of the blood of Jesus should be put upon it—all that is

written there would at once disappear and be gone forever! And the sinner would be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation!

Further, this effective and immediate way of cleansing is also an *attainable way of cleansing.* To preach to sinners a salvation which they cannot obtain would be to tantalize them. We do not so, but to every person in this Tabernacle tonight and to everyone anywhere else whom this message may reach, we have to say this, "If you will confess your sin to God and then put your trust in Jesus Christ, His Son, you shall be saved—even you, whoever you are, and whatever sin you may have committed!" Your confession is to be made, not to your fellow creature, but to Him against whom your sins were committed. Go to your home, or seek some quiet spot where you can commune with your God. Tell Him that you have sinned, and ask Him to have mercy upon you. Tell Him that Jesus died in the place of sinners—plead the merit of His precious blood and say, "Lord, I believe that You can save me and I trust in You to save me, for Jesus' sake." If you will do this, you shall be forgiven! You shall be renewed in heart, you shall be made clean!

In closing my discourse, I remind you, as I have often done before, that *this cleansing is available now,* at this very moment! I recollect hearing of a somewhat stingy man who once needed to hire a horse and chaise to go out for a drive. So he went to the man who let such things and asked the price. He said that the sum asked was too high—and went round to every other person in the little town who had such things to let, but found that their prices were higher still. So, at last, he went back to the first man and said to him, "I will take your horse and chaise at the price you mentioned." "No," he said, "you won't, for you have been around to everybody else to try to get them at a lower price, and I shall not let you have mine now." I was not very much surprised to hear that he was told that. Now, some of you have been to everybody else for salvation except to the Lord Jesus Christ! You have been to Rome and you have been to Oxford, and you have been to self and I hardly know where you have *not* been! Yet, notwithstanding that, you may come to Christ even now! He will not refuse you even now! Going to Canterbury has not saved you, but going to Calvary can. You have found no help in the city on the seven hills, but you may find immediate help on the little hill outside Jerusalem's gate—the little mound called Calvary, where the Savior shed His precious blood for all who will put their trust in Him!

I have been talking to you in a very simple, homely way, for I have been afraid lest anybody should by any possibility not know what the Gospel really is. I always think that if my net has small meshes, the big fish can get in and the little fish cannot get out, So I have put small meshes to my net and talked in a homely style with simple illustrations which all can understand. The Lord knows that I have done this out of love to your souls. I would bring you all to Jesus if I could—but I cannot do that. Oh, that the Spirit of God would do it! Why do you need so much urging to come to Christ? You are filthy with sin and here is a free bath in which you may be washed spotlessly white! Come and bathe in Jesus'

blood and that will make you fairer than the lilies, and lovelier than all the glories of Solomon! If you do but wash in this Fountain, you will scarcely know yourself when you come up out of it! And if you happen to meet your old self, the next day, you will say, "Ah, Self! I don't want to be on speaking terms with you anymore. I never knew that you were so ugly! I never knew that you were so filthy! I never knew that you were so abominable till I had gotten rid of you by being made a new creature in Christ Jesus."

The Lord bless you and bring you to trust in Jesus Christ, His Son, and He shall have all the praise and glory forever and forever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 5:13-26.

Verse 13. *You are the salt of the earth.* The earth would go putrid if there were no salt of Divine Grace to preserve it. So, dear Friends, if God's Grace is in you, there is a pungent savor about you which tends to preserve others from going as far into sin as otherwise they would have done. "You are the salt of the earth."

13. *But if the salt has lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted?* If the God-given Grace could be altogether taken from you. If you had no sanctifying power about you at all, what could be done with you? You would be like salt that has lost its savor.

13. *It is therefore good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.* Mark this, then—either the saints must persevere to the end, or else the Grace of God has effectually done nothing for them. If they do not continue to be saints and to exercise a saintly influence, there is no hope for them! There cannot be two new births for the same person. If the Divine work has failed once, it will never be begun again. If they have really been saved, if they have been made the children of God and if it is possible for them to lose the Grace which they have received, they can never have it again. The Word of God is very emphatic upon that point—"If they shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance" Falling may be retrieved, but *falling away* can never be. [See Sermon #75, Volume 2—FINAL PERSEVERANCE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

There are countries where there is found salt from which the pungency has completely gone. It is an altogether useless article and if there are men who ever did possess the Grace of God, and who were truly God's people, if the Divine life could go out of them, they would be in an utterly hopeless case. Perhaps there are no powers of evil in the world greater than apostate churches—who can calculate the influence for evil that the Church of Rome exercises in the world today?

14. *You the are light of the world.* The Bible is not the light of the world, it is the light of the Church! But the world does not read the Bible, the world reads Christians! "You are the light of the world."

14. *A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.* You Christians are like a city built upon a hilltop—you must be seen. As you will be seen, mind that you are worth seeing.

15. *Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick and it gives light unto all that are in the house.* God's intent is, first, to light you. And, secondly, to put you in a conspicuous position where men can see you.

16. *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.* Let the light of your purity and your good works be as bright as possible, yet let not the light be to your own praise and glory, but let it be clearly seen that your good works are the result of Sovereign Grace for which all the glory must be given to "your Father which is in Heaven."

17, 18. *Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all are fulfilled.* See how the great Lord of the New Testament confirms the Old Testament? He has not come to set up a destructive criticism that will tear in pieces the Book of Deuteronomy, or cut out the very heart of the Psalms, or grind Ezekiel to powder between His own wheels. But Christ has come to establish yet more firmly than before all that was written aforetime and to make it stand fast as the everlasting hills.

19. *Whoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he 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.* A true man may make mistakes and so he may teach men to violate someone or other of the Divine Commandments. If he does so, he shall not perish, for he was honest in his blunder. But he shall be among the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But he who earnestly, perseveringly and conscientiously teaches all that he knows of the Divine Will, "the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven."

20. *For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* Christ does not teach a lower kind of morality than the Pharisees taught. They were very particular about little things—jots and tittles—but we must go further than they went! We must have more righteousness of life than they had, although they seemed to their fellow men to be excessively precise. Christ aims at perfect purity in His people and we must aim at it too. And we must really attain to more holiness than the best outward morals can produce.

21. *You have heard that it was said by them of old time, You shall not kill; and whoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.* God had said, "You shall not kill." But the remainder of the verse was the gloss of the Rabbis—a true one, yet one that very much diminishes the force of the Divine Command.

22. *But I say unto you, That whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.* And a far higher judgment than that of men.

22. *And whoever shall say to his brother, Raca.* A word of very uncertain meaning, a kind of snubbing word, a word of contempt which men used to say to one another, meaning that there was nothing in them. "Whoever shall say to his brother, Raca."

22. *Shall be in danger of the council: but whoever shall say, You fool, shall be in danger of Hell fire.* Christ will not have us treat men with anger, or with contempt, which is a very evil form of hate, akin to murder, because we as good as say, "That man is nobody." That is, we make nothing of him, which is morally to kill him. We must not treat our fellow men with contempt and derision, nor indulge any angry temper against them, for anger is of the devil, but "love is of God."

23, 24. *Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has anything against you; leave there your gift before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.* Note that this injunction is addressed to the man who has *offended his brother.* Why is this? Because he is the least likely to try to make up the quarrel. It is the man who has been offended who usually exhibits the nobler spirit—the offender is almost always the last to seek a reconciliation and therefore, the Savior says to him, "If your brother has anything against you, it is but right that you should be the first to seek reconciliation with him. Leave your gift, go away from the Prayer Meeting, turn back from the Lord's Table and go and first be reconciled to your brother."

25. *Agree with your adversary quickly.* Always be ready to make peace—not peace at any price—but, still, peace at any price except the sacrifice of righteousness.

25, 26. *While you are on the way with him, lest at any time the adversary deliver you to the judge, and the judge deliver you to the officer, and you be cast into prison. Verily I say unto you, You shall by no means come out from there till you have paid the uttermost farthing.* And there are some debts of which we cannot pay the uttermost farthing! And there is a prison out of which no man shall come, for the uttermost farthing demanded *there* shall never be paid. God grant that we may, none of us, ever know what it is to be shut up in that dreadful dungeon!

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

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

A VISIT TO CHRIST'S HOSPITAL
NO. 3070

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER I2, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOL1TAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Fools because of their transgression and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhors all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saves them out of their distresses. He sent His Word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing." Psalm 107:17-22.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon on verses 17-20 is #1824, Volume 31—THE HISTORY OF SUNDRY FOOLS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

IT is a very profitable thing to visit a hospital. The sight of others' sickness tends to make us grateful for our own health. And it is a great thing to be kept in a thankful frame of mind, for ingratitude is a spiritual disease, injurious to every power of the soul. A hospital inspection will also teach us compassion and that is of great service. Anything that softens the heart is valuable. Above all things, in these days we should strive against the petrifying influences which surround us. It is not easy for a man who has constantly enjoyed good health and prosperity, to sympathize with the poor and the suffering. Even our Great High Priest, who is full of compassion, learned it by carrying our sorrows in His own Person. To see the sufferings of the afflicted, in many cases, would be enough to move a stone. And if we visit a hospital and come back with a more tender heart, we shall have found it a sanatorium to ourselves.

I purpose, at this time, to take you to a hospital. It shall not be one of those noble institutions so pleasingly plentiful around the Tabernacle, but we will take you to Christ's Hospital, or, as the French would call it, the *Hotel Dieu.* And we shall conduct you through the wards for a few minutes, trusting that while you view them, if you are yourself healed, you may feel gratitude that you have been delivered from spiritual sicknesses and an intense compassion for those who still pine and languish. May we become like our Savior who wept over Jerusalem with eyes which were no strangers to compassion's floods. May we view the most guilty and impenitent with yearning hearts and grieve with mingled hope and anxiety over those who are under the sound of the Gospel and so are more especially patients in the Hospital of God.

We will go at once with the Psalmist to the wards of spiritual sickness.

I. And first we have set out before us THE NAMES AND CHARACTERS OF THE PATIENTS.

You see in this hospital, written up over the head of every bed, the name of the patient and his disease. And you are amazed to find that all the patients belong to one family and, singularly enough, are all called by one name—and that name is very far from being a reputable one. It is a title that nobody covets and that many persons would be very indignant to have applied to *them—"Fool."* All who are sick in God's Hospital are fools, without exception, for this reason—that all sinners are fools. Often in Scripture, when David means the wicked, he says, "the foolish." And in saying this, he makes no mistake, for sin is folly.

Sin is foolish, clearly, because it is a setting up of our weakness in opposition to Omnipotence! Every wise man, if he must fight, will choose a combatant against whom he may have a chance of success. But he who wars with the Most High commits as gross a folly as when the moth contends with the flame, or the dry grass of the prairie challenges the fire! There is no hope for you, O sinful Man, of becoming a victor in the struggle! How unwise you are to take up the weapons of rebellion! And the folly is aggravated, because the One who is opposed is so infinitely good that opposition to Him is violence to everything that is just, beneficial and commendable! God is Love—shall I resist the Infinitely Loving One? He scatters blessings—should I therefore be His foe? If His Commandments were grievous, if His ways were ways of misery and His paths were paths of woe, I might have some pretense of an excuse for resisting His will. But O my God, so good, so kind, so boundless in Grace, 'tis folly, as well as wickedness, to be Your enemy!—

"To all that's good, averse and blind,
But prone to all that's ill.
What dreadful darkness veils our mind!
How obstinate our will!"

Besides this, the Laws of God are so supremely beneficial to us that we are our own enemies when we rebel. God's Laws are danger signals. As sometimes, on the ice, those who care for human life put up the warning sign, *"Danger,"* here and there, and leave the part that is safe for all who choose to traverse it, so God has left us free to enjoy everything that is safe for us—and has only forbidden us that which is to our own hurt. If there is a law which forbids me to put my hand into the fire, it is a pity that I should need such a law, but a thousand pities more if I think that law a hardship! The commands of God do but forbid us to injure ourselves. To keep them is to keep ourselves in holy happiness—to break them is to bring evil of all kinds upon ourselves in soul and body. Why should I violate a law, which, if I were perfect, I would myself have made, or myself have kept finding it in force? Why need I rebel against that which is never exacting, never oppressive, but always conducive to my own highest welfare? The sinner is a fool because he is told, in God's Word, that the path of evil will lead to destruction—and yet he pursues it with the secret hope that in his case the damage will not be very great. He has been warned that sin is like a cup frothing with a foam of sweetness, but concealing death and Hell in its dregs—yet each sinner,

as he takes the cup, fascinated by the first drop, believes that to him the poisonous draught will not be fatal! How many have fondly hoped that God would lie unto men and would not fulfill His threats? Yet be assured, every sin shall have its recompense of reward! God is Just and will by no means spare the guilty. Even in this life many are feeling in their bones the consequences of their youthful lusts—they will carry to their graves the scars of their transgressions. In Hell, alas, there are millions who will forever prove that sin is an awful and an undying evil, an infinite curse which has destroyed them forever and ever!

The sinner is a fool because while he doubts the truthfulness of God as to the punishment of sin, he has the conceit to imagine that transgression will even yield him pleasure! God says it shall be bitterness—the sinner denies the bitterness and affirms that it shall be sweetness. O Fool, to seek pleasure in sin! Go rake the morgue to find an immortal soul! Go walk into the secret springs of the sea to find the source of flame! It is not there and you can never find bliss in rebellion! Hundreds of thousands before you have gone upon this search and have all been disappointed. He is indeed a fool who must rush headlong in this useless chase and perish as the result! The sinner is a fool—a great fool—to remain as he is in danger of the wrath of God! To abide at ease in imminent peril and scorn the way of escape. To love the world and loathe the Savior. To set the present fleeting life above the eternal future. To choose the sand of the desert and forego the jewels of Heaven—all this is folly in the highest conceivable degree!

Though all sinners are fools, yet there are fools of all sorts. Some are learned fools. Unconverted men, whatever they know, are only educated fools. Between the ignorant man who cannot read a letter and the learned man who is apt in all knowledge, there is small difference if they are both ignorant of Christ! Indeed, the scholar's folly is, in this case, the greater of the two! The learned fool generally proves himself the worst of fools, for he invents theories which would be ridiculed if they could be understood—and he brings forth speculations which, if judged by common sense and men were not turned into idiotic worshippers of imaginary authority, would be scouted from the universe with a hiss of derision! There are fools in colleges and fools in cottages.

There are also reckless fools and reckoning fools. Some sin greedily with both hands. "A short life and a merry one," is their motto—while the so-called "prudent" fools live more slowly, but still live not for God. These last, with hungry greed for wealth, will often heard up gold as if it were true treasure and as if anything worth the retaining were to be found beneath the moon. Your "prudent respectable" sinner will find himself just as much lost as your reckless prodigal. They must all alike seek and find the Savior, or be guilty of gross folly. So, alas, there are old fools as well as young ones! There are those who, after an experience of sin, still burn their fingers in it. The burnt child dreads the fire, but the burnt sinner lovingly plays with his sin again! Gray hair ought to be a crown of glory, but too often they are fool's caps. There are young sinners who

waste the prime of life when the dew is on their spirit and neglect to give their strength to God—and so miss the early joy of religion, which is the sweetest and makes all the rest of life sweeter—these are fools. But what is he who has one foot hanging over the mouth of Hell and yet continues without God and without Christ, a trifler with eternity?

I have spoken thus upon the name of those who enter God's Hospital. Permit me to add that all who go there and are cured, agree that this name is correct. Saved souls are made to feel that they are naturally fools and, indeed, it is one stage in the cure when men are able to spell their own name and when they are willing to write it in capital letters and say, "That is my name! If there is no other man in this world who is a fool, I am. I have played the fool before the living God." This confession is true, for what madness it is to play the fool before the Eternal One with your own soul as the subject of the foolery! When men make sport, they generally do it with trifling things. A man who plays the fool and puts on a cap and bells is wise in comparison with him who sports with his God, his soul, Heaven and eternity! This is folly beyond all folly! Yet the sinner, when he is taken into God's Hospital, will be made to feel that he has been such a fool and that his folly is folly with emphasis. He will confers that Christ must be made unto him wisdom for he by nature was born a fool, has lived a fool and will die a fool unless the Infinite Mercy of God interposes!

II. Now, for a minute or two, let us notice THE CAUSE OF THEIR PAINS AND AFFLICTIONS. "Fools because of their transgression and because of their iniquities, are afflicted."

The physician usually tries to find out the root and cause of the disease he has to deal with. Now those souls that are brought into grief for sin, those who are smarting through the Providential dealings of God, through the striking of conscience, or the smiting of the Holy Spirit, are here taught that *the source of their sorrow is their sin.* These sins are mentioned in the text in the plural—"Fools because of their transgression and because of their iniquities." How many have our sins been? Who shall count them? Let him count the hairs of his head first. Sins are various and are, therefore, called "transgressions and iniquities." We do not all sin alike, nor does any one man sin alike at all times. We commit sins of word, thought, deed—against God, against men, against our bodies, against our souls, against the Gospel, against the Law, against the week-day duties, against the Sabbath privileges—of all sorts and these all lie at the root of our sorrows. Our sins also are aggravated. Not content with transgression, we have added iniquities to it. No one is more greedy than a sinner, but he is greedy after his own destruction! He is never content with revolting—he must rebel yet more and more. As when a stone is rolled downhill, its pace is accelerated the further it goes, so is it with the sinner—he goes from bad to worse.

Perhaps I speak to some who have lately come into God's Hospital. I will suppose a case. You are poor, very poor. But your poverty is the fruit of your profligate habits. Poverty is often directly traceable to drunkenness, laziness, or dishonesty. All poverty does not come from

these sources. Blessed be God, there are thousands of the poor who are the excellent of the earth—and a great many of them are serving God right nobly! But I am now speaking of certain cases and probably you know of such yourselves where, because of their transgression and iniquities, men are brought to need. There will come to me, sometimes, a person who was in good circumstances a few years ago, who is now without anything but the clothes he tries to stand upright in. And his wretchedness is entirely owing to his playing the prodigal. He is one of those whom I trust God may yet take into His Hospital.

At times the disease breaks out in another sort of misery. Some sins bring into the flesh itself pains which are anticipatory of Hell—yet even these persons may be taken into the Hospital of God, though they are afflicted to their shame through gross transgression. Oh, how many there are in this great city of London, of men and women who dare not tell their condition, but whose story is a terrible one, indeed, as God reads it! Oh, that He may have pity upon them and take them into His hospital and heal them through His abundant Grace!

In more numerous cases, the misery brought by sin is mental. Many are brought very low by sin—even to despair. Conscience pricks them. Fears of death and Hell haunt them. I remember well when I was in this way myself. When I, poor fool, because of my transgression and my iniquities, was sorely bowed in spirit. By day I thought of the punishment of my sin. By night I dreamed of it. I woke in the morning with a burden on my heart—a burden which I could neither carry nor shake off—and sin was at the bottom of my sorrow. My sin, my sin, my sin—this was my constant plague! I was in my youth and in the heyday of my spirit. I had all earthly comforts and I had friends to cheer me, but they were all as nothing. I would seek solitary places to search the Scriptures and to read such books as *Baxter's Call to the Unconverted* and *Alleine's Alarm,* feeling my soul plowed more and more, as though the Law, with its ten great black horses, was dragging the plow up and down my soul breaking, crushing, furrowing my heart—and all for sin. Let me tell you, though we read of the cruelties of the Inquisition and the sufferings which the martyrs have borne from cruel men—no racks, nor fire pans, nor other instruments of torture can make a man so wretched as his own conscience when he is stretched upon its rack!

Here then, we see both the fools and the cause of their disease.

III. Now let us notice THE PROGRESS OF THE DISEASE. It is said that "their soul abhors all manner of meat," like persons who have lost their appetite and can eat nothing—"and they draw near unto the gates of death"—they are given over and nearly dead.

These words may reach some whose disease of sin has developed itself into fearful sorrow so that they are near unable to find comfort in anything. You used to enjoy the theater—you went lately but you were wretched there. You used to be a wit in society and set the table on a roar with your jokes—but you cannot joke now. They say you are melancholy, but you know what they do not know, for a secret arrow

rankles in your bosom. You go to a place of worship, but you find no comfort even there. The manner of meat that is served to God's saints is not suitable to you. You cry, "Alas, I am not worthy of it!" Whenever you hear a sermon thundering against the ungodly, you feel, "Ah, that is for me!" But when it comes to, "Comfort you, comfort you My people," you conclude, "Ah, that is *not* for me!" Even if it is an invitation to the sinner, you say, "But I do not feel myself a sinner. I am not such an one as may come to Christ. Surely I am a castaway." Your soul abhors all manner of meat, even that out of God's kitchen. Not only are you dissatisfied with the world's dainties, but the marrow and fatness of Christ, Himself, you cannot relish. Many of us have been in this way before you.

The text adds, "They draw near unto the gates of death." The soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death, and feels that it cannot bear up much longer. I remember once, in the bitterness of my spirit, using those words of Job, "My soul chooses strangling and death rather than my life," for the wretchedness of a sin-burdened soul is intolerable. All do not suffer like strong convictions but in some it bows the spirit almost to the grave! Perhaps, my Friend, you see no hope whatever. You are ready to say, "There cannot be any hope for me. I have made a covenant with death and a league with Hell. I am past hope. There were, years ago, opportunities for me, and I was near the Kingdom of God, but like the man who put his hand to the plow and then looked back, I have proven myself unworthy of eternal life." Troubled Heart, I am sent with a message for you—"Thus says the Lord, your covenant with death shall be disannulled and your league with Hell shall not stand. The prey shall be taken from the mighty and the lawful captive shall be delivered." You may abhor the very meat that would restore you to strength, but He who understands the human heart knows how to give you better tastes and cure these evil whims! He knows how to bring you up from the gates of death to the gates of Heaven! Thus we see how terribly the mischief progresses—

"Our *beauty and our strength are fled,*
And we draw near to death,
But Christ the Lord recalls the dead
With His almighty breath."

IV. And now the disease takes a turn. Our fourth point is THE INTERPOSITION OF THE PHYSICIAN. "Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saves them out of their distresses. He sent His Word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions."

The Good Physician is the true Healer. *Observe when the Physician comes in*—when "they cry unto the Lord in their trouble." When they cry, the Physician has come! I will not say that He has come because they cry, though that would be true—but there is deeper truth still—they cried because He came! For whenever a soul truly cries unto God, God has already blessed it by enabling it to cry. You would never have begun to pray if the Lord had not taught you. God is visiting a soul and healing it when it has enough faith in God to cast itself, with a cry, upon His mercy! I cannot hope that there is a work of Grace in you until I know

that you pray. Ananias would not have believed that Paul was converted had it not been said, "Behold he prays!"

Note the kind of prayer here. It was not taken out of a book and it was not a fine prayer in language, whether extempore or composed—it was *a cry*. You do not need to teach your children how to cry—it is the first thing a new-born child does. It needs no schoolmaster to teach it that art! Our School Boards have a great deal to teach the children of London, but they need never have a department for instruction in crying. A spiritual cry is the call of the new-born nature expressing conscious need. "How shall I pray?" says one. Pour your heart out, Brother. Turn the vessel upside down and let the contents run out to the last dreg as best they can. "But I cannot pray," says one. Tell the Lord you cannot pray and ask Him to help you pray and you have already prayed! "Oh, but I don't feel as I should!" Then confess to the Lord your sinful insensibility and ask Him to make your heart tender and you are already in a measure softened! Those who say, "We don't feel as we should," are very often those who feel the most. Whether it is so or not, cry. If you are a sin-sick soul, you can do nothing towards your own healing but this—you can cry. He who hears your cries will know what they mean. When the surgeon goes to the battlefield after a conflict, he is guided to his compassionate work by the groans of the wounded. When he hears a soldier's cry, he does not inquire, "Was that a Frenchman or a German, and what does he mean?" A cry is good French and excellent German, too! It is part of the universal tongue. The surgeon understands it and looks for the sick man. And whatever language you use, O Sinner, uncouth or refined, if it is the language of your heart, God understands you without an interpreter!

Note well that as we have seen when the Physician interposed, we shall see next *what He did*. He saved them out of their distresses, healed them and delivered them from their destructions! Oh, the Infinite Mercy of God! He reveals to the heart pardon for all sin and, by His Holy Spirit's power, removes all our weaknesses. I tell you, Soul, though you are at death's door this moment, God can even now gloriously deliver you! It would be a wonder if your poor burdened spirit should, within this hour, leap for joy and yet, if the Lord shall visit you in mercy, you will do so! I fall back upon my own recollection. My escape from despondency was instantaneous. I did but believe Jesus Christ's word and rest upon His Sacrifice and the night of my heart was over—the darkness had passed and the true light had shone! In some parts of the world there are not long twilights before the break of day—the sun leaps up in a moment. The darkness flies and the light reigns—so it is with many of the Lord's redeemed. As in a moment, their ashes are exchanged for beauty and their spirit of heaviness for the garment of praise! Faith is the great transformer! Will you cast yourself, now, whether you shall live or die, upon the precious blood and merits of Jesus Christ the Savior? Will you come and rest your soul upon the Son of God? As you do so, you are saved! Your sins, which are many, are now forgiven you! As of old the

Egyptians were drowned in a moment in the Red Sea, and the depths had covered them so that there was not one of them left, so the moment you believe, you have lifted a mightier rod than that of Moses! And the sea of the atoning blood, in the fullness of its strength, has gone over the heads of all your enemies—your sins are drowned in Jesus' blood! Oh, what joy is this when, in answer to a cry, God delivers us from our present distresses and our threatened future destructions!

But how is this effected? The Psalmist says, "He sent His Word and healed them." *"His Word."* How God enables language when He *uses it!* That word, *"Word,"* is lifted up in Scripture into the foremost place and put on a level with the Godhead. "THE WORD." It indicates a God-like Personage for, "in the beginning was the Word." No, it denotes God Himself, for, "the Word was God." Our hope is the Word—the *Incarnate Logos,* the Eternal Word. In some respects, our salvation comes to us entirely through the sending of that Word to be made flesh and to dwell among us. He is our saving health—by His stripes we are healed. But here the expression is best understood of the Gospel, which is the Word of God. Often the reading of the Scriptures proves the means of healing troubled souls or else that same Word is made effectual when spoken from a loving heart with living lips. What might there is in the plain preaching of the Gospel! No power in all the world can match it. They tell us, nowadays, that the nation will go over to Rome and the Gospel candle will be blown out. I am not a believer in these alarming prophecies. I neither believe in the battle of Dorking, nor in the victory of Pius the Ninth. Leave us our Bibles, our pulpits and our God, and we shall win the victory! Oh, if all ministers preached the Gospel plainly, without aiming at rhetoric and high flights of oratory, what great triumphs would follow! How sharp would the Gospel sword prove itself to be if men would but pull it out of those fine ornamental, but useless scabbards! When the Lord enables His servants to put plain Gospel truth into language that will strike and stick, be understood and retained, it heals sick souls that otherwise might have lain fainting a long time!

Still, the Word of God in the Bible and the Word of God preached cannot heal the soul unless God shall *send it* in the most emphatic sense. *"He sent* His Word." When the eternal Spirit brings home the Word with power, what a Word it is! Then the miracles of Grace worked within us are such as to astonish friends and confound foes! May the Lord, even now, send His Word to each sinner and it will be his salvation! "Hear, and your soul shall live." "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." And faith brings with it all that the soul requires. When we have faith, we are linked with Christ and so our salvation is ensured.

V. That brings us to the last point—THE CONSEQUENT CONDUCT OF THOSE WHO WERE HEALED.

First, *they praised God for His goodness.* What rare praise a soul offers where it is brought out of prison! The sweetest music ever heard on earth is found in those new songs which celebrate our recent deliverance from the horrible pit and the miry clay. Did you ever keep a sparrow in a cage and then think that it was cruel to rob it of its liberty? Did you take it

out into the garden and open the cage door? Oh, but if you could have heard it sing when it had escaped from the cage where it had been so long, you would have heard the best sparrow music in all the woods! When a poor soul breaks forth from the dungeon of despair, set free by God, what songs it pours forth! God loves to hear such music. Remember that ancient Word of His, "I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness." God loves the warm-hearted praises of newly-emancipated souls and He will get some out of you, dear Friend, if you are set free at this hour!

Notice that these healed ones praised God especially *for His goodness.* It was great goodness that such as they were should be saved. So near death's door and yet saved! They wondered at His mercy and sang of "His wonderful works to the children of men." It is wonderful that such as we were should be redeemed from our iniquities, but our Redeemer's name is called Wonderful, and He delights in showing forth the riches of His Grace.

Observe that in their praises they ascribe all to God—*they praise Him for His wonderful work.* Salvation is God's work, from beginning to end. Their song is, moreover, comprehensive, and they adore the Lord for His love to others as well as to themselves—they praise Him "for His wonderful works to the children of men."

Forget not that *they added to this praise, sacrifice.* "Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving." What shall be the sacrifices of a sinner delivered from going down into the Pit? Shall he bring a bull that has horns and hoofs? No, let him bring his heart! Let him offer himself, his time, his talents, his body, his soul, his substance. Let him exclaim, "Let my Lord take all, seeing that He has saved my soul." Will you not lay yourselves out for Him who laid Himself out for you? If He has bought you with such a price, confess that you are altogether His! Of your substance give to His cause. As He prospers you, prove that you are really His by your generosity towards His Church and His poor!

In addition to sacrifice, the healed ones began to offer songs, for it was to be a *"sacrifice of thanksgiving."* May those of you who are pardoned sing more than is customary nowadays. May we, each one of us, who have been delivered from going down to the Pit, enter into the choir of God's praising ones—vocally singing as often as we can—and in our hearts always chanting His praise!

Once more, the grateful ones were to add to their gifts and Psalms, *a declaration of joy* at what God had done for them. "Let them declare His works with rejoicing." You who are pardoned should tell the Church of the Lord's mercy to you. Let His people know that God is discovering His hidden ones. Come and tell the minister. Nothing gladdens him so much as to know that souls are brought to Jesus by his means. This is our reward. You are our crown of rejoicing, you saved ones! I can truly say that I never have such joy as when I receive letters from persons, or hear from them personally the good news, "I heard you on such-and-such a night and found peace." Or, "I read your sermon and God blessed it to

my soul." There is not a true minister of Christ but would willingly lay himself down to die if he could thereby see multitudes saved from eternal wrath! We live for this. If we miss this, our life is a failure. What is the use of a minister unless he brings souls to God? For this we would yearn over you and draw near unto God in secret, that He would be pleased in mercy to deliver you!

But, surely, if you are converted, you should not conceal the fact! It is an unkind action for any person who has received life from the dead through any instrumentality to deny the worker the consolation of hearing that he has been made useful—for the servant of God has many discouragements and he is, himself, readily cast down. And the gratitude of those who are saved is one of the appointed cordials for his heavy heart. There is no refreshment like it! May God grant you Grace to declare His love, for our sake, for the Church's sake and, indeed, for the world's sake! Let the sinner know that you have found mercy—perhaps it will induce him, also, to seek salvation. Many a physician has gained his practice by one patient telling others of his cure. Tell your neighbors that you have been to the Hospital of Jesus and been restored, though you hated all manner of meat and drew near to the gates of death! And maybe a poor soul in the same condition as yourself will say, "This is a message from God to me."

Above all, publish abroad the Lord's goodness for Jesus' sake. He deserves your honor. Will you receive His blessing and then, like the nine lepers, give Him no praise? Will you be like the woman in the crowd who was healed by touching the hem of His garment and then would gladly have slipped away? If so, I pray that the Master may say, "Somebody has touched Me," and may you be compelled to tell us all the truth and say, "I was sorely sick in soul, but I touched You, O my blessed Lord, and I am saved! And to the praise of the glory of Your Grace I will tell it! I will tell it though devils should hear me! I will tell it and make the world ring with it according to my ability, to the praise and Glory of Your saving Grace!"

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 107:1-22.

Verse 1. *O give thanks unto the LORD, for He is good: for His mercy endures forever.* In the heading of this Psalm we are reminded that the Psalmist here exhorts the redeemed, in praising God, to observe His manifold Providence over travelers, prisoners, sick men, seamen "and in divers varieties of life." But, inasmuch as the exhortation is especially addressed to the redeemed of the Lord, I shall endeavor to cast the red ray of redemption over it and to explain these various circumstances as relating to the spiritual experience of God's people and to their deliverance out of divers perils to which their souls are exposed.

"O give thanks unto the Lord." This seems to imply that we are so slow to praise God that we have to be stirred up to this sacred duty! This exhortation looks as if we needed to be entreated to give thanks unto the

Lord. Yet this ought not to be an uncongenial or disagreeable task. It ought to be our pleasure to praise the Lord. We should be eager to do it and yet it is to be feared that we are often silent when we ought to be giving thanks unto His holy name. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good." Whether you give Him your praises, or—

"Let His mercies lie
Forgotten in unthankfulness,
And without praises die"—

He deserves them, "for He is good: for His mercy endures forever."

2, 3. *Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy; and gathered them out of the lands from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.* Whenever God's people are redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered unto Himself, it is always by His Grace and power. They are not only gathered to Him, but they are gathered *by* Him and, therefore, let them all praise His holy name!

4. *They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in.* This is the experience of all God's redeemed and gathered ones—they were, at one time, all lost and wandering to and fro in the wilderness—as God's ancient people did.

5, 6. *Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses.* This is the point to which a true spiritual experience sooner or later brings all God's elect ones! They cry unto the Lord in their trouble. The end, the design of their trouble is that they may cry unto Him! And when they do so, it is absolutely certain that they shall be delivered out of their distresses.

7-11. *And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfies the longing soul and fills the hungry soul with goodness. Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; because they rebelled against the words of God, and despised the counsel of the Most High.* All God's people, all His redeemed have been made to feel, in a greater or lesser degree, the agony of their spiritual bondage. They have been like captives sitting in darkness, dreading death, realizing that they are utterly unable to deliver themselves. They have been rebellious against the words of God, and have despised His counsel, so that it is absolutely necessary that they should be brought to their right position and be made to kneel before the Lord in true humility of heart.

12-16. *Therefore He brought down their heart with labor; they fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble. and He saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and broke their bonds in sunder. Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He has broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.* Is any child of God thus shut up in the

dark? Those of you who have ever been lost in a London fog know what a depression of spirit it brings upon you while you are in the impenetrable darkness out of which you cannot see any way of escape. All that you can do is to stand still and cry out for help. Well, try what crying to God will do for you in your spiritual depression! Your spirit is cast down into the very deeps—then, out of the depths cry unto the Lord as Jonah did! Rest in Him! Trust in Him, and see whether He will not bring you up into the light of His Countenance!

17, 18. *Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhors all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death.* All God's redeemed people have suffered from soul-sickness and some of them have suffered from it so acutely that they have lost all appetite for spiritual comfort. "Their soul abhors all manner of meat." They cannot bear the sight or the thought of it. A man in this condition says, "Do not bring me any food. I loathe it." The very nourishment that might have restored him, he rejects because of the nausea which soul-sickness brings.

19, 20. *Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and He saves them out of their distresses. He sent His Word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.* He healed them with His Word. And there is a remedy, in God's Word, for every form of spiritual malady. What we need to know is where the particular remedy for our special form of soul-sickness is to be found—and this, the Holy Spirit will teach us if we will but ask Him!

21, 22. *Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing.* [Expositions of the later verses of this Psalm were published with Sermons #3061—THE RULE OF GRACE and 3064—"AD IT WAS SO" both Volume 53—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

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

IDOLATRY CONDEMNED
NO. 3071

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 1907.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 6, 1874.

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."
1 John 5:21.

THIS is the conclusion of one of the most mysterious, most simple and yet most sublime of all the Divinely-inspired Books. And we may naturally expect that the closing verse of the Epistle will have great weight in it. This seems to be the practical conclusion of the whole matter upon which John had been writing, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." This Epistle is specially perfumed with love. As you read it, you cannot help realizing that it was written by a very tender, gentle hand and yet, when this loving writer is giving has last words in this Epistle, the admonition with which he closes is this, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." As love thus speaks in its fullness, let us be ready to give earnest attention to the message which it utters. John has, in this Epistle, written much concerning the love of Jesus, as well he might, for he knew more about that love than any other man knew. And yet, when he had written concerning love to Jesus, he was moved to an intense jealousy lest, by any means, the hearts of those to whom he wrote should be turned aside from that dear Lover of their souls who deserved their entire affection and, therefore, not only love to them, but also love to Jesus, made him wind up his letter with these significant words, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

I. My first observation shall be concerning THE TITLE UNDER WHICH WE ARE HERE ADDRESSED—"Little children."

I do not think that John meant, literally, to address little children. Nor do I think he merely referred to a certain class of Believers who are very little in Grace and, therefore, are called "babes" in contrast to those who are men in Christ. I think he addressed himself to the whole body of Believers to whom he was writing and, through them, that he addressed the whole Church of Christ when he wrote, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

This is, *first, a title of deep affection.* The Christian Church is the home of Christian love. When it is what it should always be, it is a family—it is "the household of faith," of which God Himself is the Father, the Lord Jesus is the Elder Brother, and all the members are Brothers and Sisters—all equal, all one in Christ Jesus, all seeking to serve the rest, laying themselves out to be servants to the whole band of Brothers and

Sisters in Christ. It seems most appropriate that an aged Apostle, such as John doubtless was when he wrote this Epistle, should have looked round upon the younger members of the Lord's family and should have called them, "little children." And when we recollect how much he knew and, above all, how much he had seen of Jesus, how he had fallen at the feet of his glorified Lord as one who was dead, and then had had the pierced hand of Jesus laid upon him to raise him up—when we remember how he had heard the blowing of the seven trumpets and seen the pouring out of the seven vials, how he had beheld a door opened in Heaven, how he had counted the foundations of the glorious City and gazed within its streets of gold, and heard the music of the celestial harps—I do not wonder that such a man with such a mind and heart, so full of God, must, as he looked upon the rest of his brethren, have regarded them, without any egotism, as still remaining as "little children." It is a familiar, endearing mode of speech such as I think should often be coming from the lips of aged saints. At any rate, if our expressions are not exactly the same as John's, the love to which the expression was thus given should burn in each one of our hearts. Like as a father loves his children, so should the pastor love his flock, so should the teacher love his class—and he may speak to them in such terms as these, "My little children."

Mark, next, that *in this title there is much that indicates good.* John calls those to whom he wrote, "children"—children of God, he means and he calls them *"little* children." Now, it is a good thing to be even little children in Christ, for this is an indication that the new birth has taken place! If this is the case with us, we are not now men or women in sin, but children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. What a priceless privilege it is to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit! There is a so-called "regeneration" by a priestly ceremony which leaves the man or the child as unregenerate as he was before the ceremony had been performed! But the regeneration by the Holy Spirit entirely changes the nature of the pea-son concerned and bestows upon him or her a new heart and a right spirit. To have this high privilege is to have one of the choicest gifts of Heaven—indeed, it is that which is essential to the enjoyment of all other blessings! So, however humble the title, "little children," may be, it is an indication of much good, for it is no small thing to be a little child in Christ Jesus and to be able even to lisp, as a little child might, "Abba, Father," and to say, with all the rest of God's family, "Our Father, who are in Heaven."

The title, "little children," also *indicates the humility of those who are rightly called by that name.* A little child is not proud. He meddles not with high things. He is content to sit at his father's feet or to lie in his mothers bosom. And Christians, being born-again—born from above—become as little children, otherwise they could not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. They were very great people once, but they are very little now. They thought, at one time, that they were really growing as they grew bigger in their own estimation, but now they understand that they are

growing in the best fashion when they are growing smaller! Growing Christians reckon themselves to be nothing. But full-grown Christians count themselves less than nothing! And when we feel ourselves to be "less than the least of all saints," then we are indeed making good progress in the Divine Life. To grow less and less in your own esteem is the right kind of growth. Naturally, we grow up from childhood to manhood but, *spiritually*, we grow down from manhood to childhood—yet it is not really growing down, but growing up as we increase in humility.

Moreover, *this title denotes teachableness.* A little child will go to school. A little child is not above learning its letters. We cannot often get men to do this, especially in spiritual things. They are so crusted over with prejudice that they think they know all they need to know, yet it is little that they do know, and even that little is wrong, yet it is enough to keep them from being willing to be taught what they really need to learn! Truly blessed is the man who is a little child in relation to God. I believe that very often great knowledge and more especially *great pretensions* to knowledge of science and philosophy, stand in men's way and prevent them from learning what is most worth learning. God forbid that I should say anything in praise of ignorance! Yet I think that I might, in spiritual things, give it greater praise than I could give to "philosophy" or "science," falsely so-called. Happy and wise were the shepherds to whom the angels came and sang and spoke concerning the birth of Jesus, for in their simplicity, they went straight away to Bethlehem and found the newborn King! But the wise men (happy, too, for a star came to guide them), in their very wisdom seemed to make mistakes, for they went to Jerusalem and enquired, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" And so, for a time, they lost their way—and caused Herod to seek the life of the Holy Child Jesus! Well did Augustine say, "Shepherds and artisans often enter the Kingdom of Heaven while wise men and scholars are fumbling to find the latch." Know all you can that is really worth knowing but, with your knowledge, mind that you have the child-like spirit without which all your knowledge will be of little service to you! After all, there is not much difference between those who are called wise men and those who know but little, for the wisest of men really know but little—and if they are truly wise, they know that they know but little.

There are some, nowadays, who think themselves to be such wise men that they even pretend to know more than God knows, or has revealed to us in His Word. They sit upon the throne of judgment and call God, Himself, before them and arraign Him, re-judge His judgments and profess to be the god of God! Such "wise" men are the most credulous fools of the age! I pity the poor creatures who believe in popish miracles, but I have now learned to think that those who can believe in such frauds are not half such idiots as the men who try to teach us that inanimate matter has fashioned itself into those marvelously beautiful shapes in which we see it all over this wondrous world which God created "in the beginning." Set these *"wise"* men up on a pinnacle in the center of the court of fools and let the biggest fools' caps that were ever

made be placed upon their heads! When they sneer at the credulity of Believers in Christ, we can tell them to look at home, for there are none who are so credulous as they are! And let us still come to God's Book as little children who are willing to be taught by God's Spirit all that God's Son has to say to our hearts.

And little, children, too, have *faith.* What a great deal of faith they usually have and how wicked it is for anyone ever to trifle with the faith of little children! It is really scandalous when nurses and others tell little children idle tales and foolish stories which the children believe to be true. We should be very careful and jealous concerning the faith which a little child has in its elders and never do or say anything to weaken their belief. Little children have a very beautiful faith, especially when the word of their father is concerned. They *know* that what he says is true. They laugh at the idea that their father would ever tell a lie. Let us be little children of that sort towards God, unquestioningly believing whatever He says to us—not asking how or why it is so but, being quite prepared to be told that we cannot yet understand everything and that all we have to do is implicitly believe all that our Heavenly Father says. If it is God who speaks, believe what He says and say with the confidence of a little child, "My Father cannot lie."

So far, we see that it is a good thing to be called little children. But I think there is another view of the matter which we must not forget, for *the title also implies weakness.* "Little children"—that is all we are at the very best—little children are very apt to be led astray and so are we. We all of us feel the influence of others and we sometimes feel it more than we would like to confess. And it is a singular thing that probably there are no persons who are so much influenced by others as those who themselves influence others. The leaders are often those who are most led and, therefore, we need to be extremely cautious. Surrounded as we are by hosts of idolaters, we are all too apt to be swayed by their example, so John says to us, "Little children, do not be led into evil by those who are around you. Try to be men in this respect and dare to do right even if you stand alone. Stand fast and quit yourselves like men. Be not carried about by every wind that blows, but stand like a mighty rock that is immovable."

Little children, too have this weakness, that they have need, as a rule, of something to see. You cannot teach them so well in any other way as you can by pictures and models. That tendency is also manifest in us *spiritually*—we have a craving for signs and symbols. The great mass of people—even Christian people—need something or other that they can see. Like Israel in the wilderness, they say, "Make us gods which shall go before us." If they cannot have a god in some visible shape, then they need some ceremony, some ritual, something or other that is not purely spiritual. As the girl wants her doll and the boy his rocking horse, so those who are little children in spiritual things seem to need some article which they can see and touch. Oh that we were men enough to believe in the spiritual—to be content with God's Revelation without needing

anything symbolical except the two grand symbols which Christ has given us in His two ordinances—and never putting even those out of their proper place, much less wishing to overlay them with any adornments of our own, but worshipping Him, who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth and yielding ourselves up to the guidance of His gracious Spirit, who will teach us how to worship God acceptably!

Little children also have a very bounded range. Put a little child down with a few broken platters and a little dirt, and he will amuse himself by the hour together! It does not seem to strike him that he may grow up to be a man and have to work for his living, or manage big business like his father does. It is, under some aspects, a great blessing to be such a child as that, but it is a pity that we are so prone to be thus childish spiritually. We are so much engrossed in the present that if we have a little trouble we fret over it as if that trouble would last for years! If we meet with a little discouragement, we are worried by it and seem to forget the Heaven that is awaiting us, the God who rules over all, the Divine Comforter who is always near us and the unerring Wisdom which will bring good out of evil. Our sphere of observation is too confined—we are too much taken up with the present and do not turn our eyes across the gulf of time to that fair Glory Land where the day has broken and the shadows have forever flown away. Little children, it is because of this special weakness of yours that the Apostle has said, "Keep yourselves from idols."

II. This remark brings me to the second part of my subject which is this—THE WARNING WHICH IS DIRECTED TO US. "Keep yourselves from idols."

I hope that I need not say to you, dear Friends, *Keep yourselves from all sorts of visible idols,* for I trust that you abhor them as much as I do. Yet in this present age, idol temples are being set up almost everywhere by our Ritualistic clergy! And a form of idolatry that is on a par with the fetishism of ignorant Africans has come back to this land, for they make a god out of a bit of bread. And after worshipping their idol, eat it up—a process which can only be fitly described in such sarcasm as Elijah would have poured upon it if he could have stood in the midst of these modem priests of Baal as he stood among their prototype of old! Keep yourselves, Beloved, from all their idols! Pay no reverence to them, nor to their so-called "priests." It is strange that now, when men have open Bibles and can read them, there should come back to us the old idolatry which our fathers abhorred and which even in the days of dim religious light, their ancestors could not endure. Do not endure it for a moment, but make your protest against it every day in the most earnest possible manner! Let the cry ring out to any Christians who are mingled with the idolaters, "Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." God will surely punish this land and every other land where these or any other idols are set up!

But to you, dear Friends, I must speak concerning other idols. First, *keep yourselves from worshipping yourselves.* Alas, how many fall into

this gross sin! Some do it by indulgence at the table. How much of eating and especially of drinking, is there which, correctly speaking, is nothing better than gluttony and drunkenness! There are professing Christians who, perhaps, never are regarded as intoxicated, yet they sip, and sip, and sip until if they do not lose the control of their brain, they cause observers to raise the question whether they ever had any at all! It is almost a pity for some professing Christians that they can thus indulge themselves at home, for if like working men, they had to go home from the tippling-shop, it would soon be discovered that they were scarcely able to walk straight and the evil habit might be cured! It is a scandalous thing when there is such a sin as this in the Church of God. And as it has been known, I urge all of you, Beloved, to see to it that you offer no sacrifices to gluttony, nor pour out libations to Bacchus—for if you do, you prove that you are idolaters worshipping your own bellies and that God's love dwells not within you.

There are others who worship themselves by living a life of indolence. They have nothing to do and they seem to do it very thoroughly. They take their ease and that is the main thing in which they take any interest. They flit from pleasure to pleasure, from show to show, from vanity to vanity as if this life were only a garden in which butterflies might fly from flower to flower, and not a sphere where serious work was to be done and all-important business for eternity was to be accomplished. Worship not yourselves by trifling as these indolent people do!

Some worship themselves by decorating their bodies most elaborately. Their first and their last thought being, "What shall we wear?" Fall not into that idolatry!

Then *there are some people who make idols of their wealth.* Getting money seems to be the main purpose of their lives. Now it is right that a Christian man should be diligent in business—he should not be second to anybody in the diligence with which he attends to the affairs of this life. But it is always a pity when we can be truthfully told, "So-and-So is getting richer every year, but he has also gotten stingier. He gives less now than he gave when he had only half as much as he now has." We occasionally meet with people like the man who, when he was comparatively poor, gave his guinea—but when he grew rich, he only gave a shilling. His explanation was that when he had a shilling purse, he had a guinea heart, but when he had a guinea purse, he found that he had only a shilling heart. But it is always a pity when hearts grow smaller as means grow greater. Remember, dear Friends, that it will be only a little while before you must leave all that you have. What is the use of your having it at all unless you really enjoy it and how can you so truly enjoy it as by laying it at your Savior's feet and using it for His Glory? There is certainly more lasting enjoyment to be gained out of the unrighteous mammon in this way than in any other that I ever heard of—this is the testimony of those who have tried it and proved it to be so. I trust that none of you will worship the golden calf.

Some worship the pursuit which they have undertaken. They give their whole soul up to their art, or their particular calling, whatever it may be. In a certain sense, this is a right thing to do, yet we must never forget that the first and great commandment is, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This must always have the first place.

Let me here touch a very tender point. *There are some who make idols of their dearest relatives and friends.* Some have done this with their children. I remember reading a story of a good man who seemed as if he could never forgive God for taking away his child. He sat in a Quakers' meeting bowed down and sorrowful. His time of deliverance came when a Sister rose, uttered these words, "Verily, I perceive that children are idols," and then resumed her seat. Such a message as that is often needed—yet it is a pity that it should be. Make no idol of your child, or your wife, or your husband, for by putting them into Christ's place, you really provoke Him to take them from you! Love them as much as you please—I would that some loved their children, their husbands, or their wives more than they do—but always love them in such a fashion that Christ shall have the first place in your hearts!

The catalog of idols that we are apt to worship is a very long one. Hindus are said to have many millions of idols and it would take me a very long while to make a list of the various forms which the idolatry of the heart will take, but in a sentence, let me say to you—Remember that God has a right to your whole being. There is nothing and there can be nothing which ought to be supreme in your affections but your Lord. And if you worship any *thing* or any ideal, whatever it may be, if you love that more than you love your God, you are an idolater, and you are disobeying the command of the text, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." So pray to Him, with Toplady—

"The idols tread beneath Your feet,
And to Yourself the conquest get—
Let sin no more oppose my Lord,
Slain by the Spirit's two-edged sword."

I would say to you, Beloved, in closing my observations upon this point—in *the matter of your faith, be sure to keep yourselves from the idol of the hour.* Some of us have lived long enough to see the world's idols altered any number of times. Just now, in some professedly Christian churches, the idol is "intellectualism," "culture," "modern thought." Whatever name it bears, it has no right to be in a Christian church, for it believes very little that appertains to Christ! Now, I have some sort of respect for a downright honest infidel, like Voltaire or Tom Paine, but I have none for the man who goes to college to be trained for the Christian ministry and then claims to be free to doubt the Deity of Christ, the need of conversion, the punishment of the wicked and other Truths of God that seem to me to be essential to a full proclamation of the Gospel of Christ. Such a man must have strange views of honesty—and so has the minister who goes into a pulpit and addresses people when he knows

that he does not believe any of the Doctrines that are dearer to them than their own lives! Yet the moment he is called to account for his unbelief, he cries out, "Persecution! Persecution! Bigotry! Bigotry!" A burglar, if I found him outside my bedroom door and held him till the Policeman came, might consider me to be very bigoted because I did not care to have my property stolen by him and because I interfered with his liberty. So, in like manner, I am called bigoted because I will not allow a man to come and assail, from my own pulpit, the Truths which are dearer to me than my life! I am quite willing to give that man liberty to go and publish his views somewhere else, and at his own expense, but it shall not be done at my expense, nor in the midst of a congregation gathered by me for the worship of God and the proclamation of His Truths as they are revealed in the Scriptures! Keep yourselves from this idol of the times, for it is the precursor of death to any church that gives it admittance.

Unitarianism, to which this so-called liberality of thought always goes, is a religion of a parasitical kind. It flourishes by feeding upon the life of other churches, just as the ivy clings to the oak and sucks the life out of it. Let us tear this ivy down wherever we find it beginning its deadly work! Believe me, my Brothers and Sisters, that the Church of Christ, if not the world, shall yet learn that the highest culture is a heart that is cultivated by Divine Grace! That the truest science is the science of Jesus Christ and Him Crucified! That the greatest thought and the deepest of all metaphysics are found at the foot of the Cross! That the men who will keep on simply and earnestly preaching the old-fashioned Gospel—and the people who will stand fast in the old paths are they who will most certainly win the victory! When those who are sailing in a frail boat—which they or their fellow sinners have constructed without a rudder and without a pilot at the helm—when, I say, *they* shall drift away and be dashed to pieces upon the rocks—they who trust in the Lord and have Him as their Pilot shall be kept clear of the rocks on which others have made shipwreck, and shall be safely steered into the haven of peace—and there be at rest forever!

Many of us are about to gather around the Communion Table to celebrate the death of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This ordinance should help us to keep ourselves from idols, for if there is any place where idols disappear, it is at the foot of the Cross! Look, by faith, at your Lord and Savior as He hung upon the accursed tree—

"See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did ever such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?"

Can you give your heart's affection to any idol after that? Has not Christ so engrossed your warmest love that no earthly charms have any power to allure you away from Him? Are you not, as it were, fastened up by His nails? Is not your heart pierced with His spear? Are you not so crucified with Christ that the world is dead to you and you are dead to the world? Do you think Jesus lived for self? What provision did He make for the

flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof? Was not His whole life one of self-denial and self-renunciation? What idol did He ever set up? To what objective did He devote His life? Did He seek fame? Did He labor for earthly honor and glory? Did He hoard up wealth? Did He say to the man of the world, "Applaud *Me*"? Was He turned aside from His purpose by either the frowning or the fawning of men? You know that it was not so! Then you who have been washed in His blood, follow Him! O you who are called by His name, do not blaspheme that name among the Gentiles by idolatry of any kind! Bring out your idols if you have hidden them as Rachel hid her father's images in the camel's furniture—bring them all out and let them be broken in pieces at the foot of the Cross, or be ground to powder as Moses treated the golden calf that his brother Aaron had made! O Jesus, where You are, who can worship any but You? If He came and lodged in your house, that child of yours would not be adored as it now is. If He always dwelt there, you would not pamper yourself as you now do. If you could see Him as He is, you must admit Him to reign within your heart. Well, let it be so as you now, by faith, gaze upon Him. And as these dear memorials of His broken body and His blood are fed upon by you and you remember Him, do with all your idols as the Ephesians did with their magical books—bring them out and let them be burned—a blessed holocaust in honor of Him who "has loved us, and has given Himself an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor." Sing with Cowper, and let the prayer ascend to your Lord from the very depths of your heart—

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Your Throne,
And worship only Thee!
So shall my walk be close with God,
Calm and serene my frame,
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads me to the Lamb."

God bless you. And if any of you are living without Christ, perhaps it is some beloved idol that is keeping you from Him. If so, may you be delivered from its thralldom by coming to Jesus right now, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 JOHN 5.

Verse 1. *Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.* Where there is real faith in Jesus Christ as the Anointed of God, there is the evidence that the new birth has taken place. Let the first, the best and the clearest proof of our regeneration be the fact that we do verily and in our heart believe that Jesus is the Christ!

1. *And everyone who loves Him that begot, loves Him also that is begotten of Him.* If we really love God with our whole heart, we must

equally love Jesus Christ. And we shall also love all His people, for they are one with Him.

2. *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.* For love leads to imitation. If we truly love the children of God, we shall imitate them. And they are known by these distinguishing characteristics—that they love their Heavenly Father and keep His commandments.

3. *For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous.* Obedience is the flower of love. Where obedience to God does not exist, no love to God exists. It is a mockery for us to talk about emotions of the heart if there are not actions that correspond with them.

4. *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world.* The new life is the conquering life. The old must give place to the new. The world that is one day to be finally overthrown, is already overcome by the child of God.

4. *And this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.* For it brings a better and brighter world before us and, opening to us the eternal, takes away from us the charms and allurements of the temporal.

5. *Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?* No one else can overcome the world. But where there is true faith in Christ, it creates within the heart a holy valor by which the conquest of the world is achieved. The Law tells us to overcome the world, but the Gospel of God's Grace enables us to do it. The legal spirit knows that it ought to conquer the world, but the evangelical spirit does conquer it.

6. *This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.* The cleansing of the outward life does not stand alone, but it is accompanied by the putting away of sin from the heart. The two must go together and no man will ever rightly value the cleansing water unless he equally values the atoning blood. It is said by some that the preaching of the Doctrine of the full and free forgiveness of sin which is bestowed upon all who exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, will load men to carelessness of life. But it has quite the opposite effect. The cleansing of the life by the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit through the Word, becomes incumbent upon us when once we are washed from sin in the precious blood of Jesus. The Atonement is the true guarantee of holiness!

7, 8. *For there are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.* What a blessing it is for us to get the witness of these three even here on earth in the new life which is created within our souls by the Holy Spirit—the daily cleansing of our life by that same blessed Spirit through the Word, and the continual application by the Spirit of that precious blood by which peace is given to the conscience and sin is put away from the heart. [See Sermon #1187, Volume 20—THE THREE

WITNESSES, for a fuller explanation of this subject.—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

9, 10. *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. He that believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself.* That very faith becomes to him the best witness and he is able to confirm the witness of his faith that he is a partaker of the salvation of Christ.

10, 11. *He that believes not God has made Him a liar; because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.* That is the Gospel in brief—what Luther would have called a little Bible containing a condensation of the whole Revelation of God.

12. *He that has the Son has life; and He that has not the Son of God has not life.* He may exist. He may have that which may be called moral, physical, or animal life—but there is such a thing as existing. Yes, and existing forever, without even a particle of "life" in the Apostle's sense of the word, in the Scriptural sense of the word! And blessed and happy are those who do not merely exist, but who have, by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, been brought into that living inner circle and have been made to live, really to live in Christ!

13, 14. *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.* First we believe, and so we prove that we have eternal life. Then we climb up to the full assurance of faith. From full assurance we mount still higher to the clear conviction that God hears prayer—and from that height we mount yet higher to the assured confidence that He will hear our prayer!

15, 16. *And if we know that He hear us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him. If any man sees his brother sin a sin which is not unto death.* What then? He shall run all over the place and tell everybody of it? Oh, no! That is not what the Apostle says, yet I have seen something like that carried into practice. But when I look into this Inspired Book, I do not see anything about talking of this sin to our fellow men, but something is said about talking of it to God! And this is what every true Christian should do. If you see any man sin, mind that you ask for pardon for the erring one, "If any man sees his brother sin a sin which is not unto death."

16. *He shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.* John does not say that he may not—and as we cannot be absolutely sure that any sin is a sin unto death, this verse does not prevent us from praying for any man, whatever his sin may have been. John says, writing under Inspiration, "There is a sin unto death." "What is it?" someone asks. Ah, would you really like to know? If you did know, you could go and commit all other sins except that one, could you not? But would that be any help

to your piety? Certainly not! You know that, sometimes, a notice to this effect is put up as a warning, "Man-traps and spring guns set on these premises." And do you go and knock at the door and say, "Will you kindly tell me where the man-traps and spring guns are?" No, for it is the fact that you do *not* know where they are that keeps you out of the premises! In like manner, somewhere in the fields of sin, there is one great man-trap which John calls "a sin unto death"—but you need not need to know what that sin is, nor where that trap is set—your business is to keep as far away from *all sin* as you can, whether it is unto death, or not unto death!

17. *All unrighteousness is sin.* If a thing is not right—if it is not right all round, it is sin, you can be sure of that. I heard the other day of a man who was said to be a splendid Christian God-wards, but a wretched creature man-wards. But there cannot be such a monstrosity as that! Such a man as that was not a Christian at all. Our righteousness, if it is real and true, must be an all-round righteousness towards men as well as towards God!

17, 18. *And there is a sin not unto death. We know that whoever is born of God sins not, but he that is begotten of God keeps himself, and that Wicked One touches him not.* That is to say sin is not the bent of his renewed nature. It would not be a fair description of his life to say that he was living a sinful life. There are spots in the sun, but the sun itself is a great mass of brightness. So is it with the Christian's life—it is not a sinful life although there are imperfections in it.

19-21. *And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.*

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"Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof."
Ecclesiastes 7:8.

SOME translators read this passage, "Better is the end of a *speech* than the beginning thereof." And I doubt not that many of my hearers quite concur in that opinion. You endeavor to be patient when we begin, but as soon as we utter the word, "finally," your eyes begin to glisten, for the tedious exercise, you think, will soon be over! And if it is so to the hearers, I grant you it is sometimes so to the speaker! *A speaker* sometimes finds it difficult to begin, more difficult to continue to edification, not difficult to come to a close, but often exceedingly pleasant to do so. Well, doubtless many a young preacher can remember when he first tried to speak—how much better he felt the end of the speech to be than the beginning! Like the young acrobat, walking upon a rope on high who tremblingly launches forth and timidly puts one foot after the other until he reaches the end of his dangerous task, he was relieved to sit down! Far better was the end of the speech than the beginning thereof.

I do not think that is a correct version, or a proper translation, but it is a great truth, for if a man should speak what is mischievous, it is a good thing when he has done. It is better that he should have done with it than that he should be continuing in his idle and dangerous talk. And if a man speaks well and is a good ambassador—and has good tidings to deliver—it is better that he should have delivered them and fulfilled his mission. Now you have advanced one stage. You have received a truth on which your souls can feed. And it is better to have received it, than not to have received it—and hence the end is better than the beginning.

I think we must take the text as it stands with a grain or two of salt. It is relatively rather than absolutely true. "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof." That is true, or we would not find it in Scripture. But the application of its truth is particular, not universal. There are some things which are worse in their ending than in their beginning. It is true, I believe, of all things which proceed according to God's order, when God begins them and God ends them, or when they are begun by God's direction, conducted in God's fear and ended in God's Presence. In such cases I say the end is better than the beginning—but the text must not be taken to be absolutely and indiscriminately true in *all cases.* With a grain or two of salt, however, I think it is a maxim worthy of Solomon.

"Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof." Some pictures in nature will illustrate this. We compare the beginning and the

end. The sower goes forth on a damp and drizzling morning with his handful of precious seed which he is loath to spare. And as he scatters it, the rough wind blows into his face and the frost bites his cheek and, literally, it may be said that he "sows in tears." The beginning, therefore, is by no means pleasant. Then comes the harvest home, with the songs and dances of smiling damsels and joyous swains, when the produce of the fields is safely housed—that is the end thereof. I think that everyone can see that the harvest is better than the seedtime! Or a man starts forth upon a long journey. He takes a staff in his hand. He prepares himself to climb yonder crags. The storm will come on, but he must press through it. There will be brooks swollen with the rains, but he must pass through them all. Summoning courage to his aid, he surmounts every obstacle. He comes in all flushed with the healthy exercise. He has climbed yonder crags, he has passed through the brooks, he has braved the storm and now he comes to the blazing fire to sit down and rest himself, for the journey is over. "Better," says the traveler, "is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof. Toil came but now toil is sweetened, for I look back upon it and can take my rest." Or see the good ship as the dock gates are opened and she is drawn out into the river. Flags are flying and everyone cheers those who are about to make a venturesome voyage to the East Indies. See her, however, coming back up the river, well loaded, going into dock—and ask the captain, who remembers the rough weather as he passed the Cape, and the storm just as he came off the Peninsula—and he will tell you that he likes coming up the river much better than going down! Coming home with his ship well freighted, after a prosperous voyage, he says, with thanks to God, "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof."

One more picture. An army of soldiers goes forth to war. Can you look upon them with pleasure? I know that you crowd the streets and shout as they march down your thoroughfares and, truly, it is a thrilling sight to see the stalwart heroes as they go forth to fight their country's battles. But when you think of the number of those brave men who may lie dead on the battleground, and how few may ever return, I am sure, to say the least, it is not a pleasant sight. But when those brave men who have escaped the storm and crash of battle return to their native land and again pass through the streets, they feel, if the spectators do not, that better is the end of war than the beginning thereof! Someone once said he thought there was never a good war and never a bad peace. And I believe to a very great extent he was right. Peace is of itself an inestimable blessing, and war in itself, whether just or unjust, is a most terrific scourge. So whether you see the sower in the field, or the traveler starting on his journey, or the voyager launching upon the deep, or the warrior going forth to the fight—you are ready to think that, "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof." I have given you these four pictures because I shall want to use them as I turn from natural things to more spiritual things.

I. Let me use this general principle tonight, in the first place, TO SOOTHE YOUR REGRETS.

This year has all but gone. 1864, then, must soon be numbered with the things that were. Perhaps someone says, "Would to God that I had this year to live over again! I have missed many opportunities of doing good or, when I have availed myself of them, I have not served my God as I could have desired. I have another year less in which to serve the Church, the world and my God. I have spent another of my talents and have so much fewer to put out to usury for my Lord and Master." Now, do not regret, dear Friend, that the year has passed. It should rather be to you, if you are a believer in Christ, a subject for congratulation! Would you wish to have the year over again, when in sober silence you meditate upon the subject? You have had some sorrows this year. You are like the sailor I spoke of just now—you have passed through some storms. Weather-beaten mariner, would you like to have the storms of this year over again? Do you remember that dreadful night when the ship was driven so fearfully by the tempest, or the time when you were cast upon the rocks—and would you like to endure the same again? I see you shake your head and say, "No! Thank God we weathered that storm, but we don't want it again." And, Christians, as you think of the losses, crosses, sufferings and bereavements which you have had during this year, can you feel any regrets that it is gone? Must not each one of you say, "I thank God that stormy voyage is over and I have not those tempests to endure"?

How many snares have you escaped during the past year? In looking back, must you not observe that your feet have sometimes almost gone and your steps have well-near slipped? There have been times when sin had almost tripped you up, when the world had almost taken you in its trap and when the devil had all but wounded you in a mortal part. You are like a sailor who remembers the rocks by which he has sailed and the quicksands from which he has escaped. Would you wish to run such risks again? Do you wish, sailor, to go again over the bar at such a low tide, or to be drifted so unpleasantly near that rock as almost to grate against it? "No," he says, "having escaped those dangers, I am thankful that they are over and have no wish to have them over again." And are you not grateful, Christian, that another year of temptation has gone forever and that the arrows that Satan has shot at you this year, he can shoot at you no more? Those sword-cuts we received which threatened to be mortal, we shall never have to dread again! They are gone and when I say they are gone, it is implied that their mischief and their power to hurt are gone forever.

But there is another side to this matter. What a multitude of mercies you have enjoyed this year! How good God has been to us!—

"When all Your mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys—
***Transported with the* view,**
I'm lost In wonder, love and praise."

Those of us who have traveled in Switzerland, or in other countries where the views are glorious to look upon, would not wish that we had never seen them. On the contrary, we are glad that our eyes have feasted on those sunny prospects. And you, too, Christian, cannot regret that you

have seen God's mercies, but you will thank God that it has been your privilege to have enjoyed such favors. There is another reason, then, why you should not regret that the year has passed. I address myself to some who are growing gray. I know there is a tendency in your minds to regret that so many years have gone, but, my dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord, if you should do so, I think you would be guilty of a folly unworthy of a Believer with such a long experience! Take John Bunyan's picture of the Christian's progress. He describes Christian as starting on his pilgrimage to the Celestial City with a burden on his back that pressed him down, wringing his hands for fear and running because he is afraid that he will be destroyed in the City of Destruction. He has not gone a day's journey before he is up to his neck in the Slough of Despond and floundering in the mire! This is the beginning of the pilgrimage, but look at the end—he has come to the river, he dips his foot into it and though it is chill and cold, it does not stop him. When he gets midway in the river, how does Bunyan picture him? The angels beckon him from the other side—those very angels whose voices he had heard ringing clear and sweet across the stream when he wandered in the groves of Beulah and sat among the spices there. And now he reaches the bank on the other side and, leaving his sins, his doubts, his infirmities and his mortality behind, his disembodied spirit goes up to the celestial land and angel attendants conduct him to the pearly gates of the golden-paved city! Oh, infinitely better is the end of a spiritual life than the beginning! Contrast the Slough of Despond with the Celestial City and human intellect cannot fail to see how much better, how infinitely better, the end is than the beginning!

Take this picture as a further illustration of the same point—Moses at the beginning of his spiritual career is seen killing an Egyptian and burying him in the sand—just like a young Christian, full of zeal, but having little prudence. There is the beginning of his public career. And now I think I see the old man of 120 years, firm of step, with an eye as clear and piercing as an eagle's, standing up to address the people whom he has carried, as nursing mother, in his arms! And, having done this, leaving Joshua, his familiar servant, and all others behind, he began to climb to the top of Pisgah. He has mounted to its loftiest crag and, leaning over, he begins to take a full view of the Promised Land. He sees the palm trees of Jerusalem and Zion, and his eyes linger on Bethlehem—he catches glimpses of the blue sea afar off, and the goodly land of Lebanon. And as he looks, one scene melts into the other and he sees the face of God, for God, Himself, has come down and his spirit is taken away with a kiss. As to his body, it is buried where no man knows—but as to his soul, it is with God forever! Truly, in the case of Moses, better was the end than the beginning, and such shall be the spiritual end of every man of God who with the simplicity and faith of Moses, can put his trust in God. I think this is sufficient to soothe all your regret! Instead of being sorry that these years have passed, thank God for them and be glad.

II. I shall now use this general principle to endeavor to STOP YOUR FOREBODINGS.

It may be that many of you are in darkness—darkness which may be felt. You find it very difficult to accept the truth that God is a God of Love and One who cares for you. You are, however, only at the beginning—the beginning of the ways of Providence. Your poor faith is ready to be staggered by the sufferings you endure and unbelief prophesies ten thousand things to fill your soul with doubts and alarms—but the end of all this shall be better than the beginning! Many Christians have more trials in the earlier part of their spiritual life than they will ever have afterwards. "It, is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." You must not consider, because the sun is just now behind a cloud, that it will always be there. It was a little child who said when there was an eclipse, "Father, the sun is put out." It was only a child who said that—no man thought so. Let your riper experience correct the childishness of your unbelief. God only hides His face to show it more clearly, by-and-by. The end shall be better than the beginning. Have you not often seen a day which, early in the morning, was heavy with fog and rain? As it came on, we waited patiently and anxiously, for we wished for fine weather—but those incessant drops of rain still fell. We looked to the wind quarter and to the rain quarter, we looked with hope and then with fear, but the drops fell unceasingly and there seemed to be no chance of intermission. And yet, before noon had come we had seen the sun shining brightly and we have heard the birds singing more sweetly—and it has been fair weather after rain. Take that morning as a prophecy to your poor, doubting, troubled soul of what your path in life will yet be. You shall yet see that the end is better than the beginning.

Take one picture as an illustration and then I will leave this point. Poor Joseph has been slandered by his mistress. His character is under serious imputation. He is put into the round house by Potiphar—he is a prisoner and must have prisoner's fare. And yet I think that Joseph had never sat upon the throne of Egypt if he had not been put into the dungeon. You must "stoop to conquer" and, like gold, you must be put in the burning coals that you may be refined. But you shall soon come out and, like that gold, when you shall glitter with purity you shall know that "better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof."

III. And now let us use this simple statement of the text TO ENCOURAGE OUR FAITH.

The way of sense is to get everything *now*—the way of faith is to get everything in *God's time*. The worldly man lives on the present—the Christian lives on the future. It will always greatly strengthen faith if we, according to God's Word, look not so much at present appearances as at the issue of our lives which is to make amends for all the toils and disappointments we experience at the commencement of our career. So surely as God has called you to be a partaker of the Kingdom, you must renounce the pleasures of this present world. Look at your Lord and Master. Look at His beginning. "He was despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." Remember Gethsemane's blood and sweat, and Gabbatha's terrible flagellation, and Golgotha's mount of doom? This is the beginning. Would you see the end?—

"The head that once was crowned with thorns,

Is crowned with Glory now."

The mighty Victor drags death and Hell at His triumphant chariot wheels! He mounts His Father's Throne and amidst the acclamations of men and angels, He sits down forever and all His enemies shall be made His footstool! This is the end, or rather, this is the beginning of the end, for the splendors of the millennium, the Second Advent, and the eternal honors which shall be cast at Jesus' feet, these are the end. How much better is the glorious end than the sorrowful beginning! "As He Is, so are we, also, in this world." You must take the manger, or you shall never take the throne! You must have the Cross, or you shall never wear the crown! You must be despised and rejected, or you shall never be accepted and crowned! You must wade through the mire, or you shall never walk the golden pavement! Cheer up, then, poor Christian! Let this Truth of God be a stay to your soul just now, "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof."

I will give you two illustrations and then leave this point. You see that creeping worm, how contemptible is its appearance! You wish to sweep it away—that is the beginning of the thing. You see that insect with gorgeous wings playing in the sunbeams, sipping at the flower bells and full of happiness and life—that is the end thereof. That worm, that caterpillar, that maggot, if you will, is you! And you are to be content with that until you are wrapped up in the chrysalis of death. But you cannot tell what you shall be after death. All that we know is that when Christ shall appear, "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Be content to be like He, a worm, a caterpillar in the beginning that, like He, you may be satisfied when you wake up in His present likeness!

Again, you see that rough-looking diamond—it is put upon the wheel of the lapidary. With much care he begins to turn it and to cut it on all sides It loses much—much that seemed to itself costly. Do you see it now? The king is to be crowned, the diadem is put upon the monarch's head with the trumpet's joyful sound. There is a glittering ray which flows from that diadem and it comes from that very diamond which was cut just now by the lapidary. You, Christian, may venture to compare yourself to such a diamond, for you are one of God's jewels. And this is the time of the cutting process. You must endure it. Be of good courage and murmur not. Let faith and patience do their perfect work. In the day when the crown shall be set upon the head of "the King eternal, immortal, invisible," one ray of glory shall stream from you, for you shall be His! "You shall be Mine," says the Lord, "in the day when I make up My jewels."

IV. Have patience with me, in the next place, while I use my text TO SUGGEST ACTION.

It is very clear that we cannot have an ending if we have not a beginning. However bright our end might be, we can never know it experimentally unless we begin. The text therefore, suggests the question to each one of us, "Have I begun? Has God begun with me?" The beginning may be dark and gloomy, but you can never have a bright ending without it. I know the beginning will involve the sacrifice of many pleasures and the giving up of friends—"pleasures" and "friends" so-

called, but you cannot have an ending with the saints of God in Heaven unless you have a beginning with the poor and afflicted of His family on earth! I wonder whether there are some with whom God will begin now. It will be a blessed thing if He should begin with you, but it will be a far more blessed thing for you when He comes to the end. It. will be so blessed, if you should, tonight, be led by the Holy Spirit to direct your eyes with faith to Christ that the very angels before the House of God shall have a merrier Christmas because of your conversion! [See Sermon #2791, Volume 48—A HIGH DAY IN HEAVEN —Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Can I be mistaken in that notion? Did not our Lord Jesus Christ say, concerning the shepherd who had found his sheep which was lost. "When he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors," (who are they but the angels who are the friends and neighbors of Christ in Heaven?) "saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance." In Heaven they sing more and with a more joyful song when sinners turn from the error of their ways. I wonder whether tonight will be a time for "beginning" with some of you? Oh, if the Spirit of God is now teaching you your sinnership, if you feel that you are lost and ruined, I have to remind you that on the Cross of Calvary, there hung a bleeding Savior and that—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One"—

and the moment you glance at Him by faith, the good beginning comes to you! But, oh, it were vain for fancy to attempt to describe the ending when the angel convoy shall bear your ransomed spirit upward to be beatified forever and to be full of eternal life and joy in the Presence of Jesus Christ, your Lord and Savior. May God begin thus with some of you tonight!

V. And now to close—THE TEXT SUGGESTS A MOST SOLEMN ENQUIRY and the enquiry for each one of us is this—If my life were to come to an end tonight, would my end be better than my beginning? I said when I began that my text must have some salt with it—and here I must use the salt. There are some things that are best in the beginning and worst at the end. There is, yonder, the sinner's feast. Bring in the dishes. Fill the goblets with sparkling wine—drink deep and sing right merrily. The lute and the harp are there and the feasters stand up and shout and sing. But what is that I see? As the night wears away and the morning light streams in through the windows, "who has woe? Who has redness of the eyes?" Truly, the end of such feasts is worse than the beginning! And in that ward of foul disease where they seem to sweep together the rank refuse of what once was beauty, exceedingly fair to look upon, truly we learn the lesson that in some cases the end is worse than the beginning. Beware, you that go to the house of strange women, lest you find that the end thereof is infinitely worse than the beginning! Stop your feet before they enter there, lest you go like a bullock to the slaughter, or a fool to the stocks. And if that one walk is so notoriously worse in the end than it is in the beginning, such, likewise, *is every walk of sin*. See the greedy man as he accumulates money! Look at the

beginning of it—he puts out his money to interest and makes out his bonds. He takes security for debts and calls houses and streets after his name. And then see the end of it. The old man is haggard and wan. He cannot count his wealth, yet he fears he will die in the workhouse. And when he thinks, in those intervals when his senses come back and he realizes his own self, it is always with the shuddering thought, "I must part with you, my treasures. I must part with you all and go back to my mother earth as naked as I came into it." So that, you see, there *are* times when the ending of a thing is a great deal worse than the beginning.

Someone will doubtless say, "I am not like these men. I am neither debauched nor avaricious." Well, I will take you at the best. Here is your beginning—you are a respectable attendant at a place of worship—you go because others go, not because your heart is right with God. This is your beginning. I will suppose that for the next 20 or 30 years you will be spared to go on as you do now, professing religion as far as outward attendance upon the means of Grace will make a profession, but having no heart in the matter. Shall I show you your end? Be hushed and silent, tread softly, for I must show you the deathbed of such an one as yourself! Let us gaze upon him gently. Let us not disturb him. A clammy sweat is on his brow and he wakes up and cries, "O God, it is hard to die!" He says to his friends, "Did you send for my minister?... "Yes, he is coming." The minister comes and the poor fellow says to him, "Sir, I fear that I am dying." "Have you any hope?" "I cannot say that I have any. I shall have to stand before my God—oh, pray for me!" The prayer is offered for him with sincere earnestness and the way of salvation is for the ten thousandth time put before him. But before he has grasped the rope, I see him sink. Shall I picture the scene further? I may put my finger upon those eyelids, for they will never see anything here again. But where is the man and where are the man's true eyes? Christ said of the rich man, "In Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments."

And it is so with this man. But why did he not lift up his eyes before? Because he got so accustomed to hear the Gospel that his soul went to sleep under it! He cannot sleep now—"being in torments." There is no sleep in Hell. Oh, what a blessing sleep would be if it could enter the habitation of the damned! Alas, if any of you should lift up your eyes there, what a sight you will behold! Here, if you drop off to sleep and wake up in the Tabernacle, you see the faces of attentive listeners hearing words of mercy—there, when first you lift up your eyes, you will gaze into visages more marred with pain than any you have ever seen before! And if you ask them the cause of their awful grief and why agony, as with a red-hot plowshare, has made such deep furrows in their cheeks, they will tell you that you need not ask them, for you will soon learn the reason yourself! I cannot picture it. Let the Savior's own Words tell you the terrible Truth of God—"The rich man cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." There is a frightful meaning in those words! May you never have to spell it out by the red light of Jehovah's wrath!—

"You sinners, seek His Grace,
Whose wrath you cannot bear!
Fly to the shelter of His Cross,
And find salvation there!"

Before this last Sabbath of the year closes, I pray that the Lord may come down in mercy and visit those who have not yet received Christ, that of them it may be truly said, "Better is the end of this year than the beginning thereof." God grant it for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 116.

We have read this Psalm many times and have often felt it to be a photograph of our own spiritual experience, but we will, on this occasion, read it from one special point of view. Please notice that this Psalm is exceedingly full of the letter, "I." Cast your eye down the page and you will be struck with the number of times in which the first person singular appears. Well, then, let us read the Psalm with this view, and each of us for himself or herself say, "I," as the Psalmist did if the Holy Spirit shall enable us to do so.

Verse 1. *I love the LORD, because He has heard my voice and my supplications.* If this double declaration is true, it turns the reading of the Psalm into a devout spiritual exercise for each one of us who can rightly adopt the Psalmist's language. But can each one of us truthfully say, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You"? If I can honestly say, "I love the Lord," then I can give the reason for the love that is in me. It is because He has loved me with an everlasting love and because He has manifested that love, among many other ways, in hearing "my voice and my supplications."

2. *Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.* "Whatever others may do or may not do, I will call upon Him as long as I live, and I have a good reason for doing so, 'Because He has inclined His ear unto me.' He has stooped from His Throne in Heaven to listen to my feeble voice. He has bowed Himself in His majesty to listen to the appeal of my misery. I was brought down very low in my sorrow, but the Lord brought His ear down as low as my lips—'He has inclined His ear unto me' and because He has done that, therefore my heart is inclined unto Him and I will call upon Him as long as I live."

3. *The sorrows of death compassed me.* "They formed a ring around me from which I could see no way of escape. I was like a wounded stag that is surrounded by fierce dogs."

3. *And the pains of Hell got hold upon me.* "The dogs of Hell had fixed their cruel teeth in my throat so that it seemed impossible for me to escape from them."

3. *I found trouble and sorrow.* "When I searched for something better, I only found still more trouble and sorrow. I had enough of them without finding any more, but the more I looked for anything else, the more trouble and sorrow I found." This is a very graphic description of the

state of heart in which some of us have been more than once. We have seen no way of escaping from it and we have been in great distress because we could not discover any way of alleviating our grief.

4. *Then I called upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech You, deliver my soul.* Do you remember, dear Friend, when you prayed such a prayer as that—short, sharp, sincere, pointed, personal, out of the depths of your soul? Then let your recollection of that prayer have so gracious an influence upon your heart that in the remembrance of the past mercy, when the Lord heard and answered your supplication, you may find a well of present gratitude!

5. *Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yes, our God is merciful.* Listen to that blessed little sentence, those of you who are full of sin, and who are therefore afraid that God will cast you away forever! "Our God is merciful."

6. *The Lord preserves the simple: I was brought low and He helped me.* There is here, first, a general Doctrine and then, there is a particular proof and application of it. It is true, in a general sense, that the Lord preserves the simple-hearted ones who have learned to trust in Him. But, in particular, you or I, if saved by His Grace, can say with the Psalmist, "I was brought low and He helped me." There is a little book of medicine [See Sermon #240, Volume 5—PRAYER ANSWERED, LOVE NOURISHED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] which Mr. John Wesley brought out and he put to some of the recipes, the word "Proved." He had evidently tried the medicine and proved it to be efficacious in his own case. In a similar fashion, we can often put in the margin of our Bibles, concerning the Word of the Lord, "Proved." We have tried it and proved it—and therefore we also can personally say, "The Lord preserves the simple: I was brought low, and He helped me."

7. *Return unto your rest, O my soul, for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.* Cannot we also, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, speak well of our God tonight? If any of us have been wandering at all from His Presence and so have lost the conscious sense of His love, let us come back to Him at once! We cannot be happy anywhere else. God has spoiled you and me, Beloved, for the world, so we must be happy in Him, for we can never be satisfied anywhere else. Only in our God can our joy be full. Come back then, my Soul, come back to your Lord! "Return unto your rest, O my soul; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you." He is your true Noah. You can find no real rest anywhere else—therefore return unto Him even as the dove flew back to the ark with weary wings after wandering over the wild waste of waters.

8. *For You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.* "I have had a trinity of deliverances—my soul saved from eternal ruin, my eyes delivered from the greatest grief of all and my life saved from sinful stumbling! 'You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.'" This testimony is far in advance of that given in Psalm 56:13 where David says, "You have delivered my soul from death: will not You deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?"

9. *I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.* "I will not walk before some great man so as to seek to please him. I will not walk before my fellow Believers so as to be merely looking for their approbation. But, 'I will walk before the Lord.'" This is the best way of living, so let it be yours and mine, Beloved. Let each of us say, "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living."

10. *I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted.* I call your attention again to the repeated use of the word, "I." Three times in this one verse we have that little personal pronoun. And I want you, each one, to take this whole Psalm to yourself so far as it is suited to your case, to make an appeal of it while we are reading it. "I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted."

11, 12. *I said in my haste, All men are liars. What shall I render unto the LORD for all His benefits toward me?* I expect that we have all of us said in our haste some things that we had better not have said. They may have been true, yet for all that, it was a pity that we uttered them. Yet I am glad that the Psalmist, although he said, "All men are liars," did not dwell upon that unpleasant truth, but speedily turned from unreliable man to his ever-reliable God. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" If all men are liars, if all earthly comforts fail us, if all human dependences disappoint us—our God will not do so. Let us leave the broken cisterns without even grumbling at them, or having bitter feelings concerning them. And let us turn to God and let this be the question put by each one of us, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" [See Sermon #2758, Volume 47—"RETURN UNTO YOUR REST"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] I suggest, dear Friends, that we, each of us, personally put this question to ourselves, "What shall I render unto the Lord? What can I do for Jesus? What can I give to God? What is there, at this particular time, that I can devise for the Glory of God in order to manifest my love to Him?" Perhaps in this house, tonight, there may be the conception—perhaps the birth—of some high and noble enterprise for God. If this question shall be pressed home upon some ardent spirit here, there may be the first thoughts, in this House of Prayer, of some far-reaching ministry which shall be a means of blessing to many lands through all the ages that are yet to come. God grant that it may be so! What shall I, a young man just beginning life, render unto the Lord? What shall I, a man in the full strength of his manhood, render unto the Lord? What shall I—a man far advanced in years, mature and ripe for Heaven, and soon to be taken there—render unto the Lord? Whoever I am, let me make haste to answer the question, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" [See Sermon #910, Volume 16—OVERWHELMING OBLIGATIONS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

13, 14. *I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all His people.* There never was a better time than the present—and there never was better place than this for some holy resolve concerning consecrated service for the Master!

15. *Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints.* They are themselves at all times so precious to the Lord that everything about them is very dear in His esteem—and they are never more precious than in their deaths. [See Sermon #1036, Volume 18—PRECIOUS DEATHS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] We constantly have some of the very choicest of the Lord's saints going Home to their Father. And when the Lord takes any of them Home to Himself, it becomes those of us who are left to try to do all the more for our God. Let some of us be baptized for the dead, let us press forward to fill the gaps in the ranks of the armies of God and do all that lies in our power to win the victory for His righteous cause!

16. *O LORD, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid: You have loosed my bonds.* Still read this Psalm very personally—you especially who have had godly mothers. Say, "I am a born slave—born of one who was your slave, for I delight to use even such a hard name as that. I am God's servant, born of one of God's servants—'the son of Your handmaid.'" I like to remember that it was so in my own case and I can truthfully say to the Lord, "I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid." "You have loosed my bonds," by making me to feel the bonds of your Grace. There is no liberty like complete subjection to God. The greatest freedom of thought is to think only God's thoughts—and the highest freedom of living is to live according to the rule of holiness in the ways of the Most High.

17-19. *I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all His people. In the courts of the LORD'S house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Praise you the LORD.* And we do and will praise Him at this time and 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.

END OF VOLUME 53.