FEAR OF DEATH
NO. 3125

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"And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."
Hebrews 2:15.

IT is a very natural thing that man should fear to die, for man was not originally created to die. When Adam and Eve were first placed in the Garden of Eden, they were in such a condition that they might have remained there for a myriad years if they had kept their integrity. There was no reason why unfallen man should die, but now that we have sinned, the seeds of corruption are in this flesh of ours, and it is appointed unto men once to die. Yet, as if the body knew that it was not according to the first decree of heaven that it should go to the earth and to the worms, it has a natural reluctance to return to its last bed. And this fear of death, so far as it is natural, is not wrong.

In fact, it subserves a very high purpose in the economy of mankind, for there is many a man who might be tempted to end this mortal life were it not for the fear of death. And to end his life by his own hand would be a dreadful deed—it would prove that he was not the child of God, for "you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him." I mean, of course, if such a deed were done by anyone in possession of his senses—I am not giving any judgment on those who are not in the possession of reason and who are not accountable for what they do. If any man in his sober senses were to commit suicide, we could entertain no hope of eternal life for him. Yet many would do so were it not that there is impressed upon them the fear of what would result from thus ending their being.

So far, you see, the fear of death answers a good purpose and is, in itself, right. But it can very readily go beyond the point where it is right into the region wherein it becomes evil and I do not doubt that many godly persons have a fear of death about them which is very evil and which produces very evil effects. Some, no doubt, have been hindered from confessing Christ and following Him fully through fear of death, but not, perhaps, so much now, as in the days of the martyrs. Then there were heroic spirits that went *willingly* to the stake, or to some other painful form of death which the tyrant of the hour decreed. They cheerfully, with shouts of victory, laid down their lives which they did not count dear unto them for the sake of Jesus Christ!

But there *were* timid spirits that shrank from such an ordeal—they loved life and they feared death, especially in the terrible forms in which it was thrust upon them. This shrinking would be wrong in any one of us. If the fear of death made us dishonor Christ, we would be guilty of deadly sin. If any man resolves to follow Christ, he must not love his own life in comparison with his love to Jesus Christ, but he must be willing to lay it down for the sake of Him who gave up His life upon the cross for us.

Fear of death also causes some Christian people to have to endure many needless sorrows. They are ill and likely to die and, instead of being in a calm and serene state of mind, as they ought to be, they are greatly perturbed and distressed. Even while they are well, if something happens that causes them to think upon their last hours, they are burdened and depressed. Now this sorrow is a sorrow of the *flesh* which ought to be avoided. We ought to seek for divine grace to conquer it so that we may not have the sorrow of the world which works death. This fear of death is very dishonoring to God. It looks as if you could trust Him in fair weather, but not in storms; could believe in Him while you are well and strong, but could not trust in Him when health and strength are failing you. Never forget what David said, "He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death."

We greatly glorify God when we can say with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him," but if we are afraid to die, it looks as if we had not a wholehearted trust in God, or that perfect love to Him which casts out fear. And this fear of death also tends very much to dishonor our holy religion in the eyes of those who are not believers in Jesus. The calmness with which the Christian expects his end, or even the holy joy with which he anticipates it, is one of the things which ungodly men cannot comprehend, and even if they will not confess it, they are a good deal impressed by it and often feel their hearts longing to know that blessed secret which can make Christians look forward to their last days on earth in such a cheery spirit.

The Christian who contemplates death with joy is a living sermon! He is a better defense of the gospel than all the works that Butler and Paley and the other writers of Christian evidences have ever been able to compile. Therefore, dear friends, the Church of Christ loses this defense and the world loses this evidence when we are troubled by the fear of death. This fear ought not to be found in Christians, but if it ever is, they ought to strive against it until they overcome it:

"Why should we start, or fear to die?
What timorous worms we mortals are!
Death is the gate of endless joy,
And yet we dread to enter there?
The pains, the groans, the dying strife
Frighten our approaching souls away
Still we shrink back again to a life,
Fond of our prison and our clay."

"How are we to get rid of this fear?" asks one. Well, let us never try to get rid of it, as some do, by forgetting all about death! That would be to live as the brutes that perish! They live their little day here without any thought beyond the present. The ox and the sheep go to the slaughter-house without the power to look beyond the present life. I would not like to obtain peace of mind by descending to the level of those "dumb, driven cattle." Yet there are many men whose only peace arises from thoughtlessness and that is a sorry peace which cannot endure contemplation and consideration. Why, we know men who are bold enough in company and who can even blaspheme God, but set them down in a room by themselves, compel them to think in solitude even for a single hour—and you could not condemn them to a greater misery! They cannot bear the idea of parting with their present joys. Venturing into another world seems, to them, such a hazardous enterprise that they forget all about it and shut their eyes to all thoughts beyond this life!

It is not in that way that Christians seek to overcome their fear of death. They are thoughtful and they wish to always ponder, to consider and to judge concerning the future as well as the present. They desire to look beyond this mortal state. They ask for brighter vision and clearer eyesight and do not need to shut their eyes to the future, whatever it may have in store for them!

I am going to try to answer three questions concerning this fear of death. First, *where shall we look to be delivered from it?* Secondly, *what shall we further think of to help us conquer it?* And, thirdly, *what shall we do to overcome it?*

I. First, then, WHERE SHALL WE LOOK TO BE DELIVERED FROM THE FEAR OF DEATH?

The answer is, beloved, that you must look for that where you are bound to look for *everything*, namely, TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, for there is no true deliverance from the fear of death except by looking unto Him whose death is the death of death! The verse before our text suggests this when it tells us that Jesus Christ became man, "that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

How does Christ take away from us the fear of death? He does it, first, *by taking away from us the sin which is the sting of death*. To die *forgiven*, "accepted in the Beloved," is not really to die, but to depart out of this world unto the Father! Unforgiven sin is that which makes it hard to lay the head upon the dying pillow. But when sin is forgiven and we know that it is and we have perfect peace with God, we can even *long* for that last evening of life to come that we may undress and sleep in Jesus! Be sure, beloved, that you are forgiven, "make your calling and election sure." Know for a certainty that Jesus Christ's words apply to you, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes on Me has everlasting life." Rest completely upon that sacrifice which He once offered upon the cross when He made a full atonement for all who believe in Him! Understand

that He has washed you from your sins in His blood and made you kings and priests unto God—and then I do not see how the fear of death can live in you any longer!

"If sin is pardoned, I'm secure!
Death has no sting beside.
The law gives sin its damning power,
But Christ, my ransom, died."

Next, Christ has delivered you from the fear of death *by changing the very character of death, itself*. You know what He said to Martha, "Whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." And believers never do die in the sense in which others die. They die in order to endure the penalty of sin, but for us, that penalty was borne by Christ! All our iniquities were laid upon Him and all the penalty of them was borne by Him. Death to the believer is no penalty—it is a development from this time state to another and a higher one—a breaking of the shell that now confines us! It is a snapping of the cable that holds the vessel to the shore; a severing of the chain that holds the eagle to the rock. Death releases us so that we may soar away to that land of light and love where Jesus is, as John Newton sings:

"In vain my fancy strives to paint
The moment after death,
The glories that surround the saint
When yielding up his breath.
One gentle sigh the fetter breaks!
We scarce can say, 'They're gone!'
Before the willing spirit takes
Her mansion near the throne."

Death to the believer is not an execution—it is his deliverance, his freedom from slavery and admission into the glory of God!

Christ has taken away the fear of death from those who truly know Him *by assuring us that our soul shall not die or become extinct*. There is a vital principle within us, as He has said, "Because I live, you shall live also." One of His last solemn declarations was, "Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory." We sorrow not as without hope concerning those who have fallen asleep in Jesus, for we know that they are forever with the Lord! "To be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord," is the divine revelation concerning all who are in Christ Jesus by a living faith! Because our souls shall never die, we are not afraid to venture into the world of spirits.

Then there is that master doctrine of the Christian faith which was not revealed to men in all its fullness until Jesus came. I mean *the doctrine of the resurrection of the body*. It is for this body that we have any fear—corruption, earth and worms are its heritage—and it seems a hard thing that these eyes, which have seen the light, should be blinded in the mold; that these hands which have been active in God's service, should lie still in the grave, and that these limbs, which have trodden the pilgrim path, should be able to move no longer. But courage, believer! Your body shall rise again! Laid in the earth it may be, but *kept* in the earth it *can-*

not be! The voice of nature bids you die, but the voice of the omnipotent bids you live, again, for the trumpet shall sound and then the bodies of the saints shall rise:

"From beds of dust and silent clay,
To realms of everlasting day."

This is our consolation, that, as Jesus Christ died and rose again from the dead, "even so they, also, who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." As we have this double comfort for soul and body, what more do we need?

Thus I have shown you that to overcome the fear of death, we must look to Jesus Christ on the cross atoning for us, in the resurrection rising for us, in the glory taking possession of our home for us and at the right hand of God preparing our place for us, possessing all power and using it so that He may bring us unto His eternal kingdom—and soon to come again, in all the glory of the latter days, to raise the bodies of His people from the dead unless they are still alive at His coming. This is He who conquers for us the fear of death! It is to Him we are to look—"looking unto Jesus." Let your eyes be always looking to Him, then the fear of death will not make you subject to bondage.

II. Now, secondly, WHAT SHALL WE THINK OF THAT MAY FURTHER HELP US TO OVERCOME THIS FEAR OF DEATH?

First, let us remember that if we are called to die, *we are called to do no more than Jesus Christ has done before us*. When my body goes down to the grave, it will not be the first tenant of the sepulcher! Myriads of the saints have been there before and, best of all, the saints' Master and Lord has slept in the tomb! You remember that Jesus left the napkin folded by itself that mourners might use it in drying their tears, but the linen clothes, in which He had been wrapped remained together so that our last bed might be well-sheeted, that our last sleeping room might not be unfurnished. More than that:

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

Should not the servant be as the Master? Does he ask for more? If the King, Himself, has passed this way, shall His bodyguard, His soldiers, His companions be afraid to pursue the same downward path? No, beloved, as you follow the track of the crucified to the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, you may, yourself, walk safely there! If the footprints of the flock have often encouraged us, how much more should the footprints of the shepherd! So, believers, be not afraid to die, for Jesus died.

Remember, also, that *death will not separate us from the love of Christ, nor from Christ Himself*. He is with us *now* and He will be with us *then*. And after death we shall be with Him forever! He loves us today and He will love us tomorrow. He will love us all our lives. He will love us in death and He will love us throughout eternity! It was this truth of God that Paul proclaimed when he wrote, "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." In one of his inventories of the Christian's possessions, he writes, "Life or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours so death is yours if you are in Christ Jesus." If the pangs of death could separate the members of Christ's mystical body from their head, it would be death, indeed. If that grievous sorrow could divide the heart of Jesus from the heart of His elect, then might we dread to die, but it is not so! If death makes any difference to us, the bonds that unite us to Christ shall become still firmer and the revelation of Christ shall become yet brighter and Jesus shall be nearer and dearer to us in our departure from earth than He ever was before! "Therefore comfort one another with these words."

Next, let us remember that *death will not even separate us from all our friends*. It will take the wife from the husband and the child from the mother, and we must leave behind us many who have been our comrades in the battle of life. But, especially to you who are growing old, it ought to be a very comforting thought that probably most of your best friends have already crossed the river! If you were to count up those who have been dear to you from your youth up, you would find that the majority have gone on before you as you have advanced in years. And there are some above who, a long way behind our Lord, of course, will be among the dearest friends that we hope to see up yonder! The mother will find her babies who were lent to her for a brief season and then caught away to heaven, safe on the other shore. And grandparents, parents, brothers, sisters and many a fellow church member with whom we went to the house of the Lord in company, are all there ready to welcome us when we shall be newcomers in the Celestial City! Do not, therefore, have a fear of death because of the separation from friends below, but rather cheer yourself with the prospect of a blessed *reunion* with friends above! You may, perhaps, regret that you have to leave some behind, but think of the friends ahead and let your spirit rejoice to remember that you are going "to the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven." Again, I say to you, "Comfort one another with these words."

I think the fear of death ought to vanish from us when we remember that *it will be an answer to a great many of our prayers*. I am not sure we always do right to sing such words as these:

"Father, I long, I faint to see
The place of Your abode."

I remember a minister, an old friend of mine, who went into the pulpit one Lord's-Day morning, stood up and read that verse:

"Father, I long, I faint to see
The place of Your abode
I'd leave Your earthly courts and flee
Up to Your seat, my God!"

As he uttered those words, he sat down in the seat, fell back, he had gone to be with his God! We should not venture to say or sing such words as these unless we are fully prepared for such a sudden change as came to my aged friend. But how often you and I have prayed to be rid of

troubles! Well, we shall be rid of them, *then*! How often have we prayed to be rid of sin! We shall be rid of it, *then*! We have prayed to be delivered from temptation and we shall be *then*. We have asked to be like Jesus and we shall be, *then*! We have prayed for a clearer vision of Him and we shall have it, *then*. Why, our prayers, except when we pray, "Let the whole earth be filled with Your glory," can scarcely go further than when we say, "Let us be with You where You are." By our death, the Lord will answer our prayers. One kiss on our lips from His dear mouth will kiss away our soul and we shall be where we shall see His blessed face in all the splendor of His glory! So then, if death is the answer to your prayers, why need you dread it?

Remember, too, that *death is attended by very special comforts*. I remember a sermon by my grandfather which stuck in my youthful memory and is still fresh in my memory. I forget the text, but I think it was, "Grace to help in time of need." And at the end of the first head the old gentleman said, "But there is one kind of grace that you do not want." Then he went on to a second head and mentioned another kind of grace and, again, he said, "But there is one kind of grace that you do not want." He had five or six heads to his discourse, but at the end of every one of them he said, "But there is one kind of grace that you do not want." We were all wondering what he could mean and then he finished up with this remark, "You do not want *dying* grace till dying moments come!" There was truth in that observation!

I may say to myself, "Do I feel, now, that I could die calmly or even triumphantly?" I may put the question if I like, but it is hardly a fair one, for I am not yet called to die! Yet my experience and observation of others lead me to believe that very remarkable grace is often given to believers in their last hours. I have seen the timid become stronger than the brave! I have seen the retiring become more bold than the courageous! And I have known some who seemed to be almost dumb, before, speak with matchless utterance! And some, whose faces have been lit up with supernatural joy, who before appeared to be amongst the doubting and the trembling ones of Christ's family. There are choice revelations, special manifestations, nearer approaches to Christ, wider outlets of love from Him and greater inlets into the soul of the brightness of His presence in those times, than ever before!

When the body is strong, it often seems like a thick wall that shuts out the light. But when disease comes and shakes the tenement, it makes great rifts in wall and roof, and through those rifts the light of God comes streaming in as it had never come in before! I never can doubt the truth of our holy faith, or the reality of religion after what I have witnessed at the deathbeds of the Lord's people. I could tell you of one, who died this week, and who had long been a member of this church. She was unconscious in her last hours, but up to the time when unconsciousness came on, it would have been a joy to any of you to see her! She almost incessantly requested her friends to sing such songs as:

"Safe in the arms of Jesus."

As long as she could do so, she took her part, joining better than any of them in the real joy of the song, for they were sorrowful at the thought of losing one whom they loved, but she was joyful in the prospect of soon beholding the face of Him whom her soul loved so intensely! I believe there is no joy in life that equals the joy of departing believers!

You may visit the haunts of folly, if you will, and search for joy there, but you shall not find any joy worth the having. You may go to the palaces of kings; you may go to bridal chambers; you may go where health, strength, fame and honor contribute to worldly mirth, but you shall not find such deep, intense joy anywhere else as you shall find in that room where the death sweat is on the believer's brow; and the glory of heaven is shining upon his face! I have heard some say that it was worthwhile to live for the sake of the joy they have had when they were dying! So there is no cause for a Christian to fear death if such an experience as this awaits him.

But it is not so much the joy of dying that can console us as *the life that is beyond death*. I never like to hear people quote the first part of that text and omit the latter portion, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God." Christians know that there is a joy unspeakable and eternal which will be their portion as soon as they shall depart from this world to be with the Father. Well did we sing just now:

"Let doubt, then, and danger my progress oppose,
They only make heaven more sweet at the close!
Come joy or come sorrow, what'er may befall
An hour with my God will make up for them all."

What will be the sensations of the first hour in heaven? I will not try to picture them, I will leave you to imagine them. But what will be your sensations when you realize that you are not merely to be there for an hour, or a day, or even for 70 years, but forever and ever? Of him that overcomes, Christ says, "He shall go no more out." He shall be blessed forever and ever in the presence of his Lord! The righteous are to go "into life eternal." Take away that word, "eternal," and you have taken away our all! But while that remains, the heaven of heaven is the fact that it will last forever and ever! I cannot stay to speak at length upon all this, but I do entreat every child of God to think much upon these comforting themes and then, surely, he will be helped to overcome the fear of death.

III. Now, thirdly, WHAT SHALL WE DO, as well as what shall we think of, IN ORDER THAT WE MAY OVERCOME THE FEAR OF DEATH?

I would say, first, *let us die every day*. "I die daily," said the Apostle Paul. The man who practices dying every day, the man who has, as it were, a daily rehearsal of it, will not be afraid of the reality when it comes! We are wise to talk of our last hours, to be familiar with the thought of our departure from this world. Every night, when we go to our bed, we ought to have a rehearsal of death. We lay aside our clothes for the night just as we shall have to lay aside our bodies in death. I like that

idea best on Saturday night, for then we take off our workday clothes and they are put away, and we fall asleep. And then, in the morning, there are our Sabbath Day garments laid ready for us and oh, what wonderful Sabbath Day clothes we shall have when we awake in the morning in heaven and are "arrayed in fine linen: clean and white," which is "the righteousness of saints."

So, die daily, brothers and sisters, in this fashion! Get into the habit of so doing. I remember an old Christian woman who used to say that she had dipped her feet in the river of death every morning before she left her bedroom, so she did not mind when she was called to go through it, she was so accustomed to "die daily."

The next piece of advice I have to give you is this—*hold very loosely everything on earth*. Have you a great many possessions and friends? Mind that you do not cling too closely to them, for there is danger about them all. As one once observed to a rich man who took him over his parks and gardens, "Ah, sir, these are the things that make it hard to die!" The poor have little enough to leave and when they go, they have not the regrets which the covetous and greedy rich man oftentimes has, or the man who has added field to field and farm to farm, till he owns all the land in the region where he lives. "Must I leave you? Must I leave you?" has often been the miser's cry, as he has tried to clutch his moneybags with his dying fingers! O beloved, hold everything loosely! You are in a dying world and everything about you is like yourself, shadowy and fleeting. Do not build your nest here as if you were to abide here forever.

We ought to live in this world like lodgers at an inn. There was a good bishop who used to say that he should like to die at an inn because he felt as if he should then be in a similar position, both literally and spiritually. And truly, that is the spirit in which Christians should always live. A man on a journey goes to an inn to spend a night - he does not trouble himself because the room is not quite to his taste, for he will be off in the morning. You, believer, are only at an inn, so do not fret about the little inconveniences here, for you are to be off in the morning and, you may depend upon it that your Father's carriage will be at the door at the right time, so have everything packed up ready for your departure! Do not go buying a lot of lumber here, for you cannot carry it with you! Have very little and have it all ready. And a very good thing is to send as much as you can on before you!

Somebody said, the other day, that the best way to travel was to send all your goods on by the luggage train in advance and then go, yourself, by the first class express passenger train. He explained that he meant that you were to give away as much as you could to the poor and to the Church of God, and so send it on by the luggage train. "What I spent, I *had*," said a man. "What I kept, I *lost.* What I gave away, I *have."* And truly it is so when believers die. Still is that theirs which they have given to God and to His poor, "but whose is that which they have left behind?" Perhaps some ungrateful heir will sinfully squander it. I have often admired the difference between a rich man's funeral and a poor man's. It

grieves me, sometimes, to think of the rich man's funeral. What do the sons and daughters of the miser think about it? They are most concerned to get home to hear the reading of the will! But when the poor man dies, it is quite another matter. There is his daughter, Jane, who is employed as a servant, she contributes a little towards the cost of the funeral. Then there is a son, John, who has a wife and four or five children, but he pinches himself so as to contribute a little. All the children do something to help and those are honest tears that they shed for the poor old man, for they have nothing to gain by his departure and the grief at his funeral will be real and true. But whether you are rich or poor in this world's goods, make sure that you are among "the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

But the main way to overcome the fear of death is *to believe firmly in your Lord*. You will generally find that in proportion as your faith gets stronger, your fear of death will vanish; and as your faith gets weak, fear will come in to take its place. Realize that Christ is your Savior, that He loves you and has given Himself for you and saved you with an everlasting salvation! Realize that He has inscribed your name upon the palms of His hands. No, more, that He has engraved it upon His heart! Remember that although a woman may forget her sucking child, your Lord *never* can forget you and that He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you" and then will you be able to say, "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."

The next thing I exhort you to do is to *walk much with God*. Pray for grace to never get out of fellowship with Him. You cannot have the fear of death while you walk with Him! There was a man, you remember, who never died, and the reason was because he walked with God! If any man would escape all dread of death, he must pursue Enoch's path. It is the only way to rise superior to the natural fear that comes upon us all at times.

Next, to get rid of the fear of death, I urge you to *serve God every day with all your might*. Live each day as if it were to be your last day. If any Christian man knew that he had only one more day to live, what a great deal of work he would crowd into that day! Then do that *every* day since any night, when you fall asleep, you may do so for the last time on earth! Press as much service as you can into each day: live at a quick rate, serve the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul and strength, and try to get a full day's work done in every day.

I met, the other day, with a piece of poetry which struck me very forcibly. I wonder whether it will strike you in the same way as I read it:

"'My work is done, I lay me down to die.
Weary and travel worn, I long for rest.
Speak but the word, dear Master, and I fly,
A dove let loose to nestle on Your breast.'
'Not yet, My child; a little longer wait,
I need your prayerful watch at glory's gate.'
'But, Lord, I have no strength to watch and pray,

My spirit is benumbed, and dim my sight.
And I shall grieve Your wakeful love, as they
Who in the garden slept, that paschal night.'
'My child, I need your weakness, hour by hour,
To prove, in Me, your weakness is power.'
'Not for myself, I urge the suit,
But loved ones lose, for me, life's priceless bloom
And tender, patient, uncomplaining, mute,
Wear out their joy in my darkened room.'
'Enough, My child! I need their love to you;
Around your couch they minister to Me.'
'It is enough, dear Master, yes, Amen!
I will not breathe one murmur or reply.
Only fulfill Your work in me and then
Call me, and bid me answer, 'Here am I.'
'My child, the sign I waited for is given.
Your work is done. I need you now in heaven.'"

I admire that utterance of Mr. Whitefield, which I have quoted to you before, "I try to keep all my affairs so arranged that if I were to die at any time, they would be no trouble to those who come after me." He was so particular in his habits that he would not fall asleep if he had a pair of gloves out of place! And I like to feel that as far as it can be, all is right with my own affairs.

I do not wonder that some Christian people would be afraid to die, now, for they remember that they have not made their *wills*. Simple as that remark may seem to be to you, it is a very important matter, for it is a terrible thing for a man to be taken suddenly ill and, instead of having to think about departing to his God, he has to send for a lawyer! And when his own wits are scarcely ready for it, he has to be planning about what is to be done for his wife and children and others whom he wishes to benefit. Get that matter settled as soon as you can and see to everything else that needs attention, so that you may be able to say—Here am I, standing like a passenger at a railway station. My luggage is already and I am only waiting to step into the carriage and be gone." Happy man who is in that prepared state, for he need have no fear of death!

And, brothers and sisters, if you would get rid of the fear of death, my last word of advice is, *use the telescope very frequently*. Look away up to the eternal hills where your heavenly inheritance lies, for all the glory which Christ has with the Father is yours! You shall sit upon His throne, even as He sits upon His Father's throne. You shall he crowned, even as He is crowned. Look away from this mist and fog, this frost and snow, to the land where the sun goes down no more and the days of your mourning shall be forever ended! Let your spirit rejoice that as you are one with Jesus, you have already, by faith, taken possession of the land where you shall be no more subject to any pain, or trial, or sorrow, or sin, or death! Happy are the people who have such a blessed place to go to when they die!

But I am afraid there are some here who have not any such prospect before them. To them I will repeat a simple story which I have told to some of you before. I have heard of a certain king who had a jester or,

"fool," to make fun for him, as kings used to have. But this "fool" was no fool! He had much sense and he had thought wisely about eternal matters. One day when he had greatly pleased the king, His Majesty gave him a stick and said to him, "Tom, here is a stick which you are to keep till you see a bigger fool than yourself, and then you may give it to him." One day His Majesty was taken ill and it was thought that he would die. Many went to see him and Tom also went and said, "What is the matter, Your Majesty?" "I am going, Tom, I am going." "Where are you going?" asked Tom. "I fear it is a very long way," said the king. ?"And are you coming back, Your Majesty?" "No, Tom." "You are going to stay a long while, then?" "Forever," said the king.

"I suppose Your Majesty has a palace ready over there." "No." "But I suppose you have provided everything that you will need there if you are going such a long way and never coming back? I suppose you have sent a good deal on and got everything provided for on ahead?" "No, Tom," said the king, "I have done nothing of the kind." "Here, then, Your Majesty, take my stick, for you are a bigger fool than I am."

And if there is a man here who has made no provision for eternity and who has no mansion, no abiding place, no treasure, no friend, no advocate, no helper there, he is a gigantic fool, be he who he may! The Lord give that fool a little sense and lead him to confess his folly and look to Jesus, who is Savior, friend and heaven all in one! God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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PICTURES OF LIFE
NO. 3126

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 7, 1909,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON MONDAY EVENING, JUNE 18, 1855.

"What is your life?"
James 4:14.

[This Sermon was delivered by Mr. Spurgeon on the evening before he came of age, having been born on June 19, 1834. A much later Sermon on the same verse is #1773, Volume 30—WHAT IS YOUR LIFE? It was suggested by the sudden death of the Duke of Albany in 1884. A still later Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon, upon verses 13-17, #2242, Volume 38—GOD'S WILL ABOUT THE FUTURE, was delivered in connection with the "Home going" of Mr. William Olney, and was published in the very week that the Beloved preacher was "called Home" in January 1892—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org .]

IT well behooves me, now that another year of my existence has almost gone, standing on the threshold of a fresh era, to consider what I am, where I am going, what I am doing, whom I am serving and what shall be my reward. I will not, however, do so publicly before you—I hope that I may be enabled to perform that duty in secret. But rather let me turn this occurrence to another account by speaking to you of the frailty of human life, the fleeting nature of time, how swiftly it passes away, how soon we all shall fade as a leaf and how speedily the place which knows us now shall know us no more forever! The Apostle James asks, "What is your life?" and, thanks to inspiration, we are at no great difficulty to give the reply, for Scripture, being the best interpreter of Scripture, supplies us with many very excellent answers. I shall attempt to give you some of them.

I. First, we shall view life with regard to ITS SWIFTNESS.

It is a great fact that though life to the young man, when viewed in the prospect appears to be long, to the old man it is always short and to all men life is really but a brief period. Human life is not long. Compare it with the existence of some animals and trees and how short is human life! Compare it with the ages of the universe and it becomes a span—and especially measure it by eternity—and how little does life appear! It sinks like one small drop into the ocean and becomes as insignificant as one tiny grain of sand upon the seashore!

Life is swift. If you would picture life, you must turn to the Bible—and this evening we will walk through the Bible gallery of old paintings.

You will find its swiftness spoken of in the Book of Job where we are furnished with three illustrations. In the ninth chapter and at the 25th verse, we read, "Now my days are *swifter than a post*." We are, most of us, acquainted with the swiftness of post conveyance. I have sometimes, on an emergency, taken post horses where there has been no railway, and have been amazed and pleased with the swiftness of my journey. But

since, in this ancient book, there can be no allusion to modern posts, we must turn to the manners and customs of the East. And in so doing, we find that the ancient monarchs astonished their subjects by the amazing swiftness with which they received intelligence. By well-ordered arrangements, swift horses and constant relays, they were able to attain a speed which, although trifling in these days, was in those slower ages a marvel of marvels, so that, to an Eastern, one of the clearest ideas of swiftness was that of "a post." Well does Job say that our life is swifter than a post. We ride one year until it is worn out, but there comes another just as swift and we are borne by it—and soon it is gone and another year serves us for a steed! Post house after post house we pass as birthdays successively arrive! We loiter not, but vaulting at a leap from one year to another, still we hurry onward, onward, ever onward! My life is like a post—not like the slow wagon that drags along the road with tiresome wheels, but like a post, it attains the greatest speed!

Job further says, "My days are passed away *as the swift ships*." He increases, you see, the intensity of the metaphor, for if, in the Eastern's idea, anything could exceed the swiftness of the post, it was the swift ship. Some translate this passage as "the ships of desire," that is, the ships hurrying home, anxious for the haven and, therefore, crowding on all sail. You may well conceive how swiftly the mariner flies from a threatening storm, or seeks the port where he will find his home. You have sometimes seen how the ship cuts through the billows, leaving a white furrow behind her and causing the sea to boil around her. Such is life, says Job, "as the swift ships," when the sails are filled by the wind and the vessel dashes on, cleaving a passage through the crowding waves. Swift are the ships, but swifter by far is life! The wind of time bears me along. I cannot stop its motion. I may direct it with the rudder of God's Holy Spirit. I may, it is true, take in some small sails of sin which might hurry my days on faster than otherwise they would go but, nevertheless, like a swift ship my life must speed on its way until it reaches its haven. Where is that haven to be? Shall it be found in the land of bitterness and barrenness, that dreary region of the lost? Or shall it be that sweet haven of eternal peace where not a troubling wave can ruffle the resting glory of my spirit? Wherever the haven is to be, that truth of God is the same—we are "as the swift ships."

Job also says that life is "*as the eagle that hastens to the prey*." The eagle is a bird noted for its swiftness. I remember reading an account of an eagle attacking a fish hawk which had obtained some booty from the deep and was bearing it aloft. The hawk dropped the fish, which fell towards the water, but before the fish had reached the ocean, the eagle had flown more swiftly than the fish could fall and, catching it in its beak, it flew away with it. The swiftness of the eagle is almost incalculable—you see it and it is gone! You see a dark speck in the sky yonder—it is an eagle soaring. Let the fowler imagine that, by and by, he shall overtake it on some mountain's craggy peak—it shall be long gone before he reaches it! Such is our life. It is like an eagle hastening to its prey—not merely an eagle flying in its ordinary course, but an eagle hastening to its prey. Life appears to be hastening to its end! Death seeks the body as its prey—life is ever fleeing from hungry death, but death is

too swift to be outrun—and as an eagle overtakes *his* prey, so shall death!

If we require a further illustration of the swiftness of life, we must turn to two other passages in the Book of Job upon which I shall not dwell. One will be found in the seventh chapter, at the sixth verse, where Job says, "*My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle*," which the weaver throws so quickly that the eyes can hardly discern it. But he gives us a yet more excellent metaphor in the seventh verse of the same chapter, where he says, "O remember that *my life is wind*." Now this excels in velocity all the other figures we have examined. Who can outrun the winds? Proverbially, the winds are rapid—even in their gentlest motion they appear to be swift. But when they rush in the tornado, or when they dash madly on in the hurricane, when the tempest blows and tears down everything—how swift, then, is the wind! Perhaps some of us may have a gentle gale of wind and we may not seem to move so swiftly. But with others who are only just born and then snatched away to heaven, the swiftness may be compared to that of the hurricane which soon snaps the ties of life and leaves the infant dead. Surely our life is like the wind!

Oh, if you could but catch these ideas, my friends! Though we may be sitting still in this chapel, yet you know that we are all really in motion. This world is turning round on its axis once every 24 hours and besides that, it is moving around the sun in the 365 days of the year. So that we are all moving—we are all flitting along through space—and as we are traveling through space, so are we moving through time at an incalculable rate! Oh, what an idea this is could we but grasp it! We are all being carried along as if by a giant angel with broad outstretched wings, which he flaps to the blast and, flying before the lightning, makes us ride on the winds! The whole multitude of us are hurrying along—where, remains to be decided by the test of our faith and the grace of God—but certain it is that we are all traveling! Do not think that you are stable, fixed in one position! Fancy not that you are standing still—you are not! Your pulses each moment beat the funeral marches to the tomb. You are chained to the chariot of rolling time—there is no bridling the steeds, or leaping from the chariot—you must be constantly in motion!

Thus have I spoken of the swiftness of life.

II. But next, I must speak concerning THE UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE, of which we have abundant illustrations. Let us refer to that part of Scripture from which I have chosen my text, the Epistle of James, the fourth chapter, at the 14th verse—"For what is your life? It is even *a vapor* that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." If I were to ask for a child's explanation of this, I know what he would say. He would say, "Yes, it is even a vapor, like a bubble that is blown upward." Children sometimes blow bubbles and amuse themselves. Life is even as that bubble. You see it rising into the air—the child delights in seeing it fly about, but it is all gone in one moment. "It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." But if you ask the poet to explain this, he would tell you that in the morning, sometimes at early dawn, the rivers send up a steamy offering to the sun. There is a vapor, a

mist, an exhalation rising from the rivers and brooks, but in a very little while after the sun has risen, all that mist has gone. Hence we read of "the morning cloud and the early dew that passes away." A more common observer, speaking of a vapor, would think of those thin clouds you sometimes see floating in the air which are so light that they are soon carried away. Indeed, a poet uses them as the picture of feebleness:

"Their hosts are scattered like thin clouds
Before a Biscay gale."

The wind moves them and they are gone. "What is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." So uncertain is life!

Again, if you read in the Book of Ecclesiastes, at the sixth chapter, and the 12th verse, you will there find life compared to something else, even more fragile than a vapor. The wise man there says that it is even "*as a shadow*." Now, what can there be less substantial than a shadow? What substance is there in a shadow? Who can lay hold of it? You may see a person's shadow as he passes you, but the moment the person passes away, his shadow is gone. Yes, and who can grasp his life? Many men reckon upon a long existence and think they are going to live here forever—but who can calculate upon a shadow? Go, you foolish man who says to your soul, "You have much goods laid up for many years—take your ease! Eat, drink and be merry." Go and fill your room with shadows! Go and pile up shadows and say, "These are mine and they shall never depart." "But," you say, "I cannot catch a shadow." No, and you cannot reckon on a year, or even a moment, for it is as a shadow that soon melts away and is gone!

King Hezekiah also furnishes us with a simile where he says that *life is as a thread which is cut off*. You will find this in the prophecy of Isaiah, the 38th chapter, at the 12th verse—"My age is departed and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off my life like a weaver." The weaver cuts off his thread very easily—and so is life soon ended.

I might continue my illustrations at pleasure concerning the uncertainty of life. We might find, perhaps, a score more figures in Scripture if we would search. Take, for instance, the grass, the flowers of the field, etc.

But though life is swift and though it is to pass away so speedily, we are still generally very anxious to know what it is to be while we have it! For we say if we are to lose it soon, still, while we live, let us live—and while we are to be here, be it ever so short a time, let us know what we are to expect in it.

III. And that leads us, in the third place, to look at LIFE IN ITS CHANGES.

If you want pictures of the changes of life, turn to this wonderful book of poetry, the Sacred Scriptures, and there you will find metaphors piled on metaphors! And, first, you will find life compared to *a pilgrimage* by good old Jacob in the 47th chapter of Genesis, and the 9th verse. That hoary headed patriarch, when he was asked by Pharaoh what was his age, replied, "The days of the years of *my pilgrimage* are an hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not obtained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in

the days of their pilgrimage." He calls life a pilgrimage. A pilgrim sets out in the morning and he has to journey many a day before he gets to the shrine which he seeks. What varied scenes the traveler will behold on his way! Sometimes he will be on the mountains, but soon he will descend into the valleys. Here he will be where the brooks shine like silver, where the birds warble, where the air is balmy and the trees are green—and luscious fruits hang down to gratify his taste. And soon he will find himself in the arid desert where no life is found and no sound is heard except the screech of the wild eagle in the air. He finds no rest for the soles of his feet, the burning sky above him and the hot sand beneath him, no shade tree and no house to rest himself. At another time he finds himself in a sweet oasis, resting himself by the wells of water and plucking fruit from palm trees. At one time he walks between the rocks in some narrow gorge where all is darkness. At another time he ascends the hill Mizar! Now he descends into the valley of Baca and soon he climbs the hill of Bashan—and a high hill is the hill Bashan—and yet again going into the mountains of leopards, he suffers trial and affliction.

Such is life, always changing. Who can tell what may come next? Today it is fair, tomorrow there may be the blundering storm. Today I may lack for nothing, tomorrow I may be like Jacob with nothing but a stone for my pillow and the heavens for my curtains! But what a happy thought it is, though we know not how the road winds, we know where it ends! It is the straightest way to heaven to go round about. Israel's 40 years wanderings were, after all, the nearest path to Canaan. We may have to go through trial and affliction. Our pilgrimage may be a tiresome one, but it is safe! We cannot trace the river upon which we are sailing, but we know it ends in floods of bliss at last! We cannot track the roads, but we know that they all meet in the great metropolis of heaven, in the center of God's universe! God help us to pursue the true pilgrimage of a pious life!

We have another picture of life in its changes given to us in the 90th Psalm, at the 9th verse—"We spend our years *as a tale that is told.*" Now David understood about tales that were told. I daresay he had been sometimes annoyed by them and amused by them at other times. There are, in the past, professed storytellers who amused their hearers by inventing tales such as those in that foolish book, *The Arabian Nights*. When I was foolish enough to read that book, I remember sometimes you were with fairies, sometimes with genii, sometimes in palaces, and soon you went down into caverns. All sorts of singular things are conglomerated into what they call a tale. Now, says David, "we spend our years as a tale that is told." You know there is nothing so amazing as the history of the odds and ends of human life. Sometimes it is a merry rhyme, sometimes a prosy subject—sometimes you ascend to the sublime, soon you descend to the ridiculous. No man can write the whole of his own biography! I suppose if the complete history of a man's thoughts and words could be written, the world itself would hardly contain the record, so amazing is the tale that might be told. Our lives are all singular and must, to ourselves, seem strange—of which much might be said—our life is "as a tale that is told."

Another idea we get from the 38th chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, at the 12th verse—"I am removed *as a shepherd's tent.*" The shepherds in the East build temporary huts near the sheep which are soon removed when the flock moves on. When the hot season comes on, they pitch their tents in the most favorable place they can find and each season has its suitable position. My life is like a shepherd's tent. I have already pitched my tent in a variety of places, but where I shall pitch it, by and by, I do not know. I cannot tell. Present probabilities seem to say that—

"Here I shall make my settled rest,
And neither go nor come—
No more a stranger or a guest,
But like a child at home."

But I cannot tell and you cannot, either. I know that my tent cannot be removed till God says, "Go forward." And it cannot stand firm unless He makes it so—

"All my ways shall always be
Ordered by His wise decree."

You have been opening a new shop, lately, and you are thinking of settling down in trade and managing a thriving concern. Now paint not the future too brightly! Do not be too sure as to what is in store for you. Another has, for a long time, been engaged in an old establishment—your father always carried on trade there, and you have no thought of moving. But here you have no abiding city—your life is like a shepherd's tent! You may be here, there, and almost everywhere before you die. It was once said by Solon, "No man ought to be called a happy man till he dies", because he does not know what his life is to be! But Christians may always call themselves happy men, here, because wherever their tent is carried, they cannot pitch it where the cloud does not move and where they are not surrounded by a circle of fire. God will be a wall of fire round about them and their glory in the midst. They cannot dwell where God is not the bulwark of their salvation!

If any of you who are God's people are going to move, or are going to change your employment, start a new business, or move to another county, you need not fear—God was with you in the last place and He will be with you in this! He has said, "Fear you not, for I am with you: be not dismayed, for I am your God." That is an often told story of Caesar in a storm. The sailors were all afraid, but he exclaimed, "Fear not! You carry Caesar and all his fortunes!" So is it with the poor Christian. There is a storm coming on, but fear not—you are carrying Jesus—and you must sink or swim with Him! Well may any true believer say, "Lord, if You are with me, it matters not where my tent is. All must be well, though my life is removed like a shepherd's tent."

Again, our life is compared in the Psalms to *a dream.* Now, if a tale is singular, surely a dream is still more so. If a tale is changing and shifting, what is a dream? As for dreams, those flutters of the benighted fancy, those revelries of the imagination—who can tell what they consist of? We dream of everything in the world and a few things more! If we were asked to tell our dreams, it would be impossible for us to do so. You dream that you are at a feast and lo, the food changes into Pegasus and you are riding through the air! Or suddenly transformed into a morsel for a monster's meal! Such is life. The changes occur as suddenly as they

happen in a dream. Men have been rich one day and they have been beggars the next. We have witnessed the exile of monarchs and the flight of a potentate. Or in another direction, we have seen a man, neither reputable in company nor honorable in station, at a single stride exalted to a throne! And you who would before have shunned him in the streets, were foolish enough to throng your thoroughfares to stare at him! Ah, such is life! Leaves of the Sibyl were not more easily moved by the winds, nor are dreams more variable. "Boast not yourself of tomorrow; for you know not what a day may bring forth." How foolish are those men who wish to pry into the future! The telescope is ready and they are going to look through it, but they are so anxious to see that they breathe on the glass with their hot breath—and they dim it so that they can discern nothing but clouds and darkness! Oh, you who are always conjuring up black fiends from the unknown deep and foolishly vexing your minds with fancies, turn your fancies out of doors and begin to rest on never failing promises! Promises are better than forebodings! "Trust in the Lord and do good; so shall you dwell in the land and verily you shall be fed."

Thus I have spoken of the changes of this mortal life.

IV. And now, to close, let me ask, WHAT IS TO BE THE END OF THIS LIFE?

We read in the Second Book of Samuel, chapter 14 and verse 14—"We will surely die and are as water spilt on the ground which cannot be gathered up again." Man is like a great icicle which the sun of time is continually thawing and which is soon to be as water spilt upon the ground which cannot be gathered up again! Who can recall the departed spirit, or inflate the lungs with a new breath of life? Who can put vitality into the heart and restore the soul from hell? No one! It cannot be gathered up again—the place that once knew it shall know it no more forever.

But here a sweet thought charms us. This water cannot be lost, but it shall descend into the soil to filter through the Rock of Ages—at last to spring up a pure fountain in heaven, cleansed, purified and made clear as crystal! How terrible if, on the other hand, it should percolate through the black earth of sin and hang in horrid drops in the dark caverns of destruction!

Such is life! Then make the best use of it, my friends, because it is fleeting. Look for another life because this life is not a very desirable one—it is too changeable. Trust your life in God's hands because you cannot control its movements. Rest in His arms and rely on His might, for He is able to do for you exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think—and unto His name be glory forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 39.

Verse 1. *I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.* This is what David said—what he had deliberately resolved upon and solemnly determined in his own mind! "I said, I will take heed to my

ways." That is a good thing for all of us to resolve and to say—"I will take heed." To be heedless is to be graceless. No man ever does a good thing by accident. We shall, none of us, get to heaven by blundering.

"I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue." The tongue may be a most powerful instrument of evil. Tongue sins are terrible sins. They are like sparks of fire which may set a whole town on fire. He that can take heed to his tongue will probably be able to manage all the rest of the members of his body. The tongue is the most unmanageable member of our frame and if we sin not with our tongue, we shall most likely be kept from sinning in other ways. "I will keep my mouth with a bridle," says David. It should be rendered, "with a muzzle." He did not mean that he would merely control his tongue, but that he would silence it altogether!

"I will keep my mouth with a muzzle, while the wicked is before me." I do not know whether that was a right resolution on David's part. Tongues were meant to be used and there are often opportunities of using them to God's glory even in the presence of the wicked. Sometimes, we are bound to use our tongue in rebuking their sin, yet we cannot criticize David's resolution very much because when the wicked are before us, it may be only like casting pearls before swine if we begin to speak to them even upon the best themes. And we may be drawn away, by their company, to speak that which is questionable. So that, often, it may be best to keep our mouth muzzled while the wicked are before us.

2. *I was dumb with silence.* "I was as silent as if I had been dumb. I did not say a word." It seems to me that this silence of the Psalmist was partly sullen and partly judicious. "I was dumb with silence."

2. *I held my peace, even from good.* He was a total abstainer from all speech. Perhaps he felt that he could not speak a little without speaking too much and so he refrained from speech altogether. Yet we must not follow his example too closely in this matter, for there is a time for speech as well as a time for silence. It was not good for David to hold his peace even from good. It is good for us to hold our peace rather than speak unwisely, but it would be better for us to speak wisely, discreetly—as God's Spirit should direct us.

2. *And my sorrow was stirred.* It is a great relief to sorrow to be able to speak about it. Be not silent in your grief, lest your grief should burn too fiercely within your heart. It is often one of the signs of a failing mind when persons sit quite still and will not tell their grief to anyone. Tell your grief to your God, first of all, and you may also tell it with advantage to some sympathizing friend. But David felt that he could not speak, so his sorrow was stirred, troubled, agitated, like a pent up fire that must sooner or later burst into a blaze.

3. *My heart was hot within me. While I was musing the fire burned.* While he was musing, his heart was fusing and there was much that was most confusing to him. He saw the prosperity of the wicked and the oppression of the righteous. He heard the reproaches of the ungodly and he felt the stings of affliction and trial in his own soul. So, as he did not speak, his heart grew hot within him. "While I was musing the fire burned. [See Sermon #576, Volume 10—QUIET MUSING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

3. *Then spoke I with my tongue.* We say, "Murder will out," and so will misery. David's heart had become like a volcano and the fire burned so furiously within that he was obliged to let the burning lava flow forth—and so give his soul vent. There is no speech like that which comes from a hot heart! That shot from the tongue which has been made red-hot in the heart is sure to tell upon the adversary. "Then spoke I with my tongue." And what he said was not unwise. There was nothing of boasting or excitement in it—it was a very wise, plain, earnest prayer.

4. *LORD.* That was a good beginning of David's speech. When we turn our burning words towards God and not towards men, good will come of them. David's hot heart finds a vent Godward! This was the wisest thing that he could do, cry unto his God. "Lord."

4. *Make me to know my end.* Did David mean to pray, "Let me die," like Elijah did? I am half afraid that he did. And many a time some of God's servants, in their great heats when their soul has been more full of passion than of faith have prayed in this sense, "Make me to know my end." Yet a better meaning may be put upon the Psalmist's words and we are bound to put the best meaning upon them that we can. He may have meant, "Let me know, Lord, that my sorrows will come to an end, that they are not to last forever." Death may be looked at through the glass of faith till it becomes even a goodly and desirable object! "Lord, make me to know my end."

4. *And the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.* Our days are all measured. They do not come to an end by accident. As merchants measure their yards of silk or cotton goods, so does God measure out life to us. There is not half an inch more or less than God Himself determines that we shall have! If David wanted to know what the measure of his days was, he was trying to pry into the folded leaves of the future. Such prying is both wrong and futile—and we may be thankful that we do not know what the measure of our days is in this sense! We do know that at their utmost, they are not likely to exceed the threescore years and ten, or the fourscore years, which now make up the ordinary measure of human life!

5. *Behold, You have made my days as an handbreadth.* That is a very short measure—the breadth of a hand, the space that we can span with one of our hands—yet that is the true measure of our life! "You have made my days as an handbreadth."

5. *And my age is as nothing before You.* What are 70 or 80 years, even if we live as long as that, out of the thousands of years that men have lived on the face of the earth? One man's life seems but a drop in the great ocean of human history. Yet what an insignificant thing human history itself is! Some thousands of years ago there were no men upon this earth, yet what is the history of the whole world compared with eternity? It is not worth speaking of! It is scarcely one tick of the clock of eternity! Why, this world is only like a newly blown bubble and the sun is but a spark fresh from the eternal fire. As compared with the eternal God, man is a nonentity, a nullity—and David was right when he said to the Lord—"My age is as nothing before You."

5. *Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.* When he is strongest, calmest, happiest. When he is in his prime, when he is at his best—his best, of which he is so vain—is itself vain! Whatever there may be true about man, this is true, that he is unstable and soon passes away. He is constant in nothing but his inconstancy. "Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity."

6. *Surely every man walks in a vain show.* [See Sermon #2346, Volume 40—EARTH'S VANITIES AND HEAVEN'S VERITIES—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This world is a mere theater and men strut across its stage acting their various parts. They come and they go as if they were mere figures moved by invisible wires! The most of men do not live at all, but only *seem* to live, for they have not the true, spiritual, eternal life within them. Every man walks like a performer in a pageant, or like those who march in a procession. We think we are standing still and watching others pass by, but we are, ourselves, part of the vain show and are passing away with the rest!

6. *Surely they are disquieted in vain.* They fret, they fume, they vex themselves, but it is all in vain. They make a noise, so the Hebrew says, in vain. Hear the clamor of the streets. Hear the buzz of the Exchange. Hear the noise of war, the shouts of conflict—it is all in vain, it is all for nothing! You are troubled about your business, troubled about your children, troubled about your wealth, troubled about I know not what—surely you are disquieted in vain! Oh, that we could but believe that all this disquietude is only vanity! Then might we live much more peaceful lives.

6. *He heaps up riches and knows not who shall gather them.* He has cut his corn and it stands in sheaves in the field, but his enemy comes and carts it away! Or if he has gathered it into his granary, it is consumed by rats or mice, or it becomes mildewed and useless! How many there are who spend their lives gathering wealth with the muck rake and then their sons come with the fork and shovel and scatter it quite as quickly as their fathers gathered it! What is the good of getting all this gold together—and stinting yourself in order to get it—when the one who has it after you will never thank you for it, or if he did, you would be dead and buried and would know nothing of his gratitude?

7. *And now, Lord, what do I wait for*? The Psalmist improves as he advances. Now you see that he is cut loose from the world. He has seen the vanity of man and he has seen the vanity of wealth, so he says, "Now, Lord, what do I wait for? What is there here, in this land of shadows, that I should wait for? Why do I sit down where nothing good has ever come, or ever can come?" The ropes that held the balloon to earth are cut and up it mounts!

7. *My hope is in You.* This is a glorious hope! This is a hope that finds its all in God! This hope will outlast death and the grave! This hope will be our treasure in eternity! Can each of you truly say this, "My hope is in You"? Let this be the language of your heart as you speak to your God, "This is what I wait for, that I may enjoy Your presence here and that I may rejoice in Your presence hereafter—I wait for the coming of my Lord! I wait for the time when the Lord shall call me home."

8. *Deliver me from all my transgressions*. That is a better prayer than if David had said, "Deliver me from all my sorrows." Now he has hit the very center of the target! "Deliver me from all my transgressions." So let each one of us pray at this moment, "O Lord, I do not ask to be saved from Your rod, but I do ask to be washed from my sin. Do what You will with me, but do forgive me, do sanctify me, do let me be washed in the precious blood of Jesus! 'Deliver me from all my transgressions.'"

9. *Make me not the reproach of the foolish*. Do not let the wicked be able to say, "See the sadness of that man's countenance! Look how sullen he looks. His face is like a thundercloud, it is clear that a Christian has no joy." Let not the wicked be able to say that, my Lord, but save me from sin and give me the full joy of Your salvation and then they will not be able to reproach me.

9. *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because You did it*. You will understand this verse much better if we read it in another tense, as it should be read—"Now I will be dumb. I will not open my mouth because you did it." David was wrong the first time when he was dumb, but he is right this second time. Two things may be very much like one another outwardly, yet very different inwardly. There is a silence which the Christian ought to keep.

10. *Remove Your stroke away from me.* The child of God who is perfectly resigned to his heavenly Father's will may yet pray to be delivered from his trouble. Prayer for deliverance from grief is quite consistent with perfect submission to the will of God. We may pray, for Jesus prayed, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." But we must take care to also add, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will."

10. *I am consumed by the blow of Your hand*. "You have beaten me sorely! Oh, strike me not again!" This is good pleading, for God does not mean to consume His own children! He means to consume our sins—and when He makes us cry, "Deliver me from all my transgressions," and when we submit to His holy will, He will soon put His rod away. As soon as you are willing to bear it, you shall not have to bear it any longer. When you submit yourself to the stroke, then the stroke will cease to be given!

11. *When You with rebukes do correct man for iniquity, You make his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity. Selah.* When God whips His children, He does not play with them. God is in earnest even if we are not. And when He corrects us, He means us to feel His rod—and He means us to bear the scars it leaves upon us! There must be real strokes and real smarts before we are likely to be cured of sin and, sometimes, when He is dealing in chastisement with His people, He makes their beauty to depart like a piece of cloth or fur when the moth gets into it and utterly destroys it. What a poor thing beauty is if the moth can eat it up! If a little affliction can take away our beauty, we may well pray for that beauty for which Moses pleaded, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." That is a beauty of quite another kind—the beauty of divine grace which no moth can consume. But if we have

not that, our beauty is a poor thing. Let no man, let no woman be vain of beauty which can so soon be gone!

12. *Hear my prayer, O LORD.* David is dumb, yet he prays. Dumb as to complaints, but eloquent as to pleading with his God.

12. *And give ear unto my cry.* The Psalmist goes from pleading to crying. And believers often thus intensify their prayers. There is something more sorrowful, more earnest, more prevalent about crying unto God than mere ordinary praying. "Give ear unto my cry."

12. *Hold not Your peace at my tears.* David goes still further, for the most eloquent things in the world are tears. They are the irresistible weapons of weakness. Many a woman, many a beggar, many a child has gained by tears what could not be obtained in any other way—so David pleaded most powerfully when he prayed, "Hold not Your peace at my tears."

12. *For I am a stranger with You, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.* "You do entertain me in Your tent as I have entertained wanderers many a time. I have broken bread with You and eaten of Your salt. Be kind to the stranger and sojourner as You have bidden Your servants to be." Or does David mean that, as God is a stranger in His own world, so are we while necessarily passing through it?

13. *O spare me.* That is a singular petition, for just now he seemed to be wanting to get to the end of his days, yet he says, "O spare me," like Elijah, who was afraid to die and so ran away from Jezebel and then prayed to God, "Let me die." So are God's children still a mass of contradictions—longing for death and yet, when death comes, they cry, "O spare me! O spare me!"

13. *That I may recover strength before I go from here and am no more.* "Give me a little respite that I may take my nourishment and have my sleep before I go hence to be no more, for soon I shall do that. But first give me a little interlude, wherein I may again take my harp and sing to Your praise." If worldlings cannot understand this mingled experience, God's children know that this is only one of the many paradoxes with which they are perfectly familiar! In any case, may each one of us be ready when it shall be God's time for us to "go from here and are no more"!

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

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A PROMISE AND PRECEDENT
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A SERMON
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"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—
Sermons #565, Volume 8—THE HOLY SPIRIT GLORIFYING CHRIST,
#2212, Volume 37—"HONEY IN THE MOUTH!"
and #3062, Volume 53—THE SPIRIT'S OFFICE TOWARDS DISCIPLES—
Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

JESUS CHRIST, our gracious Lord and Master, is here speaking of the Holy Spirit and He says of Him, "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you." Our Lord Jesus Christ, in His own personal teaching, did not plainly declare all the truths which He intended to reveal because the Holy Spirit was not then given to His disciples and they were not, at that time, able to receive all that He might have taught them. He Himself said to them, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now." The germ of everything that would be revealed was in the teaching of Christ, but not the full development of it. That was left till after the Holy Spirit had been given on the day of Pentecost. In the Acts of the Apostles, in their various epistles and in the Apocalypse given to John, we have the full revelation of the truth of God—the Holy Spirit there taking of the things of Christ and revealing them to us and also, according to His promise, showing us, in the Book of the Revelation, "things to come."

Note that our Savior did not go away from His disciples and leave the Spirit to come upon them without previously intimating to them the fact that He was coming. He prepared them for the change. While He was here upon earth, He was personally at the head of His people and as it was His purpose that the Holy Spirit should act as His substitute during His absence, He informed His followers that it would be so. He told them that the Spirit of God would come, that He would more fully reveal the great truths which He had Himself taught to His disciples and that He would apply the truths already revealed to the hearts of His people so that they would be able to understand much that had, up to now, been beyond their comprehension. There was no separation of the dispensation of Christ from that of the Holy Spirit, but they were dovetailed and pieced into one another by these memorable words of the

Lord Jesus just before He went to Gethsemane and Calvary—"He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you."

In considering this declaration of our Savior with regard to the Holy Spirit, we shall view it in three aspects, praying that God will make it a blessing while we are meditating upon it. We shall, first, *view the text doctrinally.* Secondly, *consider it as a promise.* And, thirdly, *look upon it as a precedent or model by which we should work.*

I. First, then, WE WILL VIEW THE TEXT DOCTRINALLY.

This declaration of Christ contains some most important doctrines and the best is this—that *it is the office and aim of the Holy Spirit to glorify Jesus Christ.* No study in Scripture is more interesting or profitable to the Christian than the revelation which is given to us concerning the sacred Trinity and the various parts which the divine persons take in the work of our salvation. John Bunyan wrote a notable work upon the Trinity and the Christian—and nothing could be more appropriate, for there would be no Christian without the Trinity! It needs the Father, the Son and the Spirit to produce that noblest kind of man, a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ! The various offices of the blessed Trinity in unity are usually distinct and clearly defined, yet they sometimes intertwined and interchange, just as Jesus in our text bears witness to the Spirit and the Spirit continually bears witness to the Lord Jesus and glorifies Him. Brothers and sisters, I pray you will remember that when the Spirit convicts the world of sin, it is in order that the convicted sinner may learn the preciousness of that Savior to whom the Spirit bears witness! When He convicts the world of judgment, it is not only that the judge may be honored as He deserves to be, but also that the way by which judgment may be averted through the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ may be made clear to the sinner's mind. And when He convicts the world of righteousness, what righteousness is it but that which Jesus Christ has worked out and brought in—that righteousness alone in which saved sinners are able to appear before God without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing? The Holy Spirit always works with this aim and objective—to lead sinners to admire, adore and trust in Jesus Christ! His omnipotence bends itself to this end—that Jesus Christ may be glorified in the hearts and lives of sinners saved by His grace!

I gather from our text another doctrine, namely, that, *any teaching which does not glorify Jesus Christ is not the teaching of the Holy Spirit.* By this simple test, the humblest among us may be able to judge even that form of teaching which is most pretentious. And if it cannot endure this test, it may be rejected without hesitation! The poorest man, who enters any assembly, if he hears a doctrine that glorifies Christ, can say, "I may safely listen to this teaching, for the Spirit of God will set His seal to it." But if, on the other hand, amidst a blaze of intellectual splendor and a brilliant display of mere human knowledge, nothing is said that will glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, the true child of God says to himself, "What business have I to be in this place? This is not the company that

is congenial to me, nor the teaching to which I ought to give heed. Here is neither the food for my soul nor yet the opportunity of glorifying my dear Lord and Master! I will leave this assembly and seek to find some other place where the Spirit of God is at work in His chosen ministry of glorifying Christ." Thus the great doctrine that it is the Spirit's work to glorify Christ furnishes us with a spiritual detector by which we may discover what is true gold and what is counterfeit—and by which we may judge whether the voices that we hear are voices of the night which cry out to us to follow them in the darkness, or the voices of the dawning which herald the coming of the day!

There is this further doctrine in the text, that *the Holy Spirit, in glorifying Christ, acts in sacred concert with the other persons of the blessed Trinity*, for Jesus said, "He shall receive of Mine." I am not going to explain this declaration of Christ. I cannot do so, for I do not, myself, fully understand it. All I can say is that the Holy Spirit is represented here as receiving the things of Christ. Now the Holy Spirit is continually spoken of in the Scriptures as divine and He certainly is divine—yet Christ here says that He receives or takes from the Father the things of Christ that He may show them to us. They are not His own things—things of His own devising or suggesting—but those which Christ calls His. So, just as Jesus said that He did not come in His own name, but in the name of the Father who had sent Him, so the Spirit of God does not come in His own name, nor come with His own message—but He receives the things of Christ and shows them to us. I delight in this sharing of the great work by the glorious Trinity in unity! I love to see the Father, Son and Spirit all taking part in the salvation of the elect! Just as in the Creation, God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness," and there was a council held to decide as to that early work, so here it is not merely one of the persons of the Trinity, but all three who are concerned in the greater work of man's new creation! The Spirit receives from the Father the things of Christ and so it is as though God said, "Let Us make man new in Our image, after Our likeness." Father, Son and Spirit work together in perfecting the new creation—so let us always give undivided and equal honor to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit—

"Give to the Father praise,
Give glory to the Son,
And to the Spirit of His grace
Be equal honor done!"

Further, I want you to notice that *the Holy Spirit, being bent upon glorifying Christ, glorifies Him with His own things*. Jesus says, "He shall receive of Mine." The Holy Spirit does not go after something apart from Christ in order to bring glory to Christ—if Christ is to be glorified, the crown must be made out of His own jewels—and the jewels must be found in His own mine! So, beloved, in order to honor Christ, you must

go to Christ—you must find Christ's honors in Christ Himself. Even the Holy Spirit, who is omniscient, does not look outside of Christ in order to find something with which to glorify Him. "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine." And none of us can ever honor Christ by bringing anything to Him. If we want to honor Him, we must honor Him with that which is already His own. If I want to honor the Lord Jesus Christ at this moment, how can I do it better than by preaching of His own person, His own manhood, His own Godhead, His own life, His own death, His own resurrection, His own ascension and His own coming again in the glory of His Father with the holy angels? It must be with the things of Christ that we honor Christ!

If the Holy Spirit willed to do so, He could bring forth matchless novelties in honor of Christ, but He does not will to do so. He honors Christ with that which is Christ's—and if you and I, standing in the pulpit or anywhere else, want to honor Christ, we must not seek to invent some brilliant thought from our own brain, or come before our fellows to display the results of our own wonderful culture—the grand flowers which we have grown in the well tilled garden of our own highly educated minds! Oh no—Christ must have His own flowers to smell if He is to have a sweet and acceptable posy brought to Him! The ingredients of the incense put into His censer must be all His own—nothing else will be acceptable to Him. Even in the Song of Solomon, you remember that when Christ comes into His own garden, He says, "I have gathered My myrrh with My spice; I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey; I have drunk My wine with My milk." Nothing will so glorify Christ as that which is already His own! The Spirit of God knows this and, therefore, in order to glorify Christ, He takes of Christ's own things and of nothing else.

Continuing a little further—this view of the doctrine in the text—I would remind you that when the Holy Spirit wishes to glorify Christ with Christ's own things, *He presents them to the hearts of believers—"*He shall receive of Mine, and shall *show* it unto you." Without His divine assistance, you cannot see it—not because it is not visible, but because your eyes are too dim to perceive it. The work of the Spirit of God is to shine upon the beauties of Christ so that we can see them. And when He does so illuminate them, it is a glorifying of Christ for us to see those beauties! It is not merely to Christ's glory for us to talk about them—that is another way of glorifying Him—but if you cannot talk, if you have no gifts of eloquence, notice this blessed truth of God and be comforted by it—Christ is glorified by your *seeing* His glory! Suppose that you are so slow of speech that you cannot even tell your own wife or child what you have seen of the beauties of Christ, yet the Holy Spirit has glorified Christ when He has shown those beauties to you. Perhaps you are only a poor servant, or a humble working man living and laboring in obscurity—or possibly a young child or a maiden scarcely known beyond your own family circle, yet believe me—when you see the Lord Jesus

Christ in His beauty, as He is revealed to you by the light of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ is glorified! It is true that He is glorified when I proclaim His dear name to the thousands who gather in this house of prayer, but He is also glorified in that little bedroom of yours where, perhaps in the dead of night when you lie awake, you say to yourself, "Precious Christ, what a dear Savior You are to me!" When you get a fresh view of Him; when you catch a new ray of light streaming upon His blessed countenance and you perceive a few more of those lines of love that are written there—Jesus Christ is glorified! I think this is part of what Christ meant when He said to His disciples concerning the Holy Spirit, "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you."

Oh, what a wondrous view of Christ the Holy Spirit sometimes gives us! As yet, however, I am afraid that very few of us have had more than a partial view of Him. Have you not sometimes stood upon a hill when it has been a day of mingled cloud and sunshine and there has been a break in the clouds—and the sun has shone through and that hill over yonder has been all ablaze with the golden sunlight—and that part of the landscape has been marvelously illuminated? All down the valley there was gloom. But presently the clouds shifted again and then the beams of light traveled down into the plains and the river flowing below flashed in the sunlight while the hill was once more enveloped in shade! As the clouds continued to move, the sunshine kept lighting up different parts of the landscape. It is just like that with regard to our view of Christ! The Spirit of God, who is the very perfection of light, shines upon Christ with a brilliance that the sun never possessed! Sometimes the Spirit shines upon Christ's priesthood and oh, what a wonderful sight it is, then, for us to see Christ offering up Himself as the one great sacrifice for sin! Another time it may be that the Spirit shines especially upon the prophetic character of Christ and we then admire Him as revealing God to us and teaching us the truth! Perhaps the next day the Spirit shows us Christ's royal character and then we cry, or more probably we sing—

"All hail the power of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall!
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all!
Babes, men and sires who know His love,
Who feel your sin and thrall,
Now joy with all the hosts above
And crown Him Lord of all!"

Sometimes a beam of light will shine upon Christ's hands that were pierced by the nails and then we wonderingly ask, "How could the hands of the Creator of the universe be thus nailed to the tree for us?" And soon the Spirit's bright light gleams upon the face of Jesus and we then—

"See divine compassion
Floating in His languid eyes"

as He bows His head to death for us. But what will it be if the Holy Spirit shall be pleased to give us a full view of Christ upon the cross? Then will our happy spirits indeed glorify Him and each redeemed one will softly sing:

"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the cross I spend.
Life, and health, and peace possessing
From the sinner's dying friend.
Here I'll sit forever viewing
Mercy's streams, in streams of blood.
Precious drops! My soul bedewing
Plead and claim my peace with God.
Here it is I find my heaven
While upon the cross I gaze—
Love I much? I've more forgiven.
I'm a miracle of grace."

Oh, for such a sight of Christ as that, for thus Jesus is glorified and we are truly blessed!

II. Now secondly, I want to show you that THE TEXT MAY BE VIEWED AS A PROMISE. He shall—these are three of the blessed "shalls" and "wills" of Christ—"He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you."

Come, dear child of God, and lay hold of this precious promise of Christ! If you get the promise of a man and you believe that he is an honest man, you value his promise. But here you have the promise of your God and Savior, Jesus Christ, the faithful promiser, so you may well prize that! Are you not sometimes the subject of grave doubts as to whether you really glorify Christ? If so, fall back upon His blessed promise. The Holy Spirit in you shall glorify Christ, for He shall take of the things of Christ and shall show them to you. Possibly you fear that in the days to come, you will bring no glory to Christ. You know your own feebleness, your lack of talent and your lack of opportunity for glorifying Christ. You have cried many a time:

"Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise!
The glories of my God and King
The triumphs of His grace!"

Yet you grieve that you cannot glorify Him and you are afraid that you never will be able to do so. Listen to this precious promise again—"He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you," even to you, though you are His poorest, weakest, meanest child! Though you will not be able to say much about it to others, you will glorify Christ by looking at Him as He is revealed to you by the Holy Spirit! We honor the sun as we look at it, or bask in its beams—I do not know what else we can do to show our appreciation of the sun but lie in the sunlight and thank God for letting the sun shine upon us. I have often thought of the lilies and the roses in the garden and of how they praise the God who made them. Not by singing, as the birds do, nor by lowing, like the cattle,

nor by clapping their hands in joy and exultation like the trees of the woods do—the lilies and the roses praise God by just receiving from Him everything that they possess, drinking in His dew and rain and sunshine and standing there in all their beauty pouring out the fragrance that He has poured into them! And that is how you must glorify Christ, my brothers and sisters who are in Him. See Christ as the Spirit shows Him to you! Receive of His fullness, pour out the grace that He has poured into you—and you shall in this way glorify Christ!

Now, beloved, *this promise is being daily fulfilled in all true believers*. God is being glorified in them by their sight of the Lord Jesus Christ as He is revealed to them by the Holy Spirit. As they walk to and from their daily work. As they sit down for a while to read their Bibles. As they kneel in prayer at their bedsides and are lost in wonder, love and praise at the Spirit's revelation of the beauties of Christ, Christ is being glorified by the Holy Spirit in them! Do not talk to me of your fine "altars" studded with all manner of precious gems, with flowers, candles and images thereon. Do not tell me about your grand cathedrals with all the splendor of their architecture! The best altar in the world is a broken and a contrite heart and the truest cathedral is a soul that is rejoicing in the indwelling God! When the Holy Spirit comes and reveals Christ in the soul, there is the altar, there is the temple, there is the true worship for which God cares beyond all else—and that is really glorifying Christ!

As this promise is being thus constantly fulfilled, I am sure, beloved, that it is most desirable that it should be more and more fulfilled and, therefore, I exhort you to *plead it before God*. Say, "Lord, will You graciously bid the Holy Spirit to glorify Christ in me and to reveal Christ to me more than He has ever yet done?" As you offer this prayer, if you really mean it, you will be more earnest than you have ever been in your meditation concerning Christ, in your searching of the Word of God to find out all that you can about Christ and in your fellowship with Christ. What a man truly prays for, he diligently seeks after until he obtains it if it really is in accordance with the will of God. If our minds are entirely occupied with the *world*, is it at all likely that the Spirit of God will show the things of Christ to us? We must give adequate space to the Spirit. We must give Him time and opportunities—putting other things away from us and placing our souls before the Spirit in a waiting and expectant attitude! As sensitive plates are put before that object which they are intended to reproduce, so let us be placed before the view of Christ which the Spirit of God desires to reveal to us—then the image of Christ shall be imprinted upon us and thus He will first be glorified by our seeing Him in the light that the Spirit sheds upon Him, and then He will be further glorified by others seeing His likeness reproduced in us!

I think I have clearly shown you that our text is a promise made by Christ to His disciples. And I have also shown you that it is a promise which ought to be pleaded at the throne of grace, so may I entreat every

Christian here to really plead it? A promise is just like a check—but a check is of no real value unless it is taken to the bank and exchanged for cash. You know how we cash our checks—why do we not take God's promises to Him to have them fulfilled just as readily as we take man's promises to the bank to have them fulfilled? I think that a good many long prayers which some consider very fine things, are merely exhibitions of uncertainty and unbelief. If I have a check about the genuineness of which there is some doubt—and I take it to the bank—it is probable that I shall be delayed some little time while there is a conversation between the clerks concerning it—a comparison of signatures, an examination of ledgers and ever so many other things. But if I have a genuine check about which there is no question whatever, what is the usual order of procedure? I go to the counter, put the check down, perhaps scarcely say a word except to indicate how I will take the change, pick up my sovereigns or bank notes and walk away! And that is how I like to pray—I ask God for what He has promised to give me. I believe that He will fulfill His promise and I go my way feeling sure that I have received that for which I asked! As a sensible man, when he has received from the bank clerk the change for his check, puts the money in his pocket and goes about his business, so should you act towards your God when you pray to Him. Say, "Lord, You have promised such and such a blessing to me. I come to You and plead Your own promise. And I believe that You will fulfill it to me." At all events, that is the way that I delight to pray.

You ask me, "Would you not be longer in prayer than that?" No, not on that one occasion. I shall probably be at the bank with another check, presently, so I cannot afford to take more time than is necessary with this one. You can do a great deal of business at this blessed bank if you do it quickly! But if you waste your time loitering at the counter and chatting with the clerk, that is not the way to honor the great Lord of the bank! Some people seem to think that in prayer, they must go through the Westminster Assembly's Confession of Faith, or some similar compendium of doctrine—but that is not real praying. If, however, you will do your business with your God just as you would do your business with your banker, you will be sure to come back to Him again and again, for there is no man who does so much of this sacred business of pleading with God as the man who is most successful with Him! If you have succeeded once in prayer, I guarantee that you will pray again! And after a second time of successful pleading, you will pray a third time more easily and more confidently! And God will take care that you shall have plenty of reasons for praying! Only do make it real praying. Say, "Lord Jesus, You have said that the Holy Spirit shall glorify You by taking of Your things and showing them to Your people. I believe it, Lord. Let me prove it to be true at the communion table tonight! Let me prove it to be true in my private devotions all through this week! Let me prove it to be true all through this year and all through my life." Pray thus, and then, according to your faith shall it be unto you!

III. Now we shall think of the text in the last way which I indicated, AS A PRECEDENT FOR GLORIFYING CHRIST.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, I know that a great number of you who are now present wish above all things that the Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in this world. And I also know that you who have tasted that the Lord is gracious have this for your highest ambition, that you may, by some means or other, by sickness or by health, by poverty or by wealth, by life or by death, bring glory to Him. Very well, then, that being the case, let this text be a guide to you in your efforts.

In order to glorify Christ, it seems, first, that *it will be wisdom on your part to rely upon the Holy Spirit*. You say that you want to glorify Christ—that is also what the Holy Spirit wants to do! That is what He has long been doing and is still doing—therefore cast in your lot with Him—get Him to help you do the same work as He is doing. I have sometimes seen some young fellows rowing upstream, and it has been a heavy task to them. But there has come along a barge pulled quickly by horses, or better still, a steam launch, and the young men have called out to those on board, "Throw us a rope, please!" And then those who were before toiling in rowing have gone along easily enough. So, when I see the Spirit of God contending against all opposition—steaming upstream, as it were—in order to glorify Christ. As I need to go upstream, too, for the same purpose, I seek to act in connection with His omnipotence, so that He may work with me and that I may be drawn onward and upward by His almighty power! My sister, do not go to that Sunday school class of yours again until you have asked the Holy Spirit to go with you! My brother, do not go up those pulpit stairs again, nor even up the stairs of that infirmary where you go visit the sick, or of that prison where you go to visit the inmates without first saying, "Spirit of God, it is Your business to glorify Christ and that is also my business—so will You graciously go with me and go in me? Give me the right words to utter and the right spirit in which to utter them. You and I are perfectly agreed in what we are seeking in this matter. Oh, work by me so that Jesus Christ may be glorified!"

I see also another thing in this precedent, which is that *if I want to glorify Christ, I must first take care to apprehend Him clearly myself*. Two of Christ's declarations in the text show me this. The Holy Spirit does not glorify Christ till first He receives of the things of Christ—"He shall receive of Mine." And then He does not glorify Christ in us except by showing the things of Christ to us, so that if you and I want to glorify Christ, our first objective must be to see Him and to see His glory for ourselves. You cannot, I think, do good to others to any great extent unless you are living in the light of God's countenance. The Lord's general rule is first to give the provision into the disciples hands before those disciples are able to feed the multitude. Wait awhile, dear brother, and go to your Lord and say to Him, "Lord, fill me with Your own

fullness, for how can I hope to pour out to others till You have done so? Show me Yourself, for how can I describe You to others unless I have Your image very vividly revealed to my own mind and heart? If I am myself rejoicing in You, then shall I be able to tell others, with fluent tongue, how gracious You are. If I hear Your voice giving me a message to deliver from You, then shall I be able to tell the message with all the greater impressiveness and power because I received it first from You."

The next point is also clear from the precedent of the text—that is, in conjunction with the Holy Spirit, having ourselves apprehended Christ—*if we want to glorify Christ, we must tell others about the things of Christ.* "You have said that already," says someone. Very well, then, if I have. I will say it again because I do not know anything that needs more to be said nowadays than this—that the way for any of us to glorify Jesus is to show to others the things of Jesus. How many congregations there are in which the greatest treat to the people would be a sermon about the Lord Jesus Christ and especially about His substitutionary sacrifice! I have heard it said that there are thousands of sermons preached about the gospel, but very few in which there is the gospel, itself. This will not do! Souls will never be saved that way! Nobody has ever had his hunger satisfied by hearing a discourse about bread! It is bread, itself, that is needed to feed the hungry, so keep on, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, giving the bread of life to starving souls! I know that many call us fools and say that we are the old stick in the mud Puritans who never get any further—but never mind, dear friends, what they say—keep on feeding the hungry! We do not mean to change our message even if all should reject it. Here we have stood, these many years, talking to you about Jesus Christ and Him crucified—and if anybody heard us 20 years ago and shall come again now, he will hear just the same message as he heard then! Why do we not make progress, as others do? Simply because there is nothing which we should regard as progress except progressing in the knowledge of this precious truth of Jesus Christ and Him crucified!

In the infallible truth of God, which has been revealed by the Holy Spirit, there is no possibility of progress or advance! He has been pleased to reveal the whole truth, so there is nothing more to be revealed! We can continually search further and deeper into the truth that has been revealed, and so may be enabled, by the help of the Spirit of God, to speak better concerning it, but better truth we never shall have and "another gospel" we never will declare! We should certainly be "accursed" if we did, for there is but one gospel—and to that gospel we shall remain steadfast, God helping us—even to the end. Hit that nail on the head again, brother! Drive it in further and clinch it on the other side. Stick to the gospel! It may be a long time before it wins, but it will win in the long run! Some say that it is going out of fashion, and that it is at a discount. We were told, the other day, that Calvinism is almost obsolete, but we do not mind what men say about it—we believe that it will yet see everything

else obsolete! When modern culture has been blown away, like the thistledown from the side of the hill, the gospel I have preached will stand like the eternal hills, themselves, outliving every opposition, for God Himself has piled this truth like a mighty mountain and it shall stand fast till Christ Himself shall come! Not a jot or tittle of it shall ever pass away. The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ by taking of the things of Christ, so let us take care that we follow that precedent and glorify Christ in the same way!

But with regard to the things of Christ, of course *the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ by explaining them, by showing them to us*. So, beloved, your business and mine is to make the things of Christ plain to people as far as we can. Show them to them—turn them first one way and then another—try and get them to see all of them that there is to be seen. You have not wasted your time if you have taught one child to read and understand one verse like this, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." You have done something that was worth doing if you have only whispered into one human ear this short message, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." In some way or other, keep on showing to saints and sinners the things of Christ! That will glorify Christ, somehow or other, both in them that are saved and in them that perish—and will be a sweet savor unto God in every place where Christ is made known! Keep on then, my dear fellow workers, at this blessed work of glorifying Christ!

There are many of you who are doing this under great discouragements, but I pray you not to leave off doing it. It is the Holy Spirit's way to continue this work unceasingly, so let it be your way, also, as long as you live! But take care that the things which you show to others are the things which you have really received yourself. You must have experimental religion, or else you cannot tell of it to others with any hope that they will accept it. How idle it would be for me to come here to preach to you of a way of salvation which I had never tried and proved in my own experience! It would be as foolish as for a sick man to stand before a company of his fellow patients and recommend to them a medicine which he had never taken! Do not be guilty of such inconsistency, dear friends, but live upon Christ! Get more and more of Christ into your soul and then you will be able to go and say to others, "We have found Him of whom Moses and the Prophets did write! We have found Him whom God has set forth to be the propitiation for our sins, the healer of all our wounds, the Comforter in all our woes." They will probably say to you, "What do you know about all this?" Then you will begin to tell how you were broken down on account of sin and how Jesus met with you in His mercy and saved you with His great salvation! As you tell the story, they will want to know more and more about it, for personal narratives are always interesting! And then you will, by and by, see the tears glistening in their eyes as one or another tremblingly asks,

"Would Jesus save *me* in that way? I wonder if I went to Him and confessed my sin, whether I, too, would receive pardon and become a child of God." Then you would seize the golden opportunity and, laying a loving hand upon his shoulder, you would say, "Come, dear friend, let us kneel down and pray together. Let us together seek that dear Savior who has said, 'Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.'"

If you are moved to act and speak like that, I cannot tell how often God the Holy Spirit would glorify Christ by enabling you, first, to receive the things of Christ, yourself, and then to so show them to others that they would be moved to say, "We will go with you to the cross of Calvary. We will go with you to the sinner's Savior. Where you were saved, there we, also, will be saved." How I wish that all in this congregation would make this resolve now through the effectual working of the ever blessed Spirit, "Jesus is a great Savior! We will have Him as our Savior." How I wish that this sacred impulse might come upon all of us who are now in this building, that we might all be unhappy and unsatisfied until we found Christ! That is the way for you to glorify Christ, sinner—not for you to bring Him any of your own goodness—but to go to Him and take of His goodness! Not for you to try to make yourself better, but to come to Him just as you are, and accept Him as your Savior, to be your Lord and Master forever!

May the Holy Spirit lead you to do so! Do it, blessed Spirit! You love to glorify Christ—here is Your opportunity in this vast congregation! Come and work this great work for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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GOOD CHEER FROM CHRIST'S REAL PRESENCE
NO. 3128

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 1909,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Immediately He constrained His disciples to get into the boat, and to go before Him to the other side to Bethsaida, while He sent away the people. And when He had sent them away, He departed into a mountain to pray. And when evening was come, the boat was in the midst of the sea, and He alone on the land. And He saw them toiling in rowing, for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. But when they saw Him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: for they all saw Him, and were troubled. And immediately He talked with them, and said unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I, be not afraid. And He went up unto them into the boat, and the wind ceased: and they were sorely amazed among themselves beyond measure, and wondered. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their hearts were hardened."
Mark 6:45-52.

WE have here a word of comfort given to a shipload of believers *who were where their Lord had sent them*. They had been unwilling to put out to sea, though it was probably calm enough at the time, but they did not wish to leave the Lord Jesus. He constrained them to go and thus their sailing was not merely under His sanction, but by His express command. They were in their right place and yet they met with a terrible storm. The little inland sea upon which they sailed lies in a deep hollow and from the shore there pours a sudden downdraft of tremendous wind for which it is not possible to be prepared. By one of these whirlwinds the whole sea was stirred up to boiling, as only those little lakes can be. So, though they were where Jesus bade them go, they were in desperate peril, and you, dear friends, must not think that you are in a wrong position because you are in trouble. Do not consider that adverse circumstances are a proof that you have missed your road, for they may even be an evidence that you are in the good old way since the path of believers is seldom without trial. You did well to embark and to leave the shore, but remember, though your Lord has insured the vessel and guaranteed that you shall reach your haven, He has not promised that you shall sail over a sea of glass. On the contrary, He has told you that "the world you shall have tribulation" and you may all the more confidently believe in Him because you find His warning to be true!

Their Lord had bid His disciples make for the other side and, therefore, they did their best and continued rowing all night, but making no progress whatever because the wind was dead against them. It was with difficulty that they could keep what little way they had made and not be blown back again to the starting place. Probably you have heard it said that if a Christian does not go forward, he goes backward—that is

not altogether true, for there are times of spiritual trial when if a man does not go backward, he is really going forward. "Stand fast" is a precept, which, when well kept, may involve as much virtue as, "press forward." A master of a steam vessel will put on all steam and drive right into the teeth of a hurricane and remain perfectly satisfied if the good boat can only keep from being driven on shore. The apostolic crew rowed, and rowed, and rowed—and it was no fault of theirs that they made no progress, "for the wind was contrary unto them." The Christian may make little or no headway and yet it may be no fault of his, for the wind is contrary. Our good Lord will take the will for the deed and reckon our progress, not by our apparent advance, but by the hearty intent with which we tug at the oars!

Often, when a believer groans in prayer and cannot pray, he has offered the best prayer. And when he tries to win men's hearts and does not win them, his zeal is as acceptable as if it convinced a nation—and when he would do good and finds evil present with him—there is good in the desire. If he threw up the oars and drifted with the wind, that would be another thing, but if our Lord sees him, "toiling in rowing," albeit no progress is made, He has never a word to say against His servant, but He will bid him, "be of good cheer."

It does not appear, from the narrative, that the disciples had any fear about the storm except such as might naturally arise even in the minds of fishermen when they were dreadfully tossed upon the sea. They probably said to one another, "Did not our Master constrain us to set forth on this voyage? Though we met with this storm, we are not to be blamed." Certain believers, who have lately been brought to know the Lord, have been great losers in temporal things by becoming Christians. What then? Let them not be terrified by this fact—even Christ's boat is tossed with tempest. Let them row on against the wind and even if the storm increases in fury, let them not lose heart. One who knew the seas right well exclaimed, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him." And in so doing he glorified God and before long found himself in a great calm. Does Jesus bid us make for the shore? Then let us row on, even if we cannot make headway, for Jesus knows all about it and orders all things well.

Why, then, did our Savior, when He came to this shipload of apostles who had been toiling and rowing, say to them, "Be of good cheer"? They were bold, brave men, and were not at all afraid of the sea. What, then, did they fear? He would not have so spoken unless they had been afraid of *something*—and on looking at the text, we see, to our astonishment, that *they were afraid of Jesus Himself*. They were not afraid of wind and storms and waves and tempests, but they were afraid of their best friend! That is the point which He aimed at by saying, "Be of good cheer: it is I, be not afraid." We will first think over *the cause of their fear.* Then secondly, we will meditate upon *the method by which Jesus cheered them.* And thirdly, we will reflect upon *the times when we shall need just such a good word as this*.

I. First, then, dear friends, consider with me THE CAUSE OF THEIR FEAR.

If we had not sailed over the same lake, I mean if we had not suffered the same experience, it might have surprised us that they were afraid of their Lord. He was appearing for them and coming to their rescue. He was about to still the tempest for them, yet they were afraid *of Him;* of Him whom they loved and trusted. So blind were their eyes, so hardened were their hearts, that they were afraid of their Lord and afraid of Him when He was giving them the best reasons for trusting Him. Before their eyes He was displaying Himself as Lord over all—Master of wind and wave—and yet they were afraid of Him. The greatness of His power would have comforted them had they understood the truth—but they did not consider the miracle of the loaves and, therefore, they were in a state of perplexity and were sorely afraid.

Meanwhile Jesus was acting in great gentleness to them. He was displaying His power, but it was not in a dazzling and overwhelming manner. Admire the sacred gentleness which made Him move as though He would have passed by them. If He had suddenly appeared in brilliant light in the middle of the boat, He might well have astounded them and driven them to fright. If, in a moment, He had shone forth just at the stern, or alighted from the heavens upon the deck, they would have been petrified with alarm! But He began by showing Himself on the crest of the billow—and one cried to his fellow, "Do you see that strange light yonder?" They watch and Jesus comes nearer! They can discern a figure. They can see a man step from wave to wave with majestic tread. In tenderness He will not flash upon them all at once. As when the morning breaks by slow increase of light, so Jesus came to His timid followers. Even then He moved as though He would pass by them, that they might not be alarmed by His appearing to bear down upon them as an adversary. Even thus He manifests Himself to us in the riches of His grace in all wisdom and prudence!

The fears of the trembling crew were sufficiently aroused by even seeing Him at a distance—they were so afraid that they cried out thinking that they saw a ghost. What would they have done had He not, in gentleness to their weakness, manifested Himself gradually to them and set Himself in a sidelight? Take what way the Master might, His disciples were still afraid—and we are not much wiser nor much more courageous than they were. The manifestation of the Christ of God to us in all His glory will have to be by degrees as long as we are in this body and, perhaps even in heaven. It may not be at the very first that we shall be able to endure the fullness of its joy. Even there He may have to lead us to fountains of water which at the first we did not discover and guide us into more and more of that superlative knowledge which will utterly eclipse all acquaintance that we have of Him now, as the sunlight puts out the stars!

To return to our subject. The disciples were afraid of Jesus when He was revealing His power to help them, afraid of Him when He was acting in the gentlest possible manner toward them and treating them as a nurse does her child. Ah me, that we should be afraid of Jesus!

The Lord, after all, was doing nothing more than they knew He could do. Twenty-four hours had not passed since they had seen Him perform

a work of creation, for He had taken bread and fish and multiplied them so as to make a feast for five thousand men, besides the women and children, and to leave far more, when all had eaten, than had been in store when first the loaves and fishes had been counted! After this miracle, they ought not to have been surprised that He could traverse the sea! To walk on the waters is to suspend a law, but to make loaves and fishes is to exercise the supreme power of Creation which must forever remain with God, Himself! Knowing this, they ought not to have been astonished, not so soon, at any rate. The memory of that feast ought not to have vanished quite so quickly from their most forgetful minds. Yet when they saw Him, only doing what they knew He could do, only doing something not a jot more difficult than He was accustomed to do—they cried out for fear!

Was it not because *they dreaded contact with the spiritual, the mysterious and the supernatural*? Although we are now talking about them and, perhaps, half saying in our minds, "If we had been there, we would not have been afraid of Jesus and have cried out," we do not know what we say—it takes very little of the supernatural to make a man's flesh creep, let the man be who he may. When Belshazzar saw the handwriting upon the wall, he trembled most because of the mystery involved in a moving hand with which no visible body was connected. The unseen is the birthplace of fear. Imagination exaggerates and conscience whispers that some great ill will befall us. We are nearing the confines of the mysterious world where God and spirits dwell and, therefore, we tremble. Yet, beloved, the spirit world is the last thing which Christians should tremble at, for there can be nothing in the supernatural world which we have cause to dread! If there is such a thing as a ghost walking the earth, I, for one, would like to meet it—either at dead of night or noon of day!

I have not the least particle of faith in rambling spirits. Those who are in heaven will not care to be wandering in these foggy regions! And those in hell cannot leave their dread abode. From where, then, shall they come? Are they devils? Even so; and what then? A devil is no new personage. We have fought with devils full often and are prepared to resist them, again, and make them flee! The Lord will tread Satan, who is the master of evil spirits, under our feet shortly. Why, then, should we be afraid of his underlings? Nothing supernatural should cause any Christian the slightest alarm. We are expressly forbidden to fear the fear of the heathen and that is one of their greatest horrors; their dread of witchcraft, necromancy and other supposed manifestations of evil spirits! We who believe in Jesus are to be ashamed of such superstitions, lest a lie should have dominion over us!

If saintly spirits and holy angels can appear among men, what then? It would be a joy and a privilege to meet them! We are come to an innumerable company of angels—they bear us up in their hands lest we dash our feet against a stone.

Brothers and sisters, I am more afraid of the natural than of the supernatural! And far more fearful of the carnal than of the spiritual. Yet the disciples were afraid of Jesus because they were fearful of the supernatural—and when a person falls under that dread, he will be

afraid of anything. We have known such persons to be frightened by cattle, alarmed by a cat and distressed at the croak of a raven. Some foolish ones have even died with fear at the click of an insect in an old post, for they call it a "death watch." Let us shake off all such childish folly, for if we once fall into it, we may even go the length of these apostles and be afraid of our Master Himself!

II. Let us consider, secondly, THE METHOD BY WHICH OUR MASTER CHEERED HIS FOLLOWERS WHEN THEY WERE AFRAID OF THE SUPERNATURAL.

First of all, *He assured them that He was not a disembodied spirit*. He said, "It is I," and that, "I," was a man who did eat and drink with them. A man of flesh and blood, whom they had seen, and heard, and touched. They were comforted when they knew that it was really no disembodied spirit, but a man in flesh and blood.

I beg you always to remember, dear friends, concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, that He is not to be regarded as an unclothed spirit, for He wears a body like our own. It would greatly detract from our comfort if we doubted the real personality of Christ and the truth of His resurrection. Our Lord has taken into heaven our human nature in its entirety—body as well as soul—and He ever lives not as a spirit, but as a man like ourselves, all sin excepted, and He lives there as the pledge that we shall be there, too, in the completeness of our manhood when the trumpet of the resurrection sounds.

As a real man, Jesus reigns above! He is no phantom, no ghost, no spirit, but a risen man, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, who pities us and loves us, and feels for us! And in that capacity He speaks to us out of the glory of heaven and He says, "It is I; be not afraid."

Another thought lies on the surface of the passage, *Jesus comforted them by the assurance that it was really Himself*. They were not looking upon a fiction, they were looking upon Christ Himself.

Friend, be sure of the reality of the Christ you trust in! It is very easy to use the name of Jesus, but not quite so easy to know His person. It is common to talk about what He did and not to feel that He lives just as truly as we do—and that He is a person to be loved and to be trusted in just as much as our own brother, or father, or friend. We need a real, living, personal Christ! A phantom Christ will not cheer us in a storm—it is rather the cause of fright than hope. But a real Christ is a real consolation in a real tempest. May every one of you, my hearers, truly know the personal Savior to whom you can speak with as much certainty as if you could touch His hand!

The Christ of 1900 years ago worked out our salvation, but the Christ of today must apply it, or we are lost. Seeing that He always lives, He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. Believe in His true manhood and never allow your idea of Him to become thin and unsubstantial. Those are substantial Christians to whom Christ is substantial.

But the pith of the comfort lay in this—He said, "It is I; be not afraid," which being interpreted means, *it is Jesus*, be not afraid. When our Lord met Paul on the road to Damascus, He said to him, "I am Jesus." But

when He spoke to those who knew His voice and were familiar with Him, He did not quote His name, but said, "It is I." They were sheep that had been long enough with the Shepherd to know His voice and they had only to hear Him speak! And without a name being mentioned, they perceived that it was the Lord. To this conclusion they should have come at first. But as they blundered, and said, "It is a spirit," the loving Master corrected them by saying, "It is I, it is Jesus." It is not possible for me to convey to you what richness of consolation lies in the thought that Jesus is Jesus, which is, being interpreted, a Savior! That one character and office is cheering, but the same is true of all the names He wears. All the glorious titles and the blessed emblems under which He is set forth are rich in good cheer!

It is Jesus who walks the water of your trouble and comes to you; Jesus, the Son of God, the Alpha and the Omega, the head over all things to His church, the all in all of all His people!

When Jesus wished to encourage John, in the first chapter of the revelation, the comfort He gave to him was, "I am the First and the Last." The comfort of the Lord's people lies in the person and character of Jesus. Here is their solace, "IT IS I." But what a big, "I," it is! Compound in one all that is conceivable of goodness, mercy, grace, faithfulness and love—add perfect humanity, infinite Godhead and all the sovereign rights, powers and possessions of the Highest—and these are all contained in the one little letter, "I," when Jesus says, "It is I; be not afraid."

You have not reached the bottom of it yet. "*I Am.*" Literally rendered, the word which Jesus said was not, "It is I," but "I Am." When He would cheer His ancient people, the Lord bade Moses comfort Israel by saying, "I AM has sent me unto you." The self-existence of their God was to be the joy of the tribes. When Jesus said to those who came to take Him in the garden, "I Am," they fell backward. Such was the power of that word—but when He said to these, His cowering disciples, "I Am," they were drawn towards Him—and yet they lost not the awe which must always go with that incommunicable name, "I AM."

Believer, Jesus says to you, "I Am." Is your wife dead? Is your child to be buried? Have your possessions failed? Is your health departing? Are your joys declining? Alas, it is a dying, fleeting world, but there is one who is always the same, for Jesus says to you, "I Am; and because I live, you shall live also." Be comforted—whatever else is gone, wherever else the arrows of death may fly, your Jesus still lives! "I AM." Blessed word of rich comfort to be heard amid the darkness of the night by weary mariners whose spirits had been sinking within them!

The glory of it all was brought out by the fact that "Jesus went up unto them into the boat." And as He stood amid them, the stillness all around proved that the "I AM" was there. Had He not moved upon the face of the deep, as once the Spirit moved there? And was there not order out of the tempest's chaos even as at the beginning? Where the great "I AM" is present, the winds and the waves perceive their Ruler and obey Him!

Then the disciples knew that Jesus was not only "I AM," but, "Immanuel, God with us." "I AM" had come to their rescue and was in

the boat with them. Here, dear friend is your comfort and mine! We will not fear the supernatural, or the unseen, for we see Jesus and in Him we see the Father—and therefore we are of good cheer.

III. Our third point for consideration is this—THERE ARE TIMES WHEN WE SHALL BE LIKELY TO NEED SUCH COMFORT AS THIS.

Jesus spoke this message to believers tossed with tempest—and we need it *when we are depressed by the surroundings of these evil times*. In seasons of depressed trade, great sickness, terrible wars and public disasters, it is balm to the spirit to know that Jesus is still the same. Sin may abound yet more, the light of the gospel may burn low and the prince of darkness may widely sway his destroying scepter, but nevertheless, this truth of God stands sure, that Jesus is the "I AM." At certain periods diabolical influence seems paramount, the reins of nations appear to be taken out of the hands of the great governor and yet it is not so. Look through the darkness and you shall see your Lord amid the hurricane, walking the waters of politics, ruling national convulsions, governing, overruling, arranging all, making even the wrath of man to praise Him and restraining it according to His wisdom! Above the howling of the blast I hear His voice announcing, "It is I." When men's hearts sink for fear and the rowers feel their oars ready to snap by the strain of useless toil, I hear those words which are the soul of music—"It is I; be not afraid. I am ruling all things. I am coming to the rescue of the boat, my church—she shall yet float on smooth waters and reach her desired haven."

Another time of need will surely be *when we reach the swellings of Jordan*. As we shall get near the spirit world and the soul will begin to strip off her material garment to enter on a new form of life, how shall we feel as we enter the unknown world? Shall we cry out, "It is a Spirit!" as we salute the first who meets us? It may be so, but then a sweet voice will destroy death's terror, end all our alarms and this shall be its utterance, "It is I; be not afraid." This new world is not new to Jesus! Our pains and dying throes are not unknown to Him! The disembodied state, wherein the spirit sojourns for a while unclothed, He knows it all, for He died and entered into the spirit land and can sympathize with us in every step of the way. In what sweet company shall we pass through the valley of death shade! Surely its gloom will turn to brightness, as when a cavern, wrapped in blackness, is lit up with a hundred torches and myriads of gems sparkle from roof and walls! Passing through the sepulcher, its damp darkness shall flash and glow with unexpected joys and marvelous revelations of the ever blessed because Jesus will be with us and, "the Lamb is the light." If, in that dread hour, we shall feel the least trembling at our Lord as the judge of all the earth, that dread shall vanish as He cries, "It is I."

This comfort may serve us *when we suffer great tribulation*. May you, my friend, be spared this trial if God so wills. But should it come, you will all the better understand me. They that "do business in great waters" know that our troubles are, at times, so pressing that we lose our heads and are not able to cope with our trials. Forebodings fill the air and our sinking spirits chill the very marrow of our life. We become like

distraught men or, as David put it, we reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man and are at our wits end. Then, ah then, the voices of our comrades in the boat are of little value—and even the echoes of former words from the Lord are of small account—nothing will serve but the present and sure consolations of the Lord Jesus. We must hear Him say, "It is I," or we shall faint outright. Then is the soul braced to breast the next billow and while she cries, "All Your waves and Your billows have gone over me," she is still able to add, "Yet the Lord will command His loving kindness in the daytime; and in the night His song shall be with me." When Jesus is with a man, troubles have lost their power to trouble him!

We shall need this same word of comfort *whenever the Lord graciously reveals Himself to us*. His glory is such that we are not able to bear much of it. Its very sweetness overpowers the heart! Saints have had to ask for a staying of the intense delight which seemed to overbear their natural faculties. Those who have enjoyed those transporting manifestations can quite understand why John has written, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." An awful delight—or shall I say a delightful awe?—throws the man upon his face. John had lain in Jesus' bosom and yet, when he had a clear manifestation of his glorified Savior, He could not bear it till His tender friend laid His hand upon Him and said, "Fear not." So will it be with each of us when we are favored with the visits of the well Beloved—we shall greatly need that He should say to us, "It is I, your Brother, your Friend, your Savior, your Husband! Be not afraid. Great as I Am, tremble not in My presence, for I am Jesus, the lover of your soul."

Once more, there is a day coming *when the Son of man will be revealed in the clouds of heaven*. We know not when it will be, but we are solemnly warned that when men look not for Him, He will suddenly appear. He will come as a thief in the night to the mass of men. But as for believers, they are not in darkness that that day should come upon them as a thief—to them He comes as a long expected friend. When He comes there will be seen tokens; signs in the heavens above and in the earth beneath—which we shall recognize. We may then, perhaps, be distressed by these supernatural portents and begin to tremble. What, then, will be our delight when we hear Him say, "It is I; be not afraid!" Lift up your heads, you saints, for the coming of the Lord draws near and to you it is not darkness, but day! To you it is not judgment and condemnation, but honor and reward! What bliss it will be to catch the first glimpse of our Lord on the throne! Sinners will wring their hands and weep and wail because of Him, but we shall know His voice and welcome His appearing! When the last trumpet rings out clear and loud, happy shall we be to hear that gladsome sound, "It is I; be not afraid." Rolling earth and crumbling mountains, darkened sun and blackened moon, flames of fire and shocks of earthquake, gathering angels and chariots of God—none of these things shall amaze us while Jesus whispers to our soul, "I Am," and yet again, "IT IS I; BE NOT AFRAID."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 14:22-33.

Verse 22. *And immediately Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a boat and to go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. Immediately* is a business word—Jesus loses no time. No sooner is the banquet over than He sends off the guests to their homes. While they are well fed, He bids them make the best of their way home. He who made the multitude sit down was also able *to send the multitude away*, but they needed sending, for they were loath to go.

The sea must be crossed again, or Jesus cannot find seclusion. How He must run the gauntlet to get a little rest! Before He starts again across the sea, He performs another act of self-denial, for He cannot leave till He sees the crowd happily dispersed. He attends to that business Himself, giving the disciples the opportunity to depart in peace. As the captain is the last to leave the boat, so is the Lord the last to leave the scene of labor. The disciples would have chosen to stay in His company and to enjoy the thanks of the people, but *He constrained them to get into a boat*. He could not get anyone to go away from Him at this time without sending and constraining. This loadstone has great attractions. He evidently promised His disciples that He would follow them, for the words are, "*to go before Him unto the other side*." How He was to follow He did not say, but He could always find a way of keeping His appointments. How considerate of Him to wait amid the throng while the disciples sailed away in peace. He always takes the heavy end of the load Himself.

23. *And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone.* Now that the crowd is gone, He can take His rest—and He finds it in prayer. *He went up into a mountain*—in a place where He might speak aloud and not be overheard or disturbed. He communed with the Father *alone*. This was His refreshment and His delight. He continued therein till the thickest shades of night had gathered and the day was gone. "Alone," yet not alone, He drank in new strength as He communed with His Father. He must have revealed this private matter to the recording evangelist and surely it was with the intent that we should learn from His example.

We cannot afford to be always in company, since even our blessed Lord felt that He must be alone.

24. *But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.* While Jesus was alone, they in *the boat* were in the same condition, but not occupied with the same spiritual exercise. When they first left the shore it was fair sailing in the cool of the evening, but a storm gathered hastily as night covered the sky. On the Lake of Galilee the wind rushes down from the gullies between the mountains and causes grievous peril to little boats—sometimes fairly lifting them out of the water and soon submerging them beneath the waves! That deep lake was peculiarly dangerous for small craft. They were far from land, for they were "*in the midst of the sea*," equally distant from either shore. The sea was furious and their boat was "*tossed with waves*." The hurricane was terrible. "*The wind was contrary*," and would not let them go anyplace which they sought. It was a whirlwind and they were whirled

about by it, but could not use it for reaching either shore. How much did their case resemble ours when we are in sore distress? We are tossed about and can do nothing—the blast is too furious for us to bear up against it, or even to live while driven before it.

One happy fact remains—Jesus is pleading on the shore though we are struggling on the sea. It is also comfortable to know that we are where He constrained us to go (see verse 22), and He has promised to come to us in due time and, therefore, all must be safe though the tempest rages terribly.

25. *And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.* Jesus is sure to come. The night wears on and the darkness thickens. *The fourth watch of the night draws near*, but where is He? Faith says, "He must come." Though He should stay away till almost break of day, He must come. Unbelief asks, "How can He come?" Ah, He will answer for Himself! He can make His own way. "*Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.*" He comes in the teeth of the wind and on the face of the wave! Never fear that He will fail to reach the storm tossed boat. His love will find the way. Whether it is to a single disciple, or to the church as a whole, Jesus will appear in His own chosen hour and His time is sure to be the most timely.

26. *And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit, and they cried out for fear.* [See Sermon #957, Volume 16—JESUS NO PHANTOM—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Yes, *the disciples saw Him*—saw Jesus, their Lord—and derived no comfort from the sight! Poor human nature's sight is a blind thing compared with the vision of a spiritual faith. They saw, but knew not what they saw. What could it be but a phantom? How could a real man walk on those foaming billows? How could he stand in the teeth of such a hurricane? They were already at their wits' end and the apparition put an end to their courage. We seem to hear their shriek of alarm—"*they cried out for fear.*" We read not that "*they were troubled"* before. They were old sailors and had no dread of natural forces. But *a spirit*—ah, that was too much of a terror! They were at their worst now and yet, if they had known it, they were on the verge of their best! It is noteworthy that the nearer Jesus was to them, the greater was their fear. Want of discernment blinds the soul to its richest consolations. Lord, be near, and let me know You! Let me not have to say with Jacob, "Surely God was in this place; and I knew it not!"

27. *But immediately Jesus spoke unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.* He did not keep them in suspense—"*Immediately Jesus spoke unto them.*" How sweetly sounded that loving and majestic voice! Above the roar of waves and howling of winds, they heard the voice of the Lord. This was also His old word, "*Be of good cheer.*" The most conclusive reason for courage was His own presence. "*It is I; be not afraid.*" If Jesus is near. If the Spirit of the storm is, after all, the Lord of love, all room for fear is gone! Can Jesus come to us through the storm? Then we shall weather it and come to Him. He who rules the tempest is not the devil, not chance, not a malicious enemy—but Jesus! This should end all fear.

28. *And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it is You, bid me come unto You on the water.* Peter must be the first to speak—he is impulsive and besides, he was a sort of foreman in the company. The first speaker is not always the wisest man. Peter's fears have gone—all but one, "if", but that, "if," was working him no good, for it seemed to challenge his Master—"*Lord if it is You.*" What a test to suggest—"*Bid me come unto You on the water*!" What did Peter need with walking the waters? His name might have suggested that like a stone he would go to the bottom! It was an imprudent request. It was the swing of the pendulum in Peter from despair to an injudicious venturing! Surely, he knew not what he said. Yet we, too, have put our Lord to tests almost as improper. Have we not said, "If You have ever blessed me, give me this and that"? We, too, have had our water walking and have ventured where nothing but special grace could uphold us. Lord, what is man?

29. *And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the boat he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.* When good men are unwise and presumptuous, it may be for their lasting good to learn their folly by experience. "He said, Come." Peter's Lord is about to teach him a practical lesson. He asked to be bid to come. He may come. He does come. He leaves the boat, he treads the wave. He is on the way towards his Lord. We can do anything if we have divine authorization and courage enough to take the Lord at His word! Now there were two on the sea, two wonders! Which was the greater? The reader may not find it easy to reply. Let him consider.

30. *But when he saw the boisterous wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried, saying Lord, save me! "But"* a sorrowful, " but," for poor Peter. His eyes were off his Lord and on the raging of the wind—"*He saw the boisterous wind.*" His heart failed him and then his feet failed him. Down he began to go—an awful moment is this "*beginning to sink,"* yet it was only a "beginning." He had time to cry to his Lord who was not sinking. Peter *cried*, and was safe! His prayer was as full as it was short! He had brought his eyes and his faith back to Jesus, for he cried, "*Lord*!" He had come into this danger through obedience and, therefore, he had an appeal in the word, "Lord." Whether in danger or not, Jesus was still his Lord. He is a lost man and he feels it unless his Lord will save him—save him altogether, save him now! Blessed prayer—"*Lord, save me.*" Hearer, does it not suit you? Peter was nearer his Lord when he was sinking than when he was walking! In our low estate we are often nearer to Jesus than in our more glorious seasons.

31. *And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him, and said unto him, O you of little faith, why did you doubt?* [See Sermons #246, Volume 5—MR. FEARING COMFORTED; #1856, Volume 31—THE HISTORY OF LITTLE-FAITH; #2173, Volume 36—LITTLE FAITH AND GREAT FAITH and #2925, Volume 51—REASONS FOR DOUBTING CHRIST—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Our Lord delays not when our peril is imminent and our cry is urgent—"*Immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand.*" He first "*caught him"* and then taught him. Jesus saves first and upbraids afterwards, when He must do so. When we are saved is the fit time for us to chasten ourselves for our unbelief. Let us learn from our

Lord that we may not reprove others till we have first helped them out of their difficulties.

Our doubts are unreasonable—"*Why did you doubt*?" If there is reason for little faith, there is evidently reason for great confidence. If it is right to trust Jesus at all, why not trust Him altogether? Trust was Peter's strength, doubt was his danger. It looked like great faith when Peter walked on the water, but a little wind soon proved it to be "little faith." Till our faith is tried, we can form no reliable estimate of it.

After his Lord had taken him by the hand, Peter sank no further, but resumed the walk of faith. How easy to have faith when we are close to Jesus! Lord, when our faith fails, come to us and we shall walk on the waves!

32. *And when they were come into the boat, the wind ceased.* So that Peter's walk and his rescue had happened in the face of the tempest. He could walk the water well enough when his Lord held his hand—and so can we. What a sight! Jesus and Peter, hand in hand, walking upon the sea! The two made for the boat at once—miracles are never spun out to undue length. Was not Peter glad to leave the tumultuous element and, at the same time, to perceive that the gale was over? "*When they were come into the boat, the wind ceased."* It is well to be safe in a storm, but more pleasant to find the calm return and the hurricane end. How gladly did the disciples welcome their Lord and their brother, Peter, who though wet to the skin, was a wiser man for his adventure!

33. *Then they that were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, Of a truth You are the Son of God.* No wonder that Peter "*worshiped Him*," nor that His comrades did the same! The whole of the disciples who had been thus rescued by their Lord's coming to them on the stormy sea were overwhelmingly convinced of His Godhead. Now they were doubly sure of it by unquestionable evidence—and in lowly reverence they expressed to Him their adoring faith, saying, "*Of a truth You are the Son of God.*"

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THE KING'S MOWINGS
NO. 3129

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 1909,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
EARLY IN THE YEAR 1872.

"The king's mowings"
Amos 7:1.

CERTAIN lands belonged to the king so far that he always took the first cut of grass for himself and left any aftermath to those who worked upon the land. Now, our great King has His mowings, too. His church is the field which He has enclosed and blessed. At set seasons the King takes His mowings. Lately, beyond any other time in my life that I remember, the King has been taking His mowings in and around the church of which He has made me overseer. One has spent many hours at the bedsides of the dying and in trying to console the bereaved. Our loss, if I may venture to call it a loss, as a church, at the opening of this year was extremely heavy. The King has been taking His mowings among us and has cut down here, one, and there, another. When churches commence with a great many young members, there would naturally not be so many deaths at first, but as we all grow old together, there must be a large proportion of removals from this world into the land above. I purpose to speak a little upon that subject and I shall do so in a threefold way: first, by way of *consolation.* Then, by way of *admonition;* and then by way of *anticipation.*

I. First, by way of CONSOLATION. It is a sorrowful matter that our beloved brothers and sisters should be taken from us. We were not more but less than men if we did not sorrow. Jesus wept and by that act He sanctified our tears. It is not wrong, it is not unmanly—much less is it sinful for us to drop the tear of sorrow over the departed—yet let us help to wipe those tears away with a handkerchief of sacred consolations.

First, seeing that "all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass," do you lament that the King has been mowing? Then let this thought chide you. *The King Himself has done it*! There is no such abstract thing as death—an unloosed monster devouring the saints at will—"Drinking the blood of men and grinding their bones between his iron teeth." This is a poet's raving! No destroying angel is sent forth to slay the Israel of God! There is a destroying angel, it is true, but He comes not near those who bear the blood mark. It is not in the power of disease or accident to kill the children of God except as instruments in the divine hand. No saint dies otherwise than by the act of God! It is always according to the King's own will—it is the King's own doing. Every ripe ear in His field is gathered by His own hand, cut down by His own

golden sickle and by none other. Every full blown flower of grace is taken away by Him, not smitten with blight, or cut down by the tempest, or devoured by some evil beast—

"When mortal man resigns his breath,
'Tis God directs the stroke of death.
Casual however the stroke appear,
He sends the fatal messenger.
The keys are in that hand divine—
That hand must first the warrant sign
And arm the death, and wing the dart
Which does His message to our heart."

The Lord has done it, in every case, and knowing this, we must not even think of complaining! What the King does, His servants delight in, for He is such a King that, let Him do what seems good to Him and we will still bless Him—we are of the mind of him who said, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him."

Again, *those who have been mown down and taken away are with the King*. They are the King's mowings! They are gathered into His stores. They are not in "purgatory" (a Romanist lie). They are not in the *limbus patran*, much less are they in hell. They are not wandering in dreary pathways amidst the stars to find a lodging place. Jesus prayed, "Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory, which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world." And this prayer has fixed the saints' abode! We shall enter into no question, now, about whether heaven is a place, or where it is, or whether it is merely a state—it is enough for us that where Jesus is, there His people are; not some of them in lower seats, or in lower rooms, or sitting outside, but they are all where *He* is! That will certainly content me. And if there are any degrees in glory, you who want the high ones may have them. The lowest degree that I can perceive in Scripture is, "that they may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory" and that lowest degree is as high as my most vivid imagination can carry me! Here is enough to fill our souls even to the brim.

And now do you sorrow for those who are with Christ where He is? Do you not almost blame your tears when you learn that your beloved ones are promoted to such blissful scenes? Why, Mother, did you ever wish for your child a higher place than that it should be where Jesus is? Husband, by the love you bore your wife, you cannot grudge her the glory into which she has entered! Wife, by the deep devotion of your heart to him who has been taken from you, you could not wish to have detained him a moment from the joy in which his soul now triumphs with his Lord! If he were gone to some unknown land, if you could stand on life's brink and hear the roaring billows of a dread mysterious ocean and say, "My dear one has gone, I know not where, to be tossed like a waif or stray upon yonder tempestuous sea," oh, *then* you might mix your own tears with the brine of that ocean! But you know where they are, you know with Whom they are and you can form some idea, by the joy of Christ's presence here on earth, what must be their bliss above!—

"Sounds of sweet melody fall on my ears.
Harps of the blessed, your music I hear!
Rings with the harmony heaven's high dome,
Joyfully, joyfully bring the saints home."

It is a sweet reflection, too, that although our dear friends have been cut down like flowers by the scythe, yet *their lot is better than ours*, though we are standing and blooming today. Life seems better than death and the living dog is better than the dead lion—but take into account the *everlasting state*—and who will dare to say that the state of the blessed is worse than ours? Will not all assert that it is infinitely superior? We are still suffering, but they shall smart no more. We are weak and tottering, but they have regained the dew of their youth! We know what need means and wipe the sweat of toil from off our face, but they rest in abundance forever! The worst of all is that we still sin and have to wrestle hard with doubts and fears. Satan still besets us, the world is around us and corruptions fester within us. But they are where not a wave of trouble can ever break the serenity of their spirit! They are beyond the barking of the hell dogs and beyond the arrows of hell's quiver, though there are archers who would shoot their darts into heaven itself if they could! The ingathered ones are supremely blest! They are far beyond what we are in joy, knowledge and holiness! Therefore, if we love them, how can we mourn that they have gone from the worse to the better—and from the lower to the higher room?

And, moreover, brothers and sisters, although some of you sorrow very bitterly because God has taken away the desire of your eyes with a stroke, let me remind you that *you might have had a worse sorrow than this concerning them*. Ah, the mother who has to mourn over an adult son who has become a profligate, has a thousand times more bitter pang than she has who seen her infant carried to the grave! The father who knows that his sons or daughters have become a dishonor to his name may well wish that he had long ago seen them laid in the silent tomb. And I have known men in the Church whom I would sooner have buried a thousand times over than have lived to see what I have afterwards seen in them! For years they stood as honorable professors—but they lived to dishonor the church, to blaspheme their Lord, to go back into perdition and prove that the root of the matter was never in them! Oh, you need not weep for those in heaven! Weep not for the dead, neither bewail them—but weep for the *spiritually* dead—weep for the apostate and backslider! Weep for the false professor and the hypocrite—"the wandering stars," "to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." If you have tears, go and shed them there—but for those who have fought the fight and won the victory, for those who have stemmed the stream and safely landed on the other side—let us have no tears! No, put away the trombone and bring forth the clarion! Let the trumpet ring out jubilantly the note of victory! It is to them the day of jubilee—why should it be for us the hour of sorrow? They put on the crown and bear the palm branch in their hands—why should we don the funeral weeds? There is infinitely more to rejoice in than there is to sorrow for! Therefore

let our hearts be glad. The Lord has said to them, "Well done," and rewarded them according to His grace—and this is infinitely better than that they should have lived to slip and slide!

"But this is poor comfort," you will say, and therefore let me come back to the text and say that *the King has taken His mowings*. Sorrowful as we may be, it is not the worst sorrow that we could have, but whether or not, we must not grudge the King any whom He takes from us. All the friends we have are lent us. The old proverb says, "A loan should go laughing home," that is we should never be unwilling to return a loan, but cheerfully give it back to the lender. Our dear ones were lent to us and what a blessing they have been to us! The lamps of our house, have they not been the joy of our day? The Master says, "I need them back again," and do we clutch at them and say, "No, Master, You shall not have them"? Oh, it must not be so! Our dear ones were never half as much ours as they were Christ's! We did not make them, but *He* did! We never bought them with our blood, but *He* did! We never sweat a bloody sweat for them, nor had our hands and feet pierced for them, but *He* did! They were lent to us, but they belonged to Him! Your prayer was, "Father, let them be with me where I am," but Christ's prayer was, "Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am." Your prayer pulled one way and Christ's pulled another. Be not envious that Christ won the suit! If I ever enter into the Lord's Court of Chancery, if I find that Christ is on the other side, my Lord, I will not plead. You shall have Your will, for I and You and You and I are one—and if it is Your plea that all I love may be with You, so be it, for I shall be with You, too, before long, and I would not quarrel with Your wish. The King has let out this church like a pasture to us and He says, "I must sometimes take My mowings." Well, He has so watered us and given us the smell of a field that the Lord God has blessed, that when He comes and takes His rent, we may not stand at the gate and forbid Him, but say, "Good Master, come and take which You will! Take your quit rent, for the field is all Your own. You have dearly purchased it and You have tilled it with much diligence—take what You will, for it is Yours."

And, let me add, to increase our comfort *the King took His mowings at the right time*. Out of those whom He has taken away from us, I think we must all confess that the Lord took them when they should be taken. In one case, a venerable sister, who if she had lasted longer, would have been the prey of weakness and of pain—'twas well she fell asleep. In another case, a dear young friend was pining under that fell disease, consumption—her throat was scarcely able to receive nourishment—I think those who loved her best must have felt relieved when at last she fell asleep. Two brothers rise before my mind's eye—the one struggled through life and wondered often that he did not sink before, for he was like a ship unfit for sea which every wave threatens to engulf! It is a wonder that he survived as long as he did. He served his Lord up to the last and when all was over, it was well. Another, whom I saw with an afflicting disease about him that had brought him very low, had led so gracious a life that he did not need to utter any dying testimony. Beloved

brothers, also, who were once with us in the College have fallen asleep, having finished their course and kept the faith.

I may add that not only did the King take His mowings at the right time, but in every case I have now before my mind, *He took them in the easiest way*. He took them gently. Some have a hard fight for it at the last, but in these cases, though there were pains and dying strife, yet at the last their souls were kissed away by the dear lips of Him who named them by their names and said they were His! They fell asleep, some of them so sweetly that those who looked on scarcely knew whether it was the sleep of life or the deeper sleep of eternity. They were gone—they were gone at once to their Lord and their God! Putting all these things together—reflecting that the King has done it, that those He has taken away He has taken to be with Himself, that their present lot is an infinitely better one than anything beneath the moon and considering, too, that we must never grudge the King the heritage which He has so dearly bought, and that He took His mowings at the right time and took them in the happiest manner—we will no longer repine, but we will bless the Lord!

II. And now, brothers and sisters, allow me for a few minutes to use the subject by way of ADMONITION.

I hardly know whether, under this head, I have grouped together thoughts that are quite admonitory. The first one is to be very joyous. It is this—that *as we belong to the King, our hope is that we shall be mown too!* We are sitting on the banks of Jordan, especially some of us who are of riper years, waiting for a summons to the court of the eternal King! It becomes a wonder, sometimes, with aged Christians, why they stay here so long. John Newton, I think, used to marvel at his own age! And Rowland Hill used to say that he half imagined they had forgotten him—and hoped they would soon remember him and send for him. Well, we have not quite gone that length, we who are young, but still we entertain the hope that some fair evening, calm and bright, the angel reaper will come with the scythe. Then shall we, having fulfilled, like the hireling, our day, lay down our tools of labor and take our rest. Then shall we put down our sword, take off our breastplate and unloose the shoes of iron and brass, for we shall fight no more, but take the palm and claim the victory before the house of God! Never let us look forward to this with dread. It is amazing that we should do so—and we would not if our faith were stronger. When faith vividly realizes the rest that remains for the people of God, we are tempted to long to be up and away! Then why should we wish to linger here? What is there in this old musty worn-out world—worm-eaten and full of holes, with its very gold and silver cankered—that can satisfy an immortal spirit? Let us away to the hills of spices and to the mountains of frankincense, where the King in His beauty stands with "helmed cherubim and sworded seraphim" and all the hosts that serve Him day and night, to behold His face, and evermore adore Him! Let us anticipate cheerfully the time when the King's mowings shall also include us!

Brothers and sisters, the admonition that arises out of all this is, *let us be ready*. Should not every Christian live every day as if he were going to die that day? Should we not always live as if we knew our last hour to be at the door? If a man in his right state were informed all a sudden, "You will die tonight!" He ought not to have to alter his mode of life one atom! He should be so living that he had nothing more to do but to continue his course. It is remarked of Bengel, the great critic, that "he did not wish to die in spiritual parade, but in the ordinary way—like a person called out to the street door from the midst of business—so much so that he was occupied with the collection of his proof sheets at his dying season, as at other times." To me, it seems to be the very highest kind of death to die in harness—concluding life without suspending service. Alas, many are unready and would be sadly put about if the midnight cry were suddenly heard. Oh, let us see that everything is in order! Both for this world and the next, *nothing* should be left to be hurried over in the last few hours. Christian, is your will made? Are your business affairs all straight? They ought to be—everything ought to be as nearly as you can keep it in perfect order, so that you are ready to go at any minute. Mr. George Whitefield used to so live in anticipation of death that he said, "I never go to sleep at night with even a pair of gloves out of place." Oh, that we would be habitually ready and in order—especially in higher matters—walking before the Lord, as preparing to meet Him!

Then, dear friends, this departure of many of our fellow workers, while it admonishes us to be ready to go, at the same time *teaches us to do twice as much while we are here, seeing that our numbers are being so constantly thinned*. A brave soldier, in the day of battle, if he hears that a regiment has been exterminated by the enemies shot and shell, says, "Then those of us that survive must fight all the more bravely! There is no room for us to play at fighting. If they have slain so many, we must be more desperately valiant." And so, today, if one here or there is gone, a useful worker from the Sunday schools, or from the street preaching, then it is time our broken ranks were repaired! O you young men, I pray you, fill up the gap! And you young women who love the Savior, if a Sunday school teacher is gone and you are teaching, teach better! Or if you are not teaching, come and fill the place! My dear brothers and sisters, I pray for recruits. I stand like a commander in the midst of my little army and see some of the best smitten down—here one and there one—and what can I do, but as my Master bids me, lead you on and say, "Brothers and sisters, step into their places! Fill the gaps in the ranks!" Do not let death gain upon us, but even as one goes into the Golden City, let another cry, "Here I am! Call me, also, to my reward!" As for us who are at work, we must labor more zealously than ever, we must pray more fervently than ever! When a certain great man suddenly died in the ministry, I remember, in my young days, an old preacher saying, "I must preach better than ever I did, now that Mr. so and so is gone." And you, Christian, whenever a saint is removed, say, "I must live the better to make up to the church the loss which it has sustained."

One other thought, by way of admonition. *If the King has been taking His mowings, then the King's eyes are upon His church*. He has not forgotten this field, for He has been mowing it! We have been praying lately that He would visit us. He has come, He *has* come! Not quite as we expected Him, but He has come, He has come! Oh yes, and as He has walked these aisles and looked on this congregation, He has taken first one, and then another. He has not taken me, for I am not ready. And He has not taken you, for you are not quite ripe—but He has taken away some that were ripe and ready—and they have gone to be with Him where He is. Well, then, He has not forgotten us, and this ought to stimulate us in prayer! He will hear us! His eyes are upon us! !his ought to stimulate us to self-examination. Let us purge out everything that will grieve Him! He is evidently watching us. Let us seek to live as in His presence—that nothing may vex His Spirit and cause Him to withdraw from us!

Beloved, these are the words of admonition.

III. And, now, a few more words by way of ANTICIPATION. I hardly know under what head to place them. What anticipations are there that come out of the mowing?

Why these. *There is to be an after growth*. After the King's mowings, there came another springing up of fresh grass which belonged to the King's tenants. So we expect, now that the King has been mowing, that we shall have a fresh crop of grass! Is there not a promise, "They shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses?" Fresh converts will come and who will they be? Well, I look around, but I will not say, with Samuel, as I look at some young man in the gallery, "Surely the Lord has chosen him." Neither will I look down to someone in that area and say, "Surely the Lord has chosen *him*," but I will bless God that I know He has chosen some and that He means to make this fresh grass spring up to fill up the vacuum caused by the King's mowings!

Do you know who I should like to come if I might have my preference? Well, where the daughter has died, how glad I should be if the father came, or the brother came. And where the father has died, how I would rejoice if the son should come! And where a good woman has been taken away, how glad would I be if her husband filled up her place! It seems to me as if it were natural to wish that those who loved them best should occupy their position and discharge their work for them. But if that cannot be, I stand here tonight as a recruiting sergeant. My King in His wars has lost some of His men and the regiment needs replenishing! Who will come? I put the colors in my hat, tonight, but I will not stand here and tempt you with lies about the ease of the service, for it is hard service! Yet I assure you that we have a blessed Leader, a glorious conflict and a grand reward! Who will come? Who will come to fill up the gaps in the ranks? Who will be baptized for the dead, to stand in their place of Christian service and take up the torch which they have dropped? I will pass the question round and I hope that many a heart will say, "Oh, that the Lord would have me! Oh, that He would blot out

my sins and receive me!" He delights in contrite hearts! He saves such as are of a contrite spirit. He will save whom He will have, but the way to be enlisted is plain! "Oh," you say, "what must I give to be Christ's soldier?" To be the queen's soldier, you do not give anything, you receive a shilling. You *take* in order to be a soldier of the queen, and so, to be Christ's soldier, you must take Christ to be your all in all, holding out your empty hand and receiving of His blood and righteousness to be your hope and your salvation! Oh, that His good Spirit would sweetly incline your wills that one after another might be made willing in the day of His power! May He thus do—and our hearts will greatly rejoice!

As I read the passage in Amos from which I have taken my text, I noticed something about caterpillars. (The marginal reading calls them "green worms"). It is said that after the King's mowings, there came the caterpillars to eat up the after growth. Oh, those caterpillars! When the poor Eastern farmer sees the caterpillars, his heart is ready to break, for he knows that they will eat up every green thing! And I can see the caterpillars here tonight. There is the great green caterpillar that eats up all before him—I wish I could crush him. He is called the caterpillar of procrastination! There are many, many other worms and locusts which eat up much, but this worm of procrastination is the worst, for just as the green blade is beginning to spring up, this caterpillar begins to eat. I can hear him gnawing, "Wait, wait, wait! Tomorrow, tomorrow! A little more sleep, a little more sleep, a little more sleep!" And so this caterpillar devours our hopes. Lord, destroy the caterpillar and grant that instead of the fathers, may be the children! Instead of the King's mowings, may there come up the after growth who shall be a rich reward to the farmer and bring glory to the owner of the soil!

We have reason to pray that the Lord would send the dew and the rain to bring forth the after growth. "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass." Now this congregation is like mown grass. God has mown it, a rich mowing has the King taken from us. Now, my brothers and sisters, we have the promise—let us plead it before the throne of God. All the preaching in the world cannot save a soul, nor all the efforts of men. But God's Spirit can do everything! Oh that He would come down like rain upon the mown grass right now! Then shall we see the handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains multiply till its fruit shall shake like Lebanon and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. The Lord send it, the Lord send it now!

If any would be saved, here is the way of salvation—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." To believe is to *trust*. What you have to trust in is this; that Jesus is God, that He became man, that He suffered in the sinner's place and that whoever believes in Him shall be forgiven because God has punished Christ instead of believers. Christ bore God's wrath instead of every sinner that ever did or ever shall believe in Him! And if you believe in Him, you were redeemed from among men. His substitution was for you and it will save you! But if you believe not, you have no part or lot in this matter. Oh, that you were brought to put your trust in Jesus! This would be the pledge of your sure

salvation tonight and forevermore! God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
REVELATION 21.

Verse 1. *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.* Astronomers tell us that within living memory several starry worlds have burnt out and vanished out of sight. The Apostle Peter has told us that this world will be destroyed by fire, but it will afterwards be renewed, and a new sky and a new earth will appear after the first firmament and the first earth shall have become extinct. God means that this planet should continue to exist after it has had a new creation and renewed its youth. The regeneration of His people, their new birth, is a foretaste of what is yet to happen to this whole world of ours. We have the first fruits of the Spirit and we groan within ourselves while we wait for the fullness of that new creation!

"The first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea," because the sea is the emblem of separation, destruction and unrest. The sea has her dead who shall be given up. The sea cannot now rest nor be quiet, but all shall be calm and tranquil in the new heaven and the new earth!

2. *And I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.* John saw, in vision, the glorified church of God coming to dwell on the new earth, descending for a while from heaven to be the very glory of the newly created world!

3, 4. *And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.* When there shall be a new heaven and a new earth, and the church shall be in her new and glorified condition, then there will be no need for all those purifying forces which have been so active here below. There shall be no death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain, nor trial of any kind—all shall be happiness for all shall be holiness! And then, as God dwelt of old among His people in the wilderness, and as Jesus Christ, the Word, was made flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld His glory, so in that new world shall God reveal Himself to His people by a special indwelling and a peculiar nearness.

5. *And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.* [See Sermon #1816, Volume 31—SERMON FOR A NEW YEAR'S DAY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.* Once, the Lord might have

said, "Behold, I make all things," but now He says, "Behold, I make all things *new*." Glory be unto the great Creator! Did not the morning stars sing together for joy when He made the world? But equal if not greater glory must be ascribed to the great regenerator, the new Creator! Shall we not all sing together to His praise? Yes, that we shall if we are numbered among the "all things" that He makes new!

6. *And He said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give unto him that is thirsty of the fountain of the water of life freely.* [See Sermon #1459, Volume 26—GOOD NEWS FOR THIRSTY SOULS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Probably John did not expect to hear that sweet gospel message just then. The Lord Jesus Christ was speaking of lofty themes, of worlds newly made—and yet in the very middle of it all He puts this gracious promise! Let this be a pattern to all of you who are preachers or teachers—no matter what your subject may be, a gospel promise or invitation is always in place and in season. You may put it among the most golden sentences like a precious stone in a setting of pure gold and it will never be out of order, come when it may. Men hate God without the slightest reason for doing so and God loves men without the slightest reason—there is every reason why men should love God, and not hate Him—yet they have hated Him without a cause. And there is every reason why God should hate man and not love him—yet He loves us so much that He gave His only begotten Son to die, that whoever believes in Him may live forever!

7. *He that overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son.* What a wonderful word is that! "He shall be My son"—not My servant, but, "My son." God give us the faith to rise to this more than royal dignity! "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God."

8. *But the fearful.* No, that is not the right word, it is the *cowardly*, for there are many who are full of fear who are nevertheless most sincere and right in God's sight. "But the cowardly."

8. *And unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers.* And the Apostle John tells us that "whoever hates his brother is a murderer."

8. *And whoremongers.* Unchaste and unclean men and women.

8. *And sorcerers.* Persons who profess to have communications with the dead. Necromancers, spiritualists and all people of that sort.

8. *And idolaters.* That is, all who love anyone or anything more than God.

8. *And all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.* That is the death that never dies—the death which is far more to be dreaded than the death of the body!

9. *And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come here, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife.* John had already caught a glimpse of "the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven." And now this angelic messenger bids him come

nearer and look more closely into this mysterious and glorious city "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

10-13. *And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates*. God's church glorified lies open to all quarters of the infinitude of space! It is no prison of souls that dare not go beyond its borders, but a many gated city, so that the blessed spirits there can fly wherever they will!

14. *And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb*. Not Peter only, but the whole of the twelve apostles shall have their names in the foundations of that holy city!

15, 16. *And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lies foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal*. It seems at first to be astounding that the height of a city should be equal to the length and the breadth of it, but if you have traveled in Italy, you must have seen many a city, perched upon a hill, which seemed to be even higher than it was broad or long, if you included the wall of the city and the houses, one above another, right up to the loftiest minaret or tower. Yes, like a priceless square casket made all of costly jewels is this wondrous city, equally glorious whichever way you look at it! "The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal."

17, 18. *And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass*. Such gold as never was, nor is, nor ever shall be on this earth until that time when God shall have purified it. Our gold is dull, opaque—light is blocked out by it. How many might see if it were not for the gold which blinds them and hides the truth of God from them!

19, 20. *And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst*. You know that the stones of which this holy city is built are living stones. You and I, if we are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall be there—living stones prepared by living grace to have a name and a place in this living city! But what changes will have to be worked in us before we are fit to be put among these precious jewels! We

are like poor blocks of common stone, but we do not know what we shall be like when we have been cut and polished on the great Lapidary's wheel. You may take a precious stone to a jeweler and ask him what its value is, but he will say, "I cannot tell what it is worth until it has been cut and polished." That is how the Lord will prove the value of His living stones. If He will but work upon us by His grace, we cannot tell what He will make of us before He places us in the position He has appointed for us in the glorious city that rests upon these twelve precious foundations!

21. *And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each individual gate was of pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.* John had already said that "the city was pure gold like unto clear glass" and now he says that "the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass." We do not always get such a combination as this here below, gold, precious and pure, yet unstained with blood and undimmed with the oppression of the poor, delicate gold, "as it were transparent glass."

22, 23. *And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* [See Sermon #583, Volume 10—THE LAMB—THE LIGHT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Yes, and the glorified church, herself, because of this light, sheds such a bright light on all within her that all the saints rejoice in her light!

24, 25. *And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.* Shut gates signify war—open gates mean peace. There shall be no more fear of war, no Gog and Magog to gather together to battle, no Armageddon to be dreaded by the glorified church of Christ who shall be in perfect peace forever.

26, 27. *And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles, neither whatever works abomination, or makes a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.* [See Sermon #1590, Volume 27—THE BARRIER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

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"IN REMEMBRANCE"
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"This do in remembrance of Me...This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."
1 Corinthians 11:24, 25.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon this passage and verses before and after, are as follows—Sermons #2, Volume 1—THE REMEMBRANCE OF CHRIST, #2307, Volume 39—THE GREATEST EXHIBITION OF THE AGE, #2595, Volume 44—WHAT THE LORD'S SUPPER SEES AND SAYS, #2638, Volume 45—THE RIGHT OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER, and #3099, Volume 54—THE DOUBLE FORGET-ME-NOT—
Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

IT is a wonderful proof of the deep depravity of human nature that men have made so much mischief out of the two symbolical ordinances which were instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ. You know how the ordinance of believers' baptism has been perverted, twisted and turned aside altogether from its pristine use. And the ordinance of the Lord's Supper has been quite as shamefully misrepresented. In neither case is there any excuse whatever for this perversion, for in each instance the regulations for its observance are perfectly simple and clear. In the institution of the Lord's Supper there was not a solitary word said about the new rite being a sacrifice nor so much as a single syllable concerning an altar upon which it was to be offered. It was not instituted in the temple at Jerusalem, but in the upper room of a private house. It was not ordained at a great temple festival, but at the Passover supper, when Christ and His disciples were gathered around a table to feast together according to the ancient Jewish custom. There was nothing said by our Lord about any repetition of His one great sacrifice by the offering of the bloodless sacrifice of the "mass" of which the priests of Rome make so much. It is as simple and plain as it can possibly be—"This do in remembrance of Me." Those who stumble here, stumble, surely, in the light—and their eyes must be blinded, for there are no stumbling blocks in the ordinance itself.

Observe that Christ does not prescribe anything in the Lord's Supper by way of elaborate ceremonies. There is nothing at all resembling the various intricate rules that are laid down for the celebration of the "mass" in the Church of Rome, or even for the celebration of the communion in the Church of England. Nothing is here ordered to be done except the breaking of bread and the eating of it—and the pouring out of wine and the drinking of it. And these two things are to be done in *remembrance of Christ.* He has not even laid down any rule with regard to

the posture that is to be assumed by communicants. I have no doubt whatever that the disciples were reclining around the supper table in the usual Oriental manner, but Christ does not say that we are to recline, or kneel, or stand, or sit for the right observance of the ordinance. Nothing appears to be really essential to the right celebration of this supper by believers in the Lord Jesus Christ but just this—"Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do you, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." How very little there is here of anything like a grand ceremony!

And yet, mark you, there is a certain rubric with regard to the *spiritual* part of the Lord's Supper which is not left to anybody's choice. It is essential—it is the very soul and marrow of the ordinance that we should remember Christ in it—"This do in remembrance of Me." The external order may vary in certain respects, but the internal essence must be there, else you will have the mere dead carcass and you will have lost the soul, the spirit, the very life of the whole ordinance! Again and again our Savior says, "This do in remembrance of Me…This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." *To remember Christ, then, is the main point in the right observance of this ordinance*. To let the memory look Him in the face again, to put the finger once more into the print of the nails and to thrust the hand again into His side. Once again to adore the Savior whose head was crowned with thorns for us, but is now coroneted with glory—to remember Him, to recall Him—that is our main business as we gather around His table. May God graciously grant to us the grace to attain to that which is the very essence, soul and life of the Lord's Supper, that is, the remembrance of Christ!

I. And, first, let me remark, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, that as we gather around the Lord's Table, OTHER MEMORIES WILL COME, BUT THEY MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO CROWD OUT THE ONE MEMORY—"This do in remembrance of Me."

Other memories will come, I am sure they will come to me and I believe that they will come also to my Christian brothers and sisters here. *You will remember well the time when you did not know Jesus*. With deep regret our memory will go back to the period when the little that we did know of Christ was misused. When we despised and rejected Him. When we had ill words for His people and hard words for everything that concerned Him. It is a profitable exercise for us to look unto the rock from which we were hewn and to the hole of the pit from which we were dug. That is not an ill memory with which to come to our Lord's Table—with our eyes full of the tears of repentance for our past sin, yet rejoicing that we are now washed and cleansed, although once we were defiled and altogether unfit to occupy the children's place!

Will you not remember, too, *the times when God's Spirit first began to work upon you* and you hovered around the cross and, in consequence, began also to hover around the communion table? Do you remember when you sat up in the gallery and looked down on the people of God

who were gathered to remember their Lord in the observance of this ordinance? Your mother was there and perhaps your brothers and sisters were there. And maybe a wife was there, or a husband was there—and you felt the separation from them very sorely—and all the more because you feared that it might be the prelude to an eternal separation, when those who have been joined together by ties of blood must be separated from one another as far as heaven is from hell because they have never really been one in Christ Jesus! You remember the prayers that you used to put up, that you also might know Jesus as your Savior and might then be able to make a profession of your faith and come to His table with your loved ones to remember Him. I remember well those times in my own experience. And as I recall them, I bless the Lord that He answered my prayers and set me, also, among His children.

Do you not also recollect *the time when you first came to His Table*? With some of you, it was in the first flush of your youth. You had heard of Jesus and believed on Him. Immediately you said, "I will be His disciple and I will take up His cross and follow Him." You joined His church and then, when the hour came that you should, for the first time, enjoy the privilege of fellowship with Him at His table, you reckoned on it with eager anticipation. And you came to your first communion service with much prayer and holy longing that you might meet your Lord there. It was a very precious season to you. Since then, you may have had better times than that, but probably none that you remember better, and none in which there was a greater freshness about your heart's affection for your Lord. The bloom was on the peach then—the dew of the morning was still on the field that the Lord had blessed. Possibly, some of that dew and that bloom has been brushed away by contact with the world, but it was very fresh and beautiful then. It cannot be unprofitable for you to remember the love of your espousals! And if that remembrance should lead you to do your first works with your first love, that memory will not be out of place even at your Lord's Table!

And, brothers and sisters in Christ, as we are coming again to the communion table at the close of this service, there are hallowed memories that come to me, just now, *of some who used to sit with us at this table*, some officers of the church who sat on this platform and many members of the church who sat down there, and there, and there; good men and true, and holy women, and young saints who rejoiced in Christ, workers of different sorts, and sufferers of different kinds—persons of differing rank and degree, but "all one in Christ Jesus"—and now they are enjoying the higher fellowship in the kingdom of their Father above! They were ready "to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better," and that is now their blessed portion. I am sure that such memories as these must come to many of you, for some of you are occupying the very seats upon which they used to sit, or else next to you there sits one who did not sit there this time last year. Well, I do not think these are unprofitable memories, because they link us to those who have gone in

to see the King—and help us to remember the mighty hosts of the redeemed who have triumphed through His grace and are now with Him in His glory! They also help us to realize the unity of the one church of Jesus Christ, of which we sometimes sing—

"One family we dwell in Him
One church above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death."

There also come to some of us the memories of *dear ones who are not here, though their hearts are here*, for sickness has detained them from the communion table these many days. Some of us who have experienced the bitterness of that deprivation feel intense sympathy with other sufferers who are kept away from the sacred feast. And we pray the Master to send home to each of them a blessing that shall fill their souls with rejoicing and their mouths with thanksgiving! As David ordained that those who tarried by the stuff should share equally with those who went down to the battle, so may those who are shut out from the public ministry and the observance of the ordinance with us here, have a special portion direct from the Master's own hand and heart!

And as we sit here, some of us *think with great pleasure of those who are sitting with us*. I regret that we are so often tempted to remember the fault of our fellow Christians. Oh, may they be blotted from my memory forever! Let us treasure the virtues and excellences of our fellow members and search for signs of the Spirit's work in them! And remembering our own imperfections and failures, let us not fix our eyes upon their defects. But there are many sitting with us here who are monuments of God's grace—and as we look at them, we recollect what God has done for their souls. Some dear brothers and sisters here have been made very useful to others during the past year. And if they turn their eyes a little, they can see many of their spiritual children sitting around them. I know that it is a joyous memory to them that the past year was a fruitful one in their portion of the Lord's vineyard! And I also bless God as I look many of you in the face, for I know that there is a love between us which many waters cannot quench because in this place God first spoke to your souls by the ministry of His word. These memories are profitable ones and we do well to remember those who form a part of the one mystical body of Christ. Is it not a part of our communion that the members of Christ's body should commune with their follow members as well as with their glorious head?

One dark memory, however, crosses my mind, as I have no doubt it often crossed the minds of those who were with Christ that night when He said, "This do in remembrance of Me," and that was the *remembrance of Judas*. It was that sentence, "One of you shall betray Me," that made the night so sorrowful to they who were in that upper room—and Judas has had many successors in the church. There have been those even high in official standing who, nevertheless, have bartered their Lord and Master for paltry silver. Alas! Alas, alas, while we remember those who have done so, it will not be with the self-righteousness that makes us think we should never have done it, but with the sacred caution which

inquires, "Lord, shall I, also, do this thing?" And with the holy prayerfulness that cries, "Hold You me up, and I shall be safe."

Now I think all these memories are natural, allowable and profitable, but they must be kept in a secondary place, and they must never crowd out the remembrance of Christ! He did not say to His disciples, "This do you in remembrance of one another," or, "in remembrance of your own conversion," or, "in remembrance of your former state of sin." No, He said, "This do in remembrance of Me." So I claim the first place for remembrance of the Master—and I say to these other memories, "Stand back! Stand back and let Him fill the central position, let Him occupy the throne! If you will, you may sit upon the steps of His grand throne, but upon that throne of God you must not sit—that is for Him who says to His disciples, "This do in remembrance of Me."

II. Note, next, that THIS ORDINANCE IS VERY HELPFUL TO THAT ONE SACRED MEMORY, the memory of Christ.

The emblems upon the table; covered up from your sight at present, but to be visible soon; *the bread and wine remind us that Jesus Christ was truly man*. When He came upon this earth, He was no phantom. Even after His resurrection, when His disciples supposed that they had seen a spirit, He said to them, "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have." He took a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb and ate it in front of them. The Apostle John says that they had seen Him with their eyes and had handled Him with their hands. He was really God manifest in the flesh—and we are thankful that in this ordinance there are two material emblems set before us to remind us that although our holy religion is most deeply spiritual, yet it also touches the material, for Christ was verily bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh—man of the substance of His mother—and as such He lived and as such He really died.

These signs being laid upon a table are meant to show us, next, *the familiarity of our blessed Lord with us*. The bread is not elevated so as to be exhibited to you while you bow down before it as if it were your God, nor is the wine in the cup lifted up as an object of adoration and worship—but both these emblems are placed upon the table—the bread to be eaten and the wine to be drunk. This is to remind us that the Word of God, incarnate, Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior, was familiar with the sons of men. "He came unto His own." He was a man among men. He was with them at their feasts and He wept with them at their funerals. He suffered hunger, thirst, weariness and pain as we do. He spoke familiarly yet faithfully with the poor sinful woman at Sychar's well. And He spoke in a similar style to the great multitude. He was no recluse! He was no Oriental potentate, guarded from the throng, but He was always among the people, healing their sicknesses and sympathizing with them in their sorrows!

This is a great blessing to us because while Jesus thus comes near to us, we are thereby invited to draw near to Him. The bread is placed upon

the table, but the table is not lifted up beyond our reach. And we are bid to gather round it and to eat the bread that is upon it—and so to have the most familiar acquaintance with that which is upon the table. So, today, Jesus invites the sinful and the sorrowful to come to Him. "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And as for His own people, He is so familiar with them that if there were anything He had not told them which was really for their good, He would tell them now. He said to His disciples concerning the many mansions in His Father's house, "If it were not so, I would have told you." And He also said to them, "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his lord does: but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." Jesus Christ is not like Moses, whose glory repelled—His glory attracts! He is the Good Shepherd who delights to fold the lambs in His bosom. He is the man among men who loves men and loves to have men about Him, for His delights are still as they have always been—with the sons of men.

This truth ought to help us to remember our Lord; that He is truly man, a man among us, near to us, to whom we are very dear and who should be, and I trust is, very dear to us! He is our Brother, yes, He is nearer even than a brother, for He is a part of ourselves! Have I exaggerated in using that expression? No, for is He not our head and are we not "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones"? And should we not, therefore, rejoice that we are reminded of this great fact by the homely tokens which set Him forth so familiarly in this ordinance?

Then you will note, by and by, that *the bread has to be broken and the wine poured forth to show the sufferings of the Savior*. The bread itself is a most impressive type of suffering. The corn is buried in the dark earth, pinched by many a frost when it peers above the ground and exposed to many trials before it comes to its full growth. When it is ripe, it is cut down with a sharp sickle, threshed with many a heavy blow, then ground in the mill, the flour kneaded into dough, pressed into the shape of loaves, thrust into a hot oven and baked—and then in this last process, broken. Our blessed Master seemed to be passing through all that experience in His lifetime on earth. He actually used some of the processes that I have described as pictures of Himself, as in that notable instance when He said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone: but if it dies, it brings forth fruit." Especially was that last part of the process; the breaking of the bread as a type of His sufferings illustrated throughout His whole life. When did He not suffer? What sorrows were crowded into the three years of His public ministry! His life was one of constant suffering and then at the last came the great climax of it all—and none of us can fully tell what was meant by Gethsemane and its bloody sweat, by Gabbatha and its terrible flagellation, and by Golgotha and its cruel and shameful death upon the accursed tree. There is, also, another most suggestive symbol of Christ's sufferings in the various processes that result in "the fruit of the vine" in the cup on the communion table. Both emblems impressively set forth our Savior's sufferings.

But you have more than that, for *you have Christ's death set forth in the instructive symbol of the bread separated from the wine*. To mix them in one cup would be to spoil the whole metaphorical teaching of the ordinance! The blood with the flesh is life, but the blood drained from the flesh is death. The blood is represented by the *wine by itself* in the cup—and the *bread by itself* represents the flesh. And the two emblems together set forth death—a violent death—such a death as Jesus died. Did you not sing of it just now:

"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?"

Never forget that the punishment for sin is not simply suffering, but death. "The soul that sins it shall die." And it was not until Christ died that the debt, which was due from His people to the justice of God, was fully discharged. The two emblems in this ordinance, therefore, needed to be separate in order to set before us the death of our dear Lord and Savior—and so to help us to remember Him.

Then, *the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine symbolize our reception of Christ into our innermost selves*. After looking at the signs, they who commune eat and drink thereof to show, as in a figure, how Christ is received into the soul. Faith must be the mouth of the soul and into that mouth we must receive Christ Himself and live upon Him. That new life, which God has created within us, must be fed and sustained by the grand truth of the atonement of Christ, the wondrous doctrine of His substitutionary sacrifice on behalf of all who believe in Him. There is a very important point of instruction there and I pray that none of you may ever miss it.

The thought also occurred to me that when the feast is over, and the bread is eaten, and the wine is drunk, no one ever says, "Where shall we find the bread for another observance of the supper?" Or "From where shall we get wine that we may come again to celebrate this sacred feast?" No, for everybody knows that, practically, of bread there is no stint and of wine there is no limit—and so it seems as though, among other reasons, *these two emblems were selected to teach us, by their abundance, the all sufficiency of Christ*. When we have spiritually fed upon Him tonight, there is as much for us to feed upon tomorrow! And when we have been drinking with joy in remembrance of Him, we may come and drink again and again, for this is a very sea of blessing of which we are bidden to drink. If you took a cupful of water from the sea, there would be so much the less there though none could tell the difference! But if you took an ocean full of love and joy out of the Redeemer, there would be none the less left in Him! It is true of His grace that it is not diminished by all that His people receive of it and it never can be exhausted. 'Tis pleasant to gather fruit where there are many heavily laden trees and to receive money from a store in which there is much left after we have had all we need. And it is pleasant to come and feast at a table that is still richly laden after myriads have been fed at it

and that is still as full as ever though ten thousand times ten thousand saints have here been feasted to the full!

Thus I think I have shown you, and I pray the Holy Spirit to show you that in this ordinance there is much to help us to remember our Lord and Savior.

III. But now, beloved, in the third place, it may be useful to you if I call to your mind anew the fact THAT THE REMEMBRANCE OF CHRIST IS, OF ITSELF, MOST NECESSARY FOR ALL BELIEVERS.

For, first, *the remembrance of Christ is the prolongation of the act of faith*. What is faith but the first look at Christ? And what is remembering Him but continuing to look at Him? At any rate, if it is not the same thing, the one act leads up to the other, for never did any soul truly remember Christ without its faith growing. Come, then, to the Lord's Table, all you who are alive unto God through faith in Jesus Christ, and pray that here your faith may be greatly increased! You have believed on Him and He is made of God unto you, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption." You have trusted in Him and you are pardoned, accepted, saved by Him. Come then to His Table, looking to Him as your Savior, looking to Him in whom you are accepted, looking to Him through whom you hope to enter into heaven at the last! Let your remembrance be blessed to you as being the continuance of your first faith.

Then, next, *the remembrance of Christ is a very blessed stimulus to our love*. "Absence makes the heart grow fonder," some say. That is a questionable proverb in relation to our earthly friends, but I am sure that it never was true and never will be true with regard to Christ and His people! We must be with Him to really love Him—and the longer we are with Him, the more we shall love Him! And when we are with Him forever and forever without a break, then shall we love Him with all our heart, soul and strength—without coldness or chill forever. Remembrance of Christ will bring Him to you! It will hold up His portrait before your mind's eye and enable you to see His heart beating with love to you! It will make you feel that He still loves you although He reigns exalted high, and then your love will flow out to Him more freely in return.

And, beloved, there will be another good thing which will come out of this remembrance of Christ, for *it will be the suggestion to you of renewed hope*. When a man remembers that Jesus Christ is really his, then he says, "Have I such a Savior as this? Then, by and by, I shall be with Him where He is and I shall behold His glory, for that is His prayer concerning me! His arm is strong enough to keep me. His heart is warm enough to love me. His eyes are bright enough to see me. I know that I shall be eternally saved by Him."

It seems to me, also, that *coming to this communion table to remember Christ, if we really do remember Him, is like a recall*, as when you have heard the trumpet sound for the soldiers to come back to the standard. It is a recall from the world. It says to you, "Now forget your business, forget your pains, forget your family cares, forget everything but your Lord! Come back, poor perplexed Martha, and become like Mary and sit

at Christ's feet. This do in remembrance of Him." It is a recall from self. You have been saying, "I have not grown in grace as I hoped to do. My doubts are many, my sins innumerable, my spiritual state is not what I would like it to be." Then come back from all that to your Lord; from the filthiness to the cleansing fountain, from the leprosy to the healing, from prison to the great liberator, from your poverty to His wealth, from your lost estate to Him who is all your salvation and all your desire, and who says to you, "This do in remembrance of Me." It calls you back from introspection, from looking within to looking away to your Lord, looking off unto Jesus!

And does not this remembrance call all of us back to our Lord from whatever we have been engaged in, even for His own name's sake? Have we been engaged in controversy? Have we been fighting for liberty of worship, for the severance of church and state, for Calvinistic doctrine, for some view of the second advent, or for any particular form of doctrine? Then I think I hear the voice of Jesus saying, "Come back, My child, from the battlefield on which you have been contending with a brave and true heart for the defense of My faith—come back to Me. I call you now not to remember doctrine, but to remember Me." "This do in remembrance of Me." So let us come together to His table though we differ from one another in many respects. We can remember Him in unity here wherever else we may not be able to unite. And let us come back, too, from all our Christian labors. I would like to forget, at this table, everything that is faulty in my own work, or in the work of my brothers and sisters, or in their characters—everything that might grieve, vex and annoy. We will try to put it all away from us, for just now our Lord's command to us is, "This do in remembrance of Me."

I said that this remembrance was like a recall, to summon the soldiers back to the standard. But it also seems to me *like the morning bugle sounding clearly throughout the camp to wake the soldiers*. "This do in remembrance of Me." Christ has gone up into His glory, away from the damps and mists of earth. Think, beloved, of the glory and brightness that abound where He stands, and of which He is the central sun! And from that glory, clear and shrill, as though it were the first notes from the archangel's trumpet, I hear the message sounding again and again, "Remember Me! Remember Me! Remember Me in My glory as well as in My shame! Remember Me in my triumph as well as in my warfare. 'This do in remembrance of Me.'" If we have really believed in Jesus, let us come to His table as though our communion here were the first course of that everlasting supper to which we shall sit down with Him above! Or, to change the figure and make it more correct, let this sad feast be, as one of the martyrs called it, the breakfast wherein we break the long fast of this world and feed on heaven's bread with Christ, knowing that we shall soon be at the great marriage supper of the Lamb, who shall know no end and where we shall feast forever in His sight!

Is it not true, then, that in this remembrance there is much that is precious, valuable and really necessary to all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?

IV. But now I must close by reminding you that THIS SYMBOLIC FESTIVAL IS HIGHLY BENEFICIAL IN REFRESHING OUR MEMORIES.

I am sure *we need this supper, though it is but a material feast, because we are yet in the body*. There are some people who, if they had the power, would be presumptuous enough to do away with baptism and the Lord's Supper because they have been so grossly misused. But if they could blot them out, it would be an irreparable loss to the church of Christ. These ordinances are the only link between the spirituality of our faith and materialism—and we must remember that God has not flung away materialism as a thing that cannot be bettered. He did curse the earth, once, and it still brings forth thorns and thistles, but He does not mean it to always remain under the curse. There will come a time when there shall be a literal new heaven and a new earth—and here, where sin has triumphed—grace shall reign. Believers are still here in the body, but Paul's words are as true, today, as when he wrote them, "Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you?" These very bodies of ours shall rise again from the grave! They may sleep in the dust for a while, but they shall come again from the land of their captivity and in our flesh shall we see God—and our body as well as our spirit shall enjoy an eternity of bliss with our Savior in His body as well as in His spirit in His great triumph! Of course it will not be such flesh as it now is, for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. But still, it will be the same body, though it will have undergone a wonderful change. So I thank God for the two ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper because they teach me that nothing is common or unclean. They sanctify the rivers for me. They sanctify my daily bread for me. They make me feel not as if I lived, like a Brahmin, in a world where everything might pollute me, but like a Christian—in a world where Christ has lived and in a position in which everything may be to me "holiness unto the Lord" if my heart is right before Him!

Not only is this symbolic festival beneficial to us because materialism still appertains to our bodies, but *it is specially so because Jesus appointed it*. He would never have appointed a needless ceremony! And He was no lover of useless ceremonies. He never wrote a Directorium (is not that the name of it?) giving instructions as to how to celebrate various ecclesiastical ceremonies! So, as He has ordained this memorial, He must have known that we needed it because of our forgetfulness. And we may be quite sure that as He has ordained it, He will make it answer the ends for which He instituted it!

Besides, *experience has taught many of us how valuable this ordinance is*. I can bear my own witness that many and many a Sabbath, when I have found but little food for my own soul elsewhere, I have found it at the communion table. You know that sometimes we who preach the gospel are not ourselves fed by it even when those who hear us may be feasting upon it—but the Master still presides at His own table and He

sees that the minister is fed as well as the rest of the communicants! I have been in a foreign land where there was no congregation to meet for public worship, but the two or three believers who were there have always broken bread together each Sunday, and it has been to us quite a full service, most strengthening to the soul, when we have gathered around the table of our Lord to do "this" in remembrance of Him!

One other thing I will mention and that is how often has Christ set His seal to this supper by *blessing it, not only to those who were doing it in remembrance of Him, but even to those who were only spectators*. It is an encouraging thought to us that the Spirit of God, while He has been hovering over the assembly of believers in Jesus, has turned His eyes of pity upon those who were but observers looking on at the ordinance—and has made the symbols to be a sermon, and the communion service to be a most impressive discourse! And many there are now in heaven who were led there through holy thoughts that were first implanted in their minds and hearts at the communion feast! And many others are on their way to glory whose feet were first guided into the right road while they were watching others who had met together thus to remember their dear Lord and Savior! So prize this ordinance much, beloved, because it is so highly beneficial to you in refreshing your memories and also because, incidentally, it may be made a means of blessing to others!

I close by saying that *it is clear, from our Lord's command, that attendance at this ordinance is binding upon all Christians*. "This do", not, "This look at", but, "This do in remembrance of Me." All who truly love their Lord should hear Him say to them, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." Some believers neglect this ordinance. If any such are in this congregation now, I would say to them, beloved friends, you are losing a great blessing and you are disobedient to your Lord. Think what would happen if all other believers were to do as you are doing. If they did (and they have as much right to do it as you have), then the Lord's Supper would cease to be celebrated and this showing forth of Christ's death which is to go on "till He comes," would necessarily cease. Your abstaining from church membership and your neglect of the two ordinances appointed by Christ is an example which it would be disastrous for all others to follow! Do not imagine that this neglect on your part can be right, but end it at the first convenient opportunity. The observance of this ordinance will not save you. And if you are not already saved, you have no right to partake of it, but if you are saved, if you have really believed in Jesus, He says to you, "This do in remembrance of Me."

Remember, too, that *this ordinance is to be often observed by all Christians*. Our Lord said to His disciples, "This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." I will not say that Christ actually laid down the rule that it should be observed *often*, but it seems to me that His words imply that it should be. And as often as it is observed, it should be in remembrance of Him. Do not live month after month without remembering Christ by means of these outward signs which He has Himself appointed as His special memorial! Remember Him often! Pray

that memory may always bear His image on its very front, but do not neglect the helpful ordinance which the Lord Himself instituted for you.

And then, last of all, *never come to this table except it is with the solemn determination that you will remember Him*. You mock Christ if you regard this communion as anything other than the remembrance of Him. What is there in that bread? What is there in that wine? There is nothing whatever there but bread and wine after we have invoked a blessing upon them just as there was before! We pay these emblems no reverence of any kind, nor could we do so without being guilty of idolatry! There is nothing in the whole ordinance but a help to our memory and I have tried to explain to you how it does help the memory. But if you do not remember Jesus, if you have no faith in Him, if you do not love Him, if you do not cast yourselves wholly upon Him, what business have you at His table? You have no part nor lot in this matter! Faith in Christ first, then baptism, then the Lord's Supper! But neither of these ordinances is for unbelievers— and whoever dares to observe them as an unbeliever, or to get others who believe not in Christ to observe them—is a profaner of the ordinances, a thief and a robber who is doing incalculable mischief to the souls of men! Come to Jesus first—believe in Him and you shall be saved. Go to the foot of the cross, confessing your sins and trusting in Him who hung there—and then, after that, we are told to bid you remember all things that He has commanded you and to tell you that He has promised to be with us even to the end of the age!

Observe you, then, these things in their right order! Faith in Jesus first and then obedience to Jesus and the remembrance of Jesus in His own appointed way. If you miss the all-important matter of faith in Jesus, you have gained the chaff, but lost the wheat—you have gained the salt, but it has no savor—you have a name to live, but you have not life eternal! God grant that none of us may be found thus lacking the one thing necessary, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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"He was very thirsty, and called on the LORD, and said, You have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant: and now shall I die of thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?"
Judges 15:18. **(NKJV)**

YOU will remember the occasion on which these words were spoken. Samson had been brought down from the top of the rock Etam, bound with cords by his own brothers, and given up as a captive into the hands of the Philistines. But no sooner did he reach the Philistines than the supernatural force of God's Spirit came upon him and he snapped the cords as though they had been but hemp and, seeing the jawbone of a newly slaughtered donkey lying near at hand, he grasped that strange weapon and fell with all his might upon the hosts of the Philistines! And though, no doubt, they took to speedy flight, yet the one man, smiting them hip and thigh, left no less than a thousand persons dead upon the ground! And as he piled up the heaps of the slain, he looked with grim satisfaction upon the slaughter which he had worked, crying, "With the jawbone of a donkey, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of a donkey have I slain a thousand men." There was, perhaps, a little of vaunting and vain glorying in his conduct, but in a moment, a sudden faintness came over him. He had been exerting himself most marvelously, straining every nerve and muscle, and now, being very thirsty, he looked round him for a stream of water, but there was none—and he felt as if, for lack of water, he would die and then the Philistines would rejoice over him! With that simpleminded faith which was so characteristic of Samson, who was nothing but a big child, he turned his eyes to his heavenly Father, and cried, "O Jehovah, You have given me this great deliverance, and now shall I die of thirst? After all that You have done for me, shall the uncircumcised rejoice over me because I die for lack of a drink of water?" Such confidence had he that God would interpose on his behalf.

Now, my drift is the comforting of God's saints, especially in coming to the table of their Lord. I have thought there may be many of you who are feeling in an unhappy and a distressed frame of mind and that by referring you to what God has already done for you, I might lead you to see a lighter estimate upon your present trouble and enable you to argue that He who has worked great deliverances for you in the past will not allow you to lack in the future!

I. YOU HAVE ALREADY, MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS, EXPERIENCED GREAT DELIVERANCES.

Happy is it for you that you have not had the grim task of slaying a thousand men, but there are "heaps upon heaps" of another sort upon which you may look with quite as much satisfaction as Samson and, perhaps, with less mingled emotions than his when he gazed on the slaughtered Philistines.

See there, beloved, the great heaps of *your sins*—all of them giants—and any one of them sufficient to drag you down to the lowest hell! But they are all slain! There is not a single sin that speaks a word against you. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Another arm than yours has done it, but the victory is quite complete. Christ has returned with dyed garments from Bozrah. He has trodden the wine press of God's wrath and I may almost say that the blood which stains His apparel is the blood of your sins which He has utterly destroyed forever. Look at their number. Take all the years of your life and make each year a heap. Divide them, if you will, into groups and classes—put them under the heads of the Ten Commandments and there they lie, in ten great heaps, but every one of them destroyed!

Think, too, of the heaps of your *doubts and fears*. Do you not remember when you thought God would never have mercy upon you? Let me remind you of the deep dungeon where there was no water when the iron entered into your soul. Some of us can never forget the time when we were under conviction of sin. Moses tied us up to the Halberts and took the ten thronged whip of the law of God and laid it upon our backs most terribly—and then seemed to wash us with brine as conscience reminded us of all the aggravations which had attended our sins! But though we feared we should have been in hell. Though we thought that surely the pit would shut its mouth upon us, yet here we are living to praise God, as we do this day, and all our fears are gone! We rejoice in Christ Jesus. God "has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." "Heaps upon heaps" of fears have we had—bigger heaps than our sins—but there they lie, troops of doubters. There are their bones and their skulls, as Bunyan pictured them outside the town of Mansoul, but they are all dead, God having worked for us deliverance from them!

Another set of foes that God has slain includes *our temptations*. Some of us have been tempted from every quarter of the world, from every point of the compass. Sometimes it has been pride; at another time despair. Sometimes it has been too much of the world and at other times it has been too little. Sometimes we have been too strong and puffed up. At other times we have been too weak and cast down. There has sometimes been a lack of faith and at other times our fervency may have been inflamed by the flesh. The best of men are shot at with the devil's worst darts. You have been tempted by Satan. You have been tempted by the world. Your nearest and dearest friends have, perhaps, been your worst tempters, for "a man's foes shall be they of his own household." There has not been a bush behind which an enemy has not lurked. There has been no inch of the road to Canaan which has not been overgrown with thorns!

Now look back upon your temptations and where are they? Your soul has escaped like a bird out of the snare of the fowler and this night you can say, "They compassed me about like bees. Yes, like bees they compassed me about, but in the name of God have I destroyed them! I have passed safely where others have been ruined. I have walked along the walls of salvation when others have been lying at the foot, dashed in pieces by their presumption and their self-confidence—'heaps upon heaps' of my temptations have been slain and You, O God, have worked for me a great deliverance!"

So let me say, in the next place, has it been with *most of your sorrows*. You sons and daughters of tribulation have sometimes sat down and said, "All these things are against us." You have lost children, friends have died, business has departed, wealth has melted—almost every comfort has had a blight upon it. Like Job's messengers, evil tidings have followed one another and you have been brought very low. But, beloved in Christ Jesus, you have been delivered! "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all." It has been so in your case. Whatever form the affliction has taken, mercy has taken a suitable form to meet it. When the arrow flew, God was your shield. When the darkness gathered, He was your sun. When you had to fight, He was your sword. When you needed to be supported, He was your rod and your staff—

"Thus far we've proved that promise good
Which Jesus ratified with blood.
Still is He gracious, wise, and just
And still in Him let Israel trust."

I will let no man or woman in this congregation take a place before me in obligation to the Most High! Brothers and sisters, we are all debtors, but I count myself most of all a debtor! I boast that I have nothing to boast of! I would desire to lie the lowest and to take the meanest place, for I owe most of all to the grace of God! When I look back to my parentage, when I see from where the Lord has brought me and what He has done for me and by me, I can only say, "You have given to Your servant this great deliverance." And I suppose if all the people of God could meet here, one by one, they would each claim that there is something peculiar in their every case. Each one would say, "There is something in the deliverance God has worked for me that demands of me a special song"—therefore let the whole of us together, who have known and "tasted that the Lord is gracious," look back upon the past with thankfulness and praise to the Lord!

II. YET FRESH TROUBLES WILL ATTACK YOU AND EXCITE YOUR ALARM.

Thus, after his fight with the Philistines, Samson was thirsty. This was a new kind of trouble to him—he was so thirsty that he was afraid that he would die! The difficulty was totally different from any that Samson had met before. Shake those Samsonian locks in which your strength lies, but they cannot distil a single drop of dew to moisten your mouth! The strongest man is as much amenable to thirst as the weakest—and

that arm which could slay a thousand Philistines, cannot open a fountain in the earth, or draw down a shower from the skies, or yield to thirst a single draught of water! He is in a new plight. Of course it seems to you to be a far simpler trial than he had known before, and so it was. Merely to get thirst relieved is not anything like so great a thing as to be delivered from a thousand Philistines! But I daresay, when the thirst was upon him and oppressed him, Samson felt that little present difficulty more weighty and severe than the great past difficulty out of which he had so recently been delivered!

Now I think, beloved, there may be some of you who have been forgiven, saved, delivered and yet you do not feel happy tonight. "God has done great things for you, whereof you are glad," yet you cannot rejoice. The song of your thanksgiving is hushed. A little inconvenience in getting into your pews, a hasty word spoken by somebody outside the gate, the thought of a child at home—something which is very little and insignificant compared with all that God has worked for you will sometimes take away the present joy and comfort of the great—the unspeakably great gifts which you have received! You may be sure of your standing in Christ and yet some little trouble keeps buzzing about your ears and may be distracting you even now. Let me say two or three words to you.

It is very usual for God's people, when they have had some great deliverance, to have some little trouble that is too much for them. Samson slays a thousand Philistines and piles them up in heaps—and then he must die for need of a little water! Look at Jacob—he wrestles with God at Peniel and overcomes omnipotence itself—and yet he goes limping on his thigh! Strange, is it not, that there must be a touching of the sinew whenever you and I win the day? It seems as if God must teach us our littleness, our *nothingness*, in order to keep us within bounds! Samson seems to have crowed right lustily when he said, "With the jaw of a donkey have I slain a thousand men." Ah, Samson, it is time your throat became hoarse when you can boast so loudly! The mighty man has to go down on his knees and cry, "O God, this thirst will overcome Your hero! Send me, I pray You, a draught of water." God has ways of touching His people so that their energy soon vanishes. "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved…You did hide Your face and I was troubled." Now, dear child of God, if this is your case, I say it is not an unusual one. There is a reaction which generally follows any strong excitement. No doubt the excitement of having slain the Philistines would naturally be followed by depression of spirits in Samson. When David had mounted the throne of Judah, there came a reaction and he said, "I am this day weak, though anointed king." You must expect to feel weakest just when you are enjoying your greatest triumph!

I have already said that *the use of all this is to make a man feel his weakness.* I hope it makes you feel yours. What fools we are, brothers and sisters and yet, if someone else were to call us fools, we would not like it—though I do not doubt but that we are very well named, whoever may give us the title—for the whole of heaven cannot make us rejoice if

we have a pain in our head and all the harps of angels and our knowledge of our interest in "the glory that shall be revealed," cannot make us happy if some little thing happens to go contrary to our minds! Somebody trod on the corns of your pride as you were coming in here—and if an angel had preached to you, you would not have enjoyed it because of your mind being discomposed. Oh, simpletons that we are! The table is daintily spread and the manna of heaven lies close to our hands, but because there is a little tear in the garment, or a small thorn in the finger, we sit down and cry as though the worst of ills had happened to us! Heaven is your own and yet you cry because your little room is scantily furnished! God is your Father and Christ your brother—and yet you weep because a baby has been taken from you to the skies! Your sins all forgiven and yet you mourn because your clothes are poor! You are a child of God, an heir of heaven—and yet you sorrow as though you would break your heart because a fool has called you ill names! Strange is it and foolish—but such is man—strangely foolish and only wise as God shall make him so!

III. If, my brothers and sisters, you are now feeling any present trouble pressing so sorely that it takes away from you all power to rejoice in your deliverance, I want you to remember that you ARE STILL SECURE! God will as certainly bring you out of this present little trouble as He has brought you out of all the great troubles in the past.

He will do this for two reasons, both of which are found in the text. The first is because *if He does not deliver you, your enemy will rejoice over you*. "What?" said Samson, "Shall I die of thirst, and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised? Faint, weary, thirsty, shall I become their victim?—I who was once their terror and made the damsels of Gath and of Askelon to weep instead of to dance? Shall *I* be slain?" And what do you say? But hush your gloomy forebodings! If you perish, the honor of Christ will be tarnished and the laughter of hell will be excited. Bought with Jesus' blood and yet in hell—what merriment there would be in the pit! Justified by the righteousness of Christ and yet lost—what a theme of scorn for fiends! Sanctified by the Spirit of God and yet damned—oh what yells of triumph would go up from the abode of Apollyon and his angels! What? A child of God forsaken of his Father? A jewel plucked from Jesus' crown? A member rent from Jesus' body? Never, never, never! God will never permit the power of darkness to triumph over the power of light. His great name He always has in respect and the ruin of the meanest believer would be the cause of dishonor and disrespect to God—therefore you are safe! Oh it is such a blessed thing when you can run behind your God for shelter! Some youngster out in the street has been offending his fellow and is likely to receive a blow—but here comes his father—and he runs behind him and feels that there is no fear for him now! So let us shelter ourselves behind our God. Better than bronze walls, or castles, or high towers shall Jehovah be to us! And we may then look at all our enemies and say, as the Lord did to Sennacherib, "The virgin, the daughter of Zion, has despised you and laughed you to scorn;

the daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head at you." The uncircumcised shall not rejoice! The daughters of Philistia shall not triumph! We are our God's and He will keep His own until the day when He shall display them as His jewels.

That is one reason for confidence, but another reason is to be found in the fact that *God has already delivered you.* I asked you just now to walk over the battlefield of your life and observe the heaps of slaughtered sins, fears, cares, temptations and troubles. Do you think He would have done all that He has done for you if He had intended to leave you? The God who has so graciously delivered you up to now has not changed! He is still the same as He ever was. I have no doubt about the sun rising tomorrow morning—he always has done so since I have been able to see him. Why should I doubt my God, for He is more certain than the sun? The Nile ceases not to make Egypt laugh with plenty—men trust it. And why should not I trust my God who is a river full of water overflowing with loving kindness? If we never doubt God till we have cause to do so, distrust will be banished from our hearts forever! Of men, we speak as we find them—let us do the same with God. Was He ever a wilderness to you? When did He forsake you? When did your cries to Him return without an answer? Has He ever said, "I have blotted you out of My book and I will remember you no more?" You have doubted Him wickedly and wantonly, but never have you had any cause for suspicion or mistrust! Now, since He is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever," the God who delivered you out of the jaws of the lion and out of the paws of the bear will yet deliver you out of your present difficulty!

Do you think, dear friend, *if He does not do so, He will lose all that He has done for you!* When I see a potter making a vessel, if he is using some delicate clay upon which he has spent much preliminary labor to bring it to its proper fineness—if I see him again, and again, and again molding the vessel—if I see, moreover, that the pattern is coming out—if I know that he has put it in the oven and that the colors are beginning to display themselves—I think were it common everyday ware I could understand his breaking up what he had done, because it would be but worth little. But since it is a piece of rich and rare porcelain upon which months of labor have been spent, I could not understand his saying, "I will not go on with it," because he would lose so much that he had already spent! Look at some of those rich vessels by Bernard de Palissy which are worth their weight in gold, and you can hardly imagine Bernard stopping when he had almost finished and saying, "I have been six months on this, but I shall never take the pains to complete it."

Now God has spent the blood of His own dear Son to save you! He has spent the power of the Holy Spirit to make you what He would have you be and He will never stay His mighty hand till His work is done! Has He said and shall He not do it? Has He begun and shall He not complete it? God will have no unfinished works! When Jehovah's banner is furled and His sword is sheathed, then shall He cry—

"'Tis done,
For the kingdoms of this world
Are the kingdoms of My Son."

In that day, every vessel that He prepared for glory shall be in glory, having been made perfectly meet for it. Do not, then, despair because of your present trouble!

Doubtless some of you who are saying that I am speaking as one who does not know the occasion, or the bitterness of your peculiar distress. My dear friends, I do not care to know it. It is enough for me to know that if God has worked for His servants so great a deliverance as He has done, the present difficulty is only like Samson's thirst and I am sure He will not let you die of faintness, nor suffer the daughter of the uncircumcised to triumph over you. "Ah," says one, "it is all very well talking, but mine is a very, very, very peculiar case!" Well, then, dear brother, there is a special reason why God should deliver you because if Satan could overcome you in that peculiar case, he would then say that he could have overcome all the saints if he could have got them into the same corner! And he would loudly boast just as though the whole had perished! But I do not think that your case is so very peculiar—it is only the way in which *you* look at it. The road to sorrow has been well trodden—it is the regular sheep path to heaven—and all the flock of God have had to pass along it. So I pray you, cheer up your heart with Samson's words and rest assured that God will deliver you soon!

And now, while I have been talking thus, the thought has again occurred to me that many people listen to me who are not Christians. My friends, my great wonder is what some of you do without God! I can hardly understand how the rich man can have any comfort without God, for he must suffer from bereavement and bodily pain as well as the poor. Those silly butterflies of fashion who spend all their time in flitting about from flower to flower are so heartless and thoughtless that I can, to some extent, comprehend how they can do without God. With empty heads and silly hearts, men and women can make gods of anything! Their own pretty persons can be quite a sufficient object for their idiotic worship. But a man who stands right straight up, a sensible thinking man—a workingman, if you will—I do not mind whether he works with the dry heat of his brain or with the damp sweat of his face—I cannot understand how a man like this, with organs of thought and a reasoning soul, can go on without God! There must be pinches with some of you when you need a God. I would have been in a madhouse a dozen times if it had not been for my God. My feet would have altogether gone into the chambers of despair and I would have ended this life if it had not been for the faithful promises of the God who keeps and preserves His people! My life has not been a miserable, but a happy one! And yet I tell you that there have been innumerable times in it when I could not have done without my God. I do not understand what some of you who are always so pinched, do without God. There are many such here. You are poor. You are not often without sickness. You were born inheritors of maladies that make your life wretched. Your children are sickly about you. It is as much as you can do by Saturday night to make ends meet—you are frequently in debt—you are constantly in trouble. Oh, I cannot tell what

you do without God! Why, you have nothing here, and no hope of anything hereafter! Poor souls, I could weep for you to think that you are without God!

And you will have to die soon. When the death thirst is in your throat, what do you think you will do without God? To die in God's presence is simply to let life blossom into something better than life—but to die without God must be horrible! You will not want your companions then! Strong drink will not pacify you then! Music will have no charms for you then! The love of a tender and gentle wife can yield you but sorry comfort then! You may lay your moneybags at your side, but they will not calm your palpitating heart then! You will hear the booming of the waves of the great sea of eternity! You will feel your feet slipping into the dreadful quicksand! You will clutch about you for help, but there will be none! Instead, invisible hands shall begin to pull you down and down through the dark sea! And you will descend to those darker depths where dread despair will be your everlasting heritage!

But there is hope yet! Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved! Turn your eyes to Christ, poor sinner, as He hangs there suffering in man's place, taking human guilt on Himself and being punished for it as though it were His own! Trust Him, sinner—and resting in Jesus you shall be saved!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 37.

Verse 1. *Fret not yourself because of evildoers, neither be you envious against the workers of iniquity.* They often seem to have the best of it in this life, but if it really is so, we must never forget that there is another life after this in which there will be no reason for the righteous to be envious of evildoers and workers of iniquity!

2. *For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.* It is very easy to cut down the grass with a sharp scythe. And when death takes down his scythe and cuts down men as the mower cuts down the grass of the field, they fall, rank upon rank, to "wither as the green herb."

3. *Trust in the LORD, and do good.* These are two good things to go together—faith and good works! "Trust in the Lord, and do good."

3. *So shall you dwell in the land.* Not merely on earth, but in the land of promise, the land which God has promised to His people. We dwell there by faith even now. Everywhere we find our God and wherever we find Him, it is Emmanuel's land to us.

3. *So and verily you shall be fed.* "Verily, verily," is Christ's most solemn affirmation. [See Sermon #3053, Volume 53—JESUS CHRIST'S IDIOM—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] David here says, "verily," because the statement he makes is absolutely true—"Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed."

4. *Delight yourself also in the LORD; and He shall give you the desires of your heart.* [See Sermon #454, Volume 8—SUNSHINE IN THE HEART—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] When all your heart's desires are fixed upon Him because He is your heart's delight, then you may give a loose rein to those desires without any fear that they will run away! When your heart's desires are of this sort, you shall have them, be they what they may! It is not every man who shall have the desires of his heart given to him, but only that man whose heart's delight is in his God. There is much in connection with the person praying which will help to decide whether he shall or shall not have his desires granted. What is the condition of the heart out of which the desires come? When the heart is full of delight in the Lord, its desires shall be pleasing in His sight and shall be granted.

5. *Commit your way unto the LORD.* You who are just now in trouble. You who are walking in a rough way, commit that trouble and that way to the Lord! You who are in difficulty as to what is your right way, commit that difficulty to the Lord! Then, of course, you will not need to keep it yourself, nor to trouble your head about it. It does not need two to "care" when God is one of the two, so cast all your care upon Him, for He cares for you! His grace is amply sufficient for every emergency that can possibly arise, so "commit your way unto the Lord." You have committed your soul to Him—then you can surely commit your business to Him, for that is a far inferior thing to your immortal soul!

5. *Trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.* Your desire shall be brought to pass. Your safety shall be brought to pass. Your everlasting advantage shall be brought to pass. Your way shall be made passable to you—you shall find your way to heaven.

6. *And He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday.* Are you misunderstood, misrepresented, slandered, laughed at? Leave it all with your God! Are you now walking in darkness? Trust in Him and He will bring you out into the light of God in due time. We do not have morning light in the evening—morning light comes when the morning comes—and your deliverance shall come when it is the right time for you to have it.

7. *Rest in the LORD.* That is a blessed state to reach. Notice the various stages that the Psalmist has mentioned. There was first, "Trust and do." Then there was, "Delight and have." Then there was, "Commit, and have it brought to pass." And now there is, "Rest in the Lord."

7, 8. *And wait patiently for Him: fret not yourself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger.* That comes of fretting and of being in a hurry—and not resting and being patient—for when the mind is restful, we can bear injuries. "Cease from anger."

8. *And forsake wrath: fret not yourself in any wise to do evil.* Very often our proverb is true, "The more haste, the less speed." And he who is in a hurry often does evil under the notion that it is the shortest way to get good—which it never is, for evil brings forth evil—and that perpetually.

9, 10. *For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yes, you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.* The very place wherein he stood so high has utterly perished. How many instances there have been of men who have taken great pains to perpetuate their own names, yet their names are forgotten in the very place where they dwelt! God has a way of stamping out evil and putting an end to it—and when there has been great wickedness in the land, He knows how to make the very name of the wicked to rot.

11-13. *But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. The wicked plots against the just, and gnashes upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him: for He sees that his day is coming.* "His day is coming," and what a day it will be! When the day of the wicked shall come—the day of God's righteous vengeance—woe unto him; woe unto him!

14-16. *The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as are of upright conversation. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked.* Not of one wicked man, only, but of "many wicked." Fortunes heaped upon fortunes as the result of evildoing cannot equal the portion of the poorest of God's saints! A little with a blessing resting upon it is vastly better than much accompanied by a curse.

17. *For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholds the righteous.* They would soon fall if they were not upheld—but they shall not fall, for God will make them to stand!

18. *The LORD knows the days of the upright.* He knows our dark days and our bright days—and all our days that are yet to be as well as all our days that have been! The Lord knows all about all our days.

18. *And their inheritance shall be forever.* What they have, if it is really worth having, they shall keep forever. What God has given them in Christ, because they are His children, shall never be taken away from them, nor shall they be taken away from it—"their inheritance shall be forever." Men try to pass on their estates, but it is often an unsatisfactory system. Our estates are owned by God—upon the inheritance of every one of His people there is an inalienable ownership.

19. *They shall not be ashamed in the evil time.* If any shall say to them, "How is it that you are a child of God and yet you live in such an evil time?" they shall not be ashamed, but they will have an answer ready for them. They will tell them that many righteous men have lived in evil times, but they, themselves, have not been evil because of that. Where should bright lights be but in a dark place? Where should the salt be but where everything is going to corruption? "They shall not be ashamed in the evil time," for their God will still be their God and though everyone else may fail them, their God will not fail them.

19-23. *And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall be consumed; into smoke shall they be consumed. The*

wicked borrows, and pays not again: but the righteous shows mercy, and gives. For such as are blessed of Him shall inherit the earth; and they that are cursed of Him shall be cut off. The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD. Oh, what comfort there is in this blessed assurance! Sometimes we know not which way to move, but we need not lack divine guidance, for there is a special providence which watches over every step of a gracious man. When we are right with God, everything is right with us. If our heart's desire is that we may walk in God's way, then God will take care that the way of His providence shall be made plain to us and shall be full of love to us.

23. *And He delights in his way.* God delights to watch the way that His children walk, even though their steps may falter and totter, for they are often like little children learning to walk and usually they are very weak and feeble. Yet, if it is a good man who is walking as he should walk, God "delights in his way."

24. *Though he falls, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholds him with His hand.* He is like a little child who does not yet know how to stand alone, so his mother or nurse holds him up, or picks him up if he falls. God's arms are under His children's arms as He says by the mouth of the Prophet Hosea, "I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms." This is how He also teaches us to go—in wondrous condescension taking us by our arms!

25. *I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.* I have been young and though I am not yet old, I can truly say that I have never seen the righteous forsaken. I have, however, seen the seed of the righteous begging bread. David never saw that sad sight, but then he was a king, so he was not likely to see as many beggars as some of us do. Yet, still as a general rule it remains true that the God of the fathers does provide for their children. Of course, if the seed of the righteous become vicious and profligate, as they sometimes do, drunkenness will clothe them with rags and set them among the beggars of the street just as it would if they were the children of ungodly parents! And it may be mercy on the part of God that it should be so, as it was in the case of the prodigal, who never came to himself until he was in need—and his begging of bread was a blessing to him—for it brought him, at last, to beg to be received again into his father's household!

26-27. *He is always merciful, and lends; and his seed is blessed. Depart from evil.* Do not remain near it, do not even look at it, do not parley with it—run away from it! "Depart from evil."

27. *And do good.* For you must do something, either good or evil. If you became an idler, even though you had departed from evil, you would not have become what God would have you to be. Negatives must be backed up with positives! "Depart from evil, and do good."

27, 28. *And dwell forevermore. For the LORD loves judgment, and forsakes not His saints; they are preserved forever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.* Not, of course, if they themselves become

righteous, for then they come under the covenant of grace and shall never be cut off.

29-37. *The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever. The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue talks of judgment. The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. The wicked watches the righteous, and seeks to slay him. The LORD will not leave him in his hands, nor condemn him when he is judged. Wait on the LORD, keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, you shall see it. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yes, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.* He does not wither and vanish like a gourd of the night. He passes not away like that phantom bay tree which seemed so substantial, but really was not. His end is peace and "all is well that ends well," so all is well with him—and blessed is that man's life which came to such a blessed conclusion as this—"the end of that man is peace."

38, 39. *But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD.* That is why they are not cut off like the wicked, because God's salvation is in them. They would pass away, they would be but the mere dream and phantom that the prosperous wicked ones are, but God Himself is in them and, therefore, are they solid and substantial and their salvation is an everlasting salvation!

39, 40 *He is their strength in the time of trouble. And the LORD shall help them and deliver them: He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in Him.* That is the main point—"they trust in Him." One of the descriptions of Abraham is this, "Abraham believed God," and therefore he had God for his shield and his exceeding great reward. Are you trusting in God, dear Friends? Are you living a life of faith? Then the walk of faith will be followed, in due time, by the triumph of faith! Blessed are all they that put their trust in the Lord, and blessed forever shall they be.

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A QUESTION FOR YOU
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"Do you believe on the Son of God?"
John 9:35.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon this question are as follows—
Sermons #1088, Volume 18—THE ESSENCE OF SIMPLICITY; #2141, Volume 36—
THE QUESTION OF QUESTIONS; #2667, Volume 46—
A PRESSED MAN YIELDING TO CHRIST,
and #3008, Volume 52—AN ALL-IMPORTANT QUESTION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THIS blind man, whose eyes Christ had opened, was a very shrewd fellow and wonderfully straightforward and determined. What he did know could not be beaten out of him, neither could he be led to draw unfair inferences from what he knew. He would hold to what he clearly saw to be the fact. He believed Jesus to be a prophet sent of God and he stuck to his belief whatever the Pharisees might say. Now I believe that is the kind of man to learn more of. The man who knows something and yet trifles with it, is not likely to be further instructed of God. Nothing is more displeasing to Him than trifling with what you have already learned, tampering with your conscience, not following the guidance of the light of God which you have already received. But to him that has, and that uses aright what he has, more shall be given—and he shall have abundance. The honest and good ground was the sort of soil in which Jesus loved to sow the good seed of the kingdom, so He thought it was worth His while to search for this man whom the Pharisees had excommunicated, that He might still further instruct him in divine truth. O dear hearers, as far as ever you have received the light, act up to it and praise God for the light that He has given you! If you value the moonlight, He will give you sunlight before long. But be upright, straight, honest and sincere before the Lord, for He looks with hopefulness to the true and the upright, for these are the people whom He is most likely to bless.

I. Our Savior, having found this man, put to him the question in my text, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" This question I am going to consider with you as the Holy Spirit shall help us. And first, I see here AN EXAMPLE OF WISE PERSONAL INQUIRY.

Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke to this man personally because He meant to do him good. He did not invite him to listen to a sermon, though that also might have done him good, but He got him alone and put to him this pointed, personal question, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" Christian people, this method which Christ, Himself, used, you ought to

employ more than you do! Talk to people personally and pointedly. Push them up in a corner from which they cannot easily escape. Whenever a sermon is preached, it is the preacher's duty to apply it to his hearers, but it is quite as much the duty of his Christian hearers to apply it to each unconverted person present by asking, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" Get hold of a man and do not let him go until you have put to him this personal question! Sunday school teachers should do this to each child in their classes—perhaps their work just needs that finishing stroke to make it effective. Parents, especially, should do this with every boy and girl in their family. It should be close personal work with each one. Teaching may be general but it should always be followed by a personal catechizing of those who have been taught.

Our Savior put this question to the man when they were alone. He did not ask him this while there were dozens of people around them. It might have been very awkward for the man if He had done so. But, getting him by himself, Christ said to him, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" You, also, dear friends, will find this to be a very useful way of working for Christ because it will often bring men to a crisis. They are, possibly, halting between two opinions. Perhaps in their own minds they have a sort of notion that they do believe in Jesus, and yet they really do not. So, when they are pointedly requested to say whether they do or do not believe in Him, it helps them to understand their true position and very frequently it drives them out of a wrong position into a right one! In the case of the man whose eyes Christ had opened, the question, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" led to the discovery of a very serious flaw in his condition. He was spiritually ignorant—he did not know the Savior even though He was standing close beside him and talking to him! He said, "Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?" That lamentable ignorance on his part might not have been discovered by him if the question had not been so pointedly and plainly put to him—"Do you believe on the Son of God?" That question led to the removal of his ignorance, brought him into clearer light and ended in his saying, "Lord, I believe," and in his falling down to worship the Savior of whose deity he had just before been ignorant!

May I, then, without enlarging upon this point, earnestly urge upon my Christian brothers and sisters the wisdom of often using this method of pushing the individual sinner up into a corner and saying to him, "Do you believe?" When we are publicly instructing people, we are very often like persons who are building a great bonfire. We bring barrels, wood, coals and I know not what else, and keep on heaping up the pile, yet there is no bonfire! What we need is a match to set light to the pile and, very often, that pointed, personal question, "Do you believe?" pressed right home upon the individual hearer is just like the lighted match thrust in among the combustible materials—and so the instruction already given becomes profitable and effective! Have you ever used this method, dear friends? I believe that in many cases parents go on with family prayer and instructing their children in divine things, yet their boy is not a decided Christian because his father does not take him into the study, or into the little quiet parlor and put his arms round his neck, and pray for him, and say to him, "My dear boy, have you really given

yourself to Jesus Christ?" And when a mother does that, oh, how many boys and girls have been brought to Jesus by those earnest personal inquiries from a mother whose tearful eyes give still greater force to her loving entreaties! I think that most Sunday school teachers will tell you that when they have persistently charged home the truth—of course, all other points being attended to as well—when they have persistently charged home the truth upon the individual conscience, they have seen greater immediate results than they have had from their more general teaching.

I pray God to make us ministers more personal in our preaching. I have sometimes felt, when I have heard a sermon, as if the people whom that sermon concerned must have lived on the moon or on the planet Saturn, but that they certainly did not live down here on this earth! The congregation was addressed as though we were all very good respectable people—but if the preacher had told us what we really were, somebody would have been sure to exclaim, "I can't hear such a preacher as that! He is so shockingly personal!" But to be personal, in the sense of being faithful to each one of our hearers, is a mark of excellence in a Christian minister. And instead of being condemned for being thus personal, we should be commended for being what we were intended to be! We were sent by God to be personal and to deliver personal messages, as Nathan did to David when he said to him, "You are the man." I wish it were possible for us, in a wise and prudent manner, to be more closely personal than we ever have been—and so to imitate our Savior's example of wise personal inquiry when He said to this man, "Do you believe on the Son of God?"

II. Now, secondly, anyone who is thoughtful can perceive, in our Savior's question, AN INDICATION OF THE VITAL POINT OF CHARACTER.

Jesus Christ said to this man, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" *He had been aggrieved by the conduct of the Pharisees*. They would not believe him. They had been prejudiced against him and they had put him out of the synagogue—so Jesus Christ seemed to say to him, "Yes, I see how wrongly they have acted towards you and I see how truthful and courageous you have been, but the Pharisees do not believe on Me and that is the reason of their prejudice against Me—but do *you believe* on Me?" It is quite possible for you not to take part with skeptics and opposers of the gospel and yet, after all, you may not be, yourself, a believer in Christ. So I put the question again to each one of you, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" I want this question to come home to you good, amiable, excellent people who never did oppose Jesus Christ in your whole lives and who do not intend to do so—and who are very vexed that there should be any Pharisees who do such things! Still, do you really believe in Jesus Christ yourselves? That is the vital point. It is not enough to be a non-opposer—you must personally be an adherent of the Lord Jesus Christ, for He said—"He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathers not with Me, scatters abroad."

This man had also been suffering for Jesus Christ's sake. He had been browbeaten and abused by the Pharisees, and now he had been put out

of the synagogue! But Jesus seems to say to him, "Yes, it is well that you should suffer for the truth's sake, and for believing that I am a prophet—but that is not enough. 'Do you believe on the Son of God?'" Some of you, perhaps, will persist in attending a place of worship, though you have to suffer a great deal at home because of it. And you continue to read the Bible and other religious books though you get laughed at for doing it. And you come regularly to the prayer meetings and the weeknight services though there are many who consider you foolish for doing so. All that is well, but it is not enough! You might even give your body to be burnt for Christ's sake, but if you have not faith in Him, you would not thereby be saved. This is *the* point, "Do you believe on the Son of God?"

This man could have replied to Christ's question, "I believe that You are a prophet." But Jesus would still have said to him, "Do you believe on *the Son of God*?" To believe that Jesus is a good man and a great prophet, and that He was sent of God is not enough! Saving faith lays hold upon both Christ's humanity and His deity. We must believe in Him as the son of Mary and the Son of God, truly Son of man, yet just as truly Son of God. There must be genuine faith in the deity of the Savior, or I do not see anything in the Word of God which gives even a glimmer of hope to the soul! So I press home the question upon each one here, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" "Well," says someone, "I believe the Bible. I am not an opponent of Christ and I have even suffered for Christ's sake." So far, so good! But, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" Have you given up all other ground of hope and committed your soul's eternal interests to that atoning sacrifice which alone can reconcile you to God and enable God to look upon you with favor? If you have, it is well. But if you have not, it is far from well with your soul!

This man might have said, "I have had my eyes opened. I was blind, but now I see." Yet Christ, who had opened his eyes, said to him, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" Perhaps someone here says, "I have given up drinking." I am glad to hear it, as glad as I am to hear that this blind man's eyes were opened! "Well," says another, "I am very different from what I was 12 months ago. Through attending the means of grace, I have become, I trust, respectable. Whereas before I was disreputable and given over to every evil thing." I am glad of it! I say again, as glad as when I read that this blind man's eyes were opened. But, my dear friend, that is not the main point. "Do you believe on the Son of God?" Morality is excellent as far as it goes, but without *holiness* no man shall see the Lord—and holiness far exceeds mere morality. Holiness can only be produced by a real change of heart and that real change of heart can only come through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit which manifests itself through faith in Jesus Christ. Moral changes are commendable and we would be the last to say a word against them! But just as silver is not gold, so morality is not holiness, and the message we still have to deliver is this, "You must be born again." So we press the question of the text home upon the conscience of everyone here because it concerns the vital point of faith in Christ. I am convinced that this question, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" is the most important question that a man can ever have to answer! This is vitally and overwhelmingly important. "I am a churchman," says one. "I am a

nonconformist," says another. "I am a Calvinist," says one. "I am an Arminian," says another. Well now, I am not going to ask you anything about your belief on any of these points, though I know what I think is the right view concerning all of them. But I can tell you that you may go to heaven or you may go to hell either as a churchman or as a nonconformist, as a Calvinist or as an Arminian—but if you believe on Jesus Christ, you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of His hands! It is believing on Him that is the all-important point, so I still urge each one of you to answer the question, "Do you believe on the Son of God?"

III. Thirdly, the text seems to me to give A HINT AS TO THE REASONABLENESS OF BELIEVING IN JESUS CHRIST.

Our Savior seems to say to this man, not in words, but in reality, "You have had your eyes opened. A great deal has been done for you. Now, do you believe on the Son of God? It is a natural inference, from the opening of the eyes of a man who has been born blind, that the one who has opened them is divine—have you perceived that great truth of God? Do you see it now?" "Why," I think I hear you all say, "He ought to see it! There ought certainly to be, in such a miracle as that, enough to convince him. He has been in darkness all his life, and now he has had his eyes opened, so that He who opened his eyes must be the Son of God." Very well, but what about yourselves? You say that you believe the Bible—then how is it that you do not believe on the Son of God? You say that the testimony of God in Scripture is true. Then why do you not believe it? Why do you not trust your soul to Him who you know is able to save you? You know what faith is—then why do you not exercise it? You know that the things which you are bid to believe are true. Then how is it that you do not believe these things? Some of you have heard the gospel preached many hundreds of times. A hundred and more times every year I have tried to batter away at the doors of your hearts! And sometimes you have been a great deal impressed by the truth that you have heard. You have gone home and prayed over the sermon, or you have sat here and wept under it. You have said truly that God has come very near to you—then how is it that you have not believed in Him? You have, perhaps, seen your daughter saved. Your wife, also, you know to be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. You have seen your sister brought to Jesus. You remember what wonders of grace God worked for your old father and how triumphantly your dear mother went home to heaven! You believe that all this is true—then you are no atheist, no skeptic. You believe that Jesus Christ can save you and you also believe that He will save you if you trust Him. What reason can there be, then, why you do not trust Him?

I sometimes hear a person say, "I cannot believe." Cannot believe the truth of God? Do not tell me such a lie as that! A thing is true—then who dares to say that he cannot believe it? When you say that you cannot believe, it is a shamefully mean way of saying that you *will not* believe. God is true and all that God says is true—and it seems to me that being true, God ought to be believed and all that God says ought to be believed! If a man says to me, when I state a thing positively to him, "That is not

true," I am not angry with him because it is clear to me that he does not know me and he may think that I can lie and I have no right to expect him to believe me until he knows me! But when he knows me and has become my friend and has found out my true character, if he then says to me, "I do not believe you," I feel hurt. But when a man says concerning what God, Himself, declares, "I do not believe it," that is to charge God with lying and is such a great sin that God justly says, "He that believes not is condemned already"—as he rightly deserves to be—"because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

It is very sad to think that men will not believe the very God who made them! A friend who is here from Edinburgh told me, this afternoon, a pretty story which I wish I could tell you in Scotch, but it was somewhat to this effect. A Christian, walking down Princes Street, Edinburgh, one night saw a sight that attracted his attention. An old man and an old woman were evidently looking for somebody, so he asked them for whom they were looking. They said they were looking for their poor girl who was out upon the streets, leading a life of shame. He waited to see what would happen. By and by, they found her. And her father took hold of her with both his hands and said to her, "Lassie, will you no come home to your own father and mother?" She would not go home with them, but went away to her sin. Well now, it seems to me that God appears thus to lay hold of sinners and say to them, "Will you not come home to Me in heaven? Will you not come to My Son, Jesus Christ, who died to save just such sinners as you? Will you not yield to that gracious Spirit who loves to bring sinners to Jesus?" Christ seems to me to put it so to this man, "Your eyes have been opened—do you not believe on the Son of God?" And He bids me remind you that you have had warnings, entreaties, invitations, privileges—you have seen the hand of God stretched out on your behalf—then will you not believe on His Son? Surely you are unreasonable if you do not!

IV. But I must pass on. The text seems to me to give, in the fourth place, A SUGGESTION AS TO THE BEST GROUND FOR COMFORT TO A MAN WHO IS IN TROUBLE.

Look at the man whose eyes Christ had opened. The Pharisees had cast him out of the synagogue and the consequence of his excommunication would be that nobody would employ him. "Oh, you are the man who was put out of the synagogue, are you not?" "Yes." "Well then, I can give you no work." He goes to an old friend and asks for lodging, but the friend says, "I am sorry, but I cannot allow you to tarry in my house. You have been put out of the synagogue and if I harbor you in my house, I also shall be excommunicated. You are now cut off from Israel, so I cannot have anything to do with you." So this poor outcast man, as he stands there, is full of trouble. Jesus Christ comes to him and, in order to comfort him, He says, "Do you believe on the Son of God"—as much as to say, "If you do, never mind the rest."

Jesus did not ask him to comfort himself with the thought that he had done the right thing and had been straightforward about it—and if they had put him out, he could bear it—for he *had* done the right thing. There is some comfort in that thought, but if we had no comfort except what we

could get out of what we ourselves had done, it would be a miserable comfort indeed! Jesus did not say to this man, "Well, you are not like those prejudiced Pharisees who have put you out of the synagogue." There are some people who can always get comfort out of the badness of other people. They say, "Well, we are glad we are not like old so and so." Jesus did not wish him to get comfort in that way and He did not say to him, "Well, poor man, they have put you out of the synagogue, but they cannot hang you, and they cannot stone you—they have done as much as they can do to injure you." There are some people who say, "Well, they have done all they can, now—they cannot do anything more to me." And they seem to be turned into Timons—men haters—who hate their species and seem to get comfort for themselves by defying all mankind beside. That is not the way to get comfort!

If you have been treated badly; if you are the odd one in the family; if everybody tries to take advantage of you; if you have been slandered—if your mistress is harsh and unkind; if your master is tyrannical; if your fellow clerks make you the butt of their jests—do not try to get comfort from any of the sources I have indicated—though a great many do so! But answer this question, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" If you do, then you are saved and you may well rejoice in that fact! Believer, you are one with Christ—rejoice in that! Your affliction is borne by Christ as well as by yourself—rejoice in that! And rejoice also that as Christ is with you in your suffering, you will be with Him in His glory! Even now He has fellowship with you in your low estate—so rejoice in that! You have to go home tonight to those who mock at your religion, those who have no sympathy with you, whose every word is a taunt and whose every look is a sneer. Then when you get home, sit down quietly by yourself and say, "My name is written in heaven, for I believe on the Son of God. And though the world knows me not, I remember that it knew Him not. It is enough for me to share the lot that was my Lord's, for the disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord. Believing in Jesus, I can bear and forbear and wait until the glory is revealed, for Jesus will never fail me, nor forsake me."

If there are any of you in great trouble, I would like to remind you of this fact, that *faith in Jesus is the best cure for every care, the best balm for every wound*. Get away to Jesus—at the foot of His cross is the best place for mourners. All our other sorrows die when Jesus' sorrows are revealed. Faith in Christ is what you need beyond everything else!

V. The last point is this. When our Savior asked the man whose eyes He had opened, "Do you believe on the Son of God? it was AN INCITEMENT TO THE MAN TO CONFESS HIS LORD.

Jesus seemed to say to him, "Do not hide that great truth—do not keep that precious treasure to yourself." Immediately the man said, "Lord, I believe," and then, next, he practically proved that he meant what he said by falling down and worshiping the Lord. My dear fellow Christians, there may be some of you who have lately been converted to Christ, but you have kept the good news to yourself. Now, believe me, if it is genuine faith in Christ, you cannot conceal it! A man may put fire into the middle of a stack of hay and tell it not to shine, lest somebody should

try to put it out. But it is not in the nature of fire to hide itself, so you will soon see that blaze. It is said that fire and a cough and love cannot be hidden. And certainly that is true of the holiest sort of love—love to Jesus. It is sure to reveal itself somehow or other!

I knew a man who thought he would go to heaven alone and never tell anybody that he was a Christian. But he lived in a village where there was a prayer meeting and he stole in once, and he liked it so much that he went again and sat in a quiet corner where he thought nobody would see him. But the brother who was conducting the meeting said, "Will that friend in the corner be kind enough to engage in prayer?" He shook his head—he was like a snail in his shell and he did not mean to come out in that public fashion. But when he got outside, he thought to himself, "I am afraid I have almost denied the Lord Jesus by refusing to pray when I might have done so. However," he thought, "if I am asked again, (I hope I shall not be), I think I will just pray, but I shall not say much." He was asked another time, but again he was very timid and he did not pray. So, after the service, the leader said to him, "I am glad to see you here, dear friend, though you do not pray with us. Do you like to be here?" He answered, "Oh, yes, I enjoy it very much." "Then," said the other, "I trust you know something about the Lord." And almost before he realized what he was doing, he had told all his secret out. He could not help it! And what is there, after all, that we should need to hide? If I really love my Savior and anybody says to me, "You also are one of His disciples," I ought gladly to answer, "Yes, yes, yes! And if He is not ashamed to acknowledge me as His disciple, I cannot be ashamed to acknowledge Him as my Master! Oh, that I may never put Him to shame! And, certainly, to confess Him as my Savior shall never make me ashamed."

Why is it that some of you who believe in Jesus, are so backward in confessing your faith in Him? Do not profess to believe if you do not, but if you do believe in Jesus, I ask again, why are you so backward in confessing your faith? Jesus Christ said to His disciples, "Go you into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." And then He told them what gospel to preach, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." You see the two parts of it. "Ah," you say, "you Baptists make a great deal of baptism." We Baptists do not make any more of baptism than the Lord Jesus Christ has done! But I was not talking about Baptists, I was talking about the words of the Lord Jesus Christ as they are recorded in the New Testament. He says, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Is not that plain? Someone asks, "Can we not be saved without being baptized? "I am not going to answer such a question as that! My business is to bid you listen to what Jesus Christ says, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Give good heed to what Christ says, and raise no questions concerning it. For my part, I am going to run no risks and, therefore, I take the whole passage just as it stands! My Master alone knows the relative importance of the two parts of the message, but I am bound to deliver His message just as I have received it. Suppose I send a servant to my front door with a message and the person to whom it is sent says to her, "Your master did not mean all that," she would naturally say, "I have nothing to do with what my master *means*—I have only to tell you what he *said*." So say I concerning

what my Master said—and what He said was—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." And He has also said, "Whoever, therefore, shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, (which is here the same thing as not confessing Him), Him will I also deny, (or, not confess), before my Father which is in heaven." Come along then, you who have been hiding yourselves! Come forth and confess that Jesus Christ is yours!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 9.

Verse 1. *And as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from his birth.* Therefore the man could not see Jesus, but the more important matter was that Christ could see the blind man! And you, dear heart, may not yet have learned to look on Christ, but He can look on you in your blindness—and a look from Him will speedily work a wondrous change in you!

2. *And His disciples asked Him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?* Many of Christ's disciples are still occupied in asking questions that serve no practical purpose, like this one, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?"

3. *Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents.* That is to say, sin on their part was not the cause of his blindness.

3. *But that the works of God should be made manifest in him.* [See Sermon #2309, Volume 39—GOD'S WORKS MADE MANIFEST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Human nature is a platform for the manifestation of divine work. The more in need you are, dear friend, the more room there is for God's mercy to operate upon you.

4-7. *I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way, therefore, and washed, and came seeing."* [See Sermon #1977, Volume 33—THE BLIND BEGGAR OF THE TEMPLE AND HIS WONDERFUL CURE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Christ used very simple means to cure this man's blindness, very unlikely means, apparently, to produce the desired effect. It might have seemed, indeed, that the man would have been more in the dark than ever when his eyes were plastered over with clay, yet the Lord chose to work in that way. And so, when the poor preacher feels as if he was nothing and nobody, and that his method may rather hinder his Master's work than help Him, yet still his Lord can work through his weakness and get to Himself glory notwithstanding His servant's infirmities!

8, 9. *The neighbors, therefore, and they who 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 question about my identity, I am the same man whom you have seen sitting and begging, and I now come before you with my sight fully restored."

10, 11. *Therefore said they unto him, How were your eyes opened? He answered and said, 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*. It was only a short story, but it was very sweet to him, and he told it with no excess of detail, but with all its salient points. He was a sharp, shrewd man of few words, but those few words were weighty. Friend, when you tell the story of Christ and His love to you, do not embellish it with flowers of speech. There is enough in what Christ has done to make it shine without any fine words of yours. The beauty of Christ's work is such that it is most adorned when unadorned.

12. *Then said they unto Him, Where is He? He said, I know not*. There are a good many things concerning Christ which you may not know, but if you know that He has opened your eyes, you may be well content with the knowledge of that until He shall be pleased to reveal more about Himself to you.

13. *They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind*. I am sure that this was a very distressing sight to them, for there was nothing that ever grieved their hearts more than for Christ's power to be displayed! They did not want to see the blind man whose eyes Christ had opened. If the miracle brought Christ any glory, it brought them just as much misery!

14, 15. *And it was the Sabbath when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight*. That seemed to be the principal question with them—they always wanted to know the manner in which Christ's cures were worked.

15. *He said unto them, He put clay upon my eyes, and I washed, and do see*. That is shorter than his previous account of the miracle. When Pharisees ask a carping question, the shorter the answer, the better—it is a pity to cast pearls before swine.

16, 17. *Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This Man is not of God because He keeps not the sabbath day. 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 say you of Him, that He has opened your eyes! He said, He is a prophet*. He was a brave man, who dared to say what he believed whether he offended or pleased! He did not know much, but what he did know he did know, and he was quite certain about it. There are some men whose breadth of knowledge is as remarkable as its shallowness! It is like water upon the meadows when a river overflows its banks, and covers a wide area, but there is scarcely an inch of depth. Give us the narrower river that is deep and that can bear on-wards to the ocean a noble fleet, rather than the wide expanse of useless, shallow water!

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. [See Sermon #1393, Volume 24—SPEAK FOR YOURSELF—A CHALLENGE!—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] They were timid, but they were also shrewd enough to let their son speak for himself, as he was quite able to do.

22-24. *These words spoke his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had already agreed 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 called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.* They thought they could get over him by giving him a little of what they called good advice—"Praise God, but be quiet concerning this man; depend upon it, He is a sinner."

25-28. *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. Then said they to him again, What did He to you? How opened He your eyes? He answered them, I have told you already, and you did not hear: therefore would you hear it again? Will you also be His disciple? Then they reviled him.* Of course, that is the usual way with those who are in the wrong. Abuse the plaintiff when you cannot answer his case! "Then they reviled him."

28-30. *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.* Where could He have come from but from God? Who could have worked such a miracle unless He had been sent from God?

31-33. *Now we know that God hears not sinners: but if any man is a worshiper of God, and does His will, him He hears. Since the world began was it 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.* That was very forcibly spoken. Oh, that all of us whose eyes Christ has opened, would speak for Him as bravely as this man did! Our cure has been quite as clear and quite as notable as His was, so let us not be ashamed to testify for Him before gainsayers and opposers!

34. *They answered and said unto him, You were altogether born in sins, and do you teach us?* "Such learned men as we are, with such culture and such penetration as we have, 'do *you* teach *us*?'"

34. *And they cast him out.* It was a great mercy for him that they did excommunicate him! One of the greatest blessings that could come to him was that of being cast out of the synagogue, and being cast out of the society of such men as those Pharisees were!

35. *Jesus heard that they had cast him out.* Jesus knew all that had happened to this man, but someone probably related the story to Him. And our Lord knows all about each one of us and He knows whether

anyone here is suffering for His sake or for the truth's sake. Jesus knew that they had cast him out.

35. *And when He had found him.* For He always finds those whom the world or false professors have cast out.

35, 36. *He said unto him, Do you believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?* He was a sensible man and he had the sense to perceive that knowledge rightly used leads to faith. He desired to know in order that he might believe. And if you ever say that you cannot believe, but are anxious to do so, then make inquiry as to what is to be believed—examine the evidence concerning it and so faith will come to you by the operation of God's good Spirit.

37-40. *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 worshiped Him. And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with Him heard these words, and said unto Him, Are we blind also?* "Are *we* blind?" It seemed impossible to them that it could be so! Jesus answered them with scathing words.

41. *Jesus said unto them, If you were blind, you would have no sin: but now you say, We see. Therefore your sin remains.* "If what you have done had been done in utter ignorance, you would have been comparatively guiltless. But you have sinned against light and knowledge, with a most determined antipathy to the grace of God and, therefore, your sin remains in all its scarlet hue to condemn you."

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CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR BELIEVERS
NO. 3133

A SERMON
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[ON BEHALF OF THE GOSPEL MINISTERS' RELIEF SOCIETY.]

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on Me through their word."
John 17:20.

IN the very opening of this subject one feels inexpressibly delighted to see the wondrous love of our Savior towards His people. He here promises that He will intercede for each of them before His Father's throne and He declares that this intercession also rises for those who are yet uncalled, unconverted and unregenerated! Mark the depth of His affection—He spends all His time in continually interceding for His people. I marvel at the condescension of Jesus Christ, that His people's names are always on His lips. When we consider that notwithstanding all His exceeding grace and affection towards them, they transgress and rebel, it appears amazing that He should mention their names, or that He should regard their persons! But when we remember that, day by day, in that land where there is no night, He who stands before His Father's throne bears perpetually on His breast their names deeply cut in the precious jewels and stones of the breastplate, and always with outspread hands, pleads for them, we cannot but admire His love for them and feel a deep veneration for that divine grace which makes Him declare, "For Zion's sake will I not hold My peace and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof goes forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burns."

You must also note here the peculiar knowledge which our Savior, Jesus Christ, has of all His people, as well as His particular love for them, for He says He prays for those who are yet uncalled. Now, none of us who have faith in God, none of those called and led to believe in Jesus, are unknown to Him. He knows His redeemed as well in one condition as another. He knows which of two drunks shall turn and become one of His family. There are none so sunk in the depths of sin and wickedness that if they are His by the covenant of His grace, do not even *now* share in His intercession! He knows His beloved when there is no visible mark by which to know them. He discerns His sheep when, to other people, they seem like wolves or goats. He recognizes His family when they are black as the tents of Kedar and He knows they shall be

fair as the curtains of Solomon! He knows His children when they do not know themselves to be His, when they fancy they are lost beyond rescue, or when they foolishly conceive that they can save themselves. Yes, and when all hope fails them—when it seems that the Lord does not know them and the gospel does not know them—when no Christian knows them and the minister can give them no comfort—Christ knows them even then, for it is still written, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for those whom You have given Me out of the world; those who have not yet believed; but who shall believe through the word of those who are already called."

Another thought before we pass to the subject, for we need to suggest a few of these thoughts just to start with, as they are in the text. The other thought is this—mark how Jesus loves all His people with the same affection. He could not pray for those few who, in His lifetime, had believed on Him without suddenly (to speak after the manner of men), recollecting that these were but a handful and, therefore, He stirs Himself up and says, "My Father, neither pray I for these, alone, but also for them who shall believe on Me through their word"—as much as to say, "These are not My special favorites because they are converted so early. I do not love these better than others. I pray also for those who shall yet be called. I pray as much for one of My people as for another." It is well said by the Apostle Paul, "there is no difference." And verily, beloved, there is no difference in the affection of God towards His children! There is an elect out of the elect, I will acknowledge, as to gifts and standing and as to the labor they may accomplish in this world—but there is no election out of the elect as for a deeper extent of love! They are all loved alike! They are all written in the same book of eternal love and life. They were all purchased with the same precious blood of the Savior. One was not purchased with His foot, another with His hand, but *all* with His very heart's blood. They are all justified with the same righteousness, all sanctified by the same Spirit and they shall all enter the same heaven! They are all saved by the same grace, loved by the same love, heirs of the same inheritance—and Jesus Christ puts them all together when He says, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them, also, who shall believe on Me through their word."

I. Let us now proceed to the text. The first thing we learn from it is this, that GOD LOVES HIS PEOPLE BEFORE THEY BELIEVE ON HIM.

Jesus Christ would never pray for those whom He did not love. He is no hypocrite in His prayers. Some people are. Many prayers are not worth buying. Indeed, they are not worth taking gratis—they are not prayers at all! I have heard some pray for their brothers in the ministry and at the same time they do not act with them, or for them. We have seen many bow the knee in prayer for such and such a person and when they rise, their knees are unbent, but their hands are raised to strike the very person for whom they were praying! We have too many hypocritical prayers that are good for nothing! We might roll many into a parcel and

nobody would pick them up in the streets—they are worse than useless, they are absolutely wicked! For a man to bend his knees and utter the hypocritical language of affection before God which he never feels in his heart is little short of blaspheming God! We must have very light thoughts of God when we try to deceive Him with such prayers as these. But Jesus Christ never prayed a deceitful prayer. If He intercedes for any, He loves them. If He pleads for any, He has chosen them. If He asks His Father that they may be blessed, we are sure that He asks it from His heart. Christ's prayers all come from His inmost soul. You never hear Him mentioning anyone's name before the throne of God whom He does not really love with an eternal affection. Hence, then, if Jesus Christ prayed for His people before they were called and before they believed—and if His intercession implies love—He must have loved His people before they believed on Him.

This will very easily appear to you to be a doctrine of truth if we consider the Scriptures at large. Some men will talk against it as a wonderfully wicked doctrine. I refer to those who believe in creature merit and who imagine that we are "*made* children of God" *by some act of our own*. But I think no sincere and earnest student of Scripture will ever believe that God commences to love His people when they begin to love Him! Such a thought would be utterly inconsistent with the nature of God. Do you not know that God is an eternal, self-existent being, that to say He loves *now*, is, in fact, to say He *always did love*, since with God there is no past and can be no future? What we call past, present and future, He wraps up in one eternal NOW. And if you say that He loves you *now*, you thereby say that He loved you yesterday, He loved you in the past eternity and He will love you forever—for *now* with God is past, present and future! Those who talk of God's beginning to love His people know not "what they say, nor whereof they affirm." They might speak of man beginning to love. They might speak of angels beginning to love. But of God we never can since He, without beginning, had a deathless love in His heart. He has an affection which has no source except in Himself. He could not begin, for He is without beginning of years and without end of days! From everlasting to everlasting He is God—and from everlasting to everlasting His mercies extend to His people.

That is an argument, I think, that none can answer—that God loved His wandering people not only because Christ intercedes for uncalled ones, but because, from the very nature of God, He must have loved them forever if He loves them at all. But we do not need this proof that God loved His people before they believed. Go to Calvary and you shall see the greatest proof. Did my Savior die for me because I believed on Him? No! I was not then in existence. I was not even formed, "and curiously worked in the lowest parts of the earth." Could the Savior, then, have died because I had faith when I was not in existence? Could

that have been the origin of the Savior's love towards me? Oh, no! My Savior died for me long before I believed!

"But," you say, "He foresaw that you would have faith and, therefore, He loved you." What did He foresee about my faith? Did He foresee that I would get that faith, myself, and that I would believe on Him of myself? No, my friends, Christ could not foresee that because no Christian will ever say that faith came of itself without the gift and without the assistance of the Holy Spirit! I have met with a great many, and talked about the matter, but I never knew one who could put his hand on his heart and say, "I believed in Jesus without the assistance of the Holy Spirit." I have seen many dying men and asked them this question, and never did I meet with such an one. *God foresaw that He would give you faith and therefore loved you*—is not that absolutely absurd? It is as much as to say, I foresee I shall give a beggar a shilling when I go out of this place and, therefore, because I foresee that gift, I love him, or you foresee that you will give something tonight towards the Society for the *Relief of Faithful Gospel Ministers* and, therefore, you will then love God's ministers because you foresee you will give them something! My gift is not the cause of my benevolence, but my benevolence is the cause of my giving it! God does not love His people because they have faith—He loved them long before. Faith is the gift of God. Does my natural father love me because he fed me and because he clothed me? No, he clothed and fed me because he loved me—but his love was prior to his gift. His gifts did not draw his love to me because he loved me *before* he gave them. And if any man says, "God loves me because I can do this or that for Him," he talks nonsense! God cannot love me because of what He has given me Himself. You may say, "He loves me because I love Him," but God gave you that love! God does not love you because you are so holy—you are holy because God loves you! And your holiness is God's *gift*.

In the very beginning, when this great universe lay in the mind of God like unborn forests in the acorn cup—long before the echoes waked the solitudes, before the mountains were brought forth and long before the light flashed through the sky—God loved His chosen creatures! Before there were creatures, when the ether was not fanned by the angel's wings. When space itself had not an existence. When there was nothing save God alone—even then, in that loneliness of deity, and in that deep quiet and profundity—His heart moved with love for His chosen. Their names were written on His heart and then were they dear to His soul! Jesus loved His people before the foundation of the world, even from eternity. He purchased me with His blood. He let His heart run out in one deep gaping wound for me long before I loved Him! Yes, when He first came to me, did I not spurn Him? When He knocked at the door and asked for entrance, did I not drive Him away and do despite to His grace? Ah, I can remember that I full often did—until at last, by His effectual grace, He said, "I must, I will come in"—and then He turned my heart and made me love Him! But even until now I would have resisted Him

had it not been for His grace. Well, then, since He purchased me when I was dead in sins, does it not follow as a necessary and logical consequence that He must have loved me? And therefore, the Savior said, "Neither pray I for these, alone, but for them also who shall believe on Me through their word."

II. The second thing we learn from the text is THE USE OF A GOSPEL MINISTRY.

Captious and quibbling persons will object, "You say that God loves His people and, therefore, they will be saved. Then what is the good of your preaching?" What is the good of your preaching? When I say that God loves a multitude that no man can number, a countless host of the race of men, do you ask me what is the good of preaching? *What is the good of preaching*? To fetch these diamonds of the Lord out of the dunghill, to go down to the depths, as the diver does, to fetch up God's pearls from the place where they are lying! *What is the good of preaching*? To cut down the good corn and gather it into the garner. *What is the good of preaching*? To fetch out God's elect from the ruins of the fall and make then stand on the Rock, Christ Jesus, and see their standing sure! Ah, you who ask what is the good of preaching because God has ordained some to salvation, we ask you whether it would not be a most foolish thing to say, because there is to be a harvest, what is the good of sowing? There is to be a harvest, what is the use of reaping? The very reason why we sow and reap is because we feel assured there is to be a harvest! And if, indeed, I believed there was not a number who must be saved, I could not go into a pulpit again! Only once make me think that no one is certain to be saved and I will not care to preach! But now I know that a countless number must be saved, I am confident that Christ, "shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days." I know that if there is much to dispirit me in my ministry and I see but little of its effects, yet He shall keep all whom the Father has given Him—and this makes me preach! I come into this chapel tonight with the assurance that God has some child of His in this place—not yet called—and I feel confident that He will call someone by the use of the ministry, so why not by me? I know there are not a few souls whom God has given me through my ministry, not only hundreds, but thousands. I have seen some hundreds of those who profess to have been brought to God through my preaching at Park Street and elsewhere, and with that confidence I must go on. I know that Jesus must have a "seed." His people must increase and it is the very purpose of the ministry to seek them out and bring them into God's fold. Our Savior tells us the use of the ministry is that they may "believe on Me through *their* word."

There is one peculiarity about this. Christ says, "They shall believe on Me through their word." Have you ever heard people call out about running after men? They say, "You are all running after such and such a *man*." What then, would you have them run after—a woman? You say,

"The people go after one particular man." Whom else shall they go after? Some persons say, "We went to such and such a place and the people there love their minister too much." That would be very dreadful, but it is not so. As for ministers being in danger of being ruined by too much love, it very seldom falls to their lot! Very generally they get quite as many kicks as anything else—and if they do get too much love in any particular place, they get too much of the reverse somewhere else. If we get a little sweet, somebody else is sure to put in much that is bitter. Is it not singular that Christ should say, "They shall believe on Me through *their* word?" Now, do God's people believe on Christ through the word of the ministry? We know that our faith does not rest on the word of man, but on the Word of God. We do not rest on any man, yet it is through "*their*" word—that is, through the word of the apostles—and through the word of every faithful minister!

I take it that *the gospel is the minister's own word when he speaks from experience*. What is in the Bible is God's word. What God speaks to me by experience becomes my word as well as God's. And it is then "*their*" word when ministers come into the pulpit with God's word in their hearts. I think a minister is not only called to preach what he finds in the Bible—the mere naked doctrines—but what he has experienced in his own heart, what he has tasted, felt and handled. If he does this, he will be greatly in danger of being called an egotist. Very likely he will use too many, "I's." Well, he cannot preach John Smith's experience, or anybody else's experience—he can only preach his own—so then he will have to say, "I." But if he does not preach experimentally what he has felt, it will not be through *his* word! When we speak that which we know and testify that which we have seen and felt—if we say we know the Savior will pardon sinners because He has pardoned us—then it is not only God's word, but it is also *our* word! If I say to a child of God, "Go, and cast your burden on the Lord and you will find relief, for I have done so," then it is not only God's word, but my word.

When he has proved the Savior's word by experience, then it becomes the minister's word, *as also when he has it manifested to him by the Holy Spirit*. Some people say that these manifestations are all nonsense. I have heard many object to applied texts. Such men do not understand much about the real law of piety, or else they would see texts manifested to them at one time which they had never seen before. I know many of my ministering brothers who now testify that they have sometimes taken a text and tried to break it. They have smitten it with a sledgehammer, but they could not get an atom off it. And they have had to throw it aside. But another time, my friends, when that same text comes before us, though it seemed hard as granite when we took it up in our hands before, it now crumbles and breaks in pieces! Why? Because God's Holy Spirit shines upon it, now, and He did not do so before! And we might have continued hitting it till we broke the head off our hammer and not a scrap would have come off it—but the Holy Spirit's manifestation

revealed the text—and most texts are to be learned so! It is not often by sitting down in deep thought that we get at the meaning—it is by leaving it until, in some hallowed hour of high spiritual communion, we get into the very secret chamber where the meaning of the text lies! In some solemn moment we dive down into the very depths where the meaning of the text is hidden. God teaches us the meaning and then it becomes *our* word! It is ours by application and we believe, my brothers and sisters, that sinners will be converted to God, not only by preaching the gospel we find in the Bible, but by preaching the gospel we find in our hearts, "known and read of all men"!

Let us then come into our pulpits with this determination (I speak to my brothers in the ministry), that by the help of God we will bring our own experience to bear upon it. We will sometimes talk of ourselves and not be ashamed of it, for whatever the Lord our God says unto us, not only in His word, but by experience, and by His Spirit, that will we speak to the people.

These two points I have mentioned—first, God loves His people before they have faith. And, secondly, the ministry has its use in bringing men to faith by "their word."

III. Now, thirdly, notwithstanding this, GOD IS SUPERIOR TO THE MINISTRY AND DOES NOT REQUIRE IT. If He chose, He could do without His ministers.

I have told you that ministers are necessary, in the present state of things, to bring men to the Lord Jesus Christ, that they may have faith in Him. But when I said they were necessary, I spoke as men speak. With God, ministers are not necessary. He could do without them. I thought today, as I walked along, "God could do without me." I thought of many men who are preaching and I thought, "God could do without them—take them all away and God could do without them." I thought of some members of my church, very dear to me, who seem to be pillars of it, and I thought, "What could I do without them?" And then the thought came across my mind, "God could do without *them*." The people of God would still be saved just as well without them, if God so pleased! God is enough in Himself, without the addition of any one of His preachers. When He made angels, it was not because He needed them. He could have accomplished His will without the wings of a flaming seraph and without the voice of a glorious cherub. When He made the stars, it was not because He needed them. He was light, Himself, without the light of sun, moon, or stars. When He made man, it was not because He needed man—it was because He would make him—and for no other reason. There was no necessity for it. He would be the same eternal God were all His creatures dead. And if He were to blot out those lines of wisdom and grace written in the universe, He would be just as glorious and great as ever! And God can do without His servants in the gospel ministry—but

this being a dispensation of means, He is not a God acting without means.

God *does not* do without them, though He could if He would. God elected His people without ministers. He did not need any ministers to help Him in that. He redeemed His people without ministers. What great divine could have helped Christ to redeem His people? Yes, more, He can, if He pleases, call His people without ministers, for we know how some have become the subjects of grace by the reading of the word, without the assistance of the ministry! And some in the Sunday school have received the words of eternal life. This should make our pride subside at once. I know it is a great honor and should comfort us much to know that God is making use of us—but He could, if He pleased, well enough accomplish His ends and purposes without you and without me! If tomorrow we were laid in our coffins and if our people should go out weeping because their pastors were dead, God has other men whom He could raise up. Or if He did not choose to raise other men up, He could attain His ends without us. And possibly there is a time coming when gospel ministers shall not be needed—when men shall need no man to say to his brother, "Know the Lord," for all shall know Him, from the least even to the greatest! There are happy days coming "when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." When there shall be no need of the messengers upon the mountains to publish the glad tidings of salvation. When the sunshine of the Lord shall supplant our poor farthing candle and when Jesus shall "come in His glory, and all His holy angels with Him." And we shall have too much to do to stand and admire Him without standing up to preach to men concerning Him who is present in their midst!

IV. But then, our fourth point is that GOD WILL NEVER DO WITHOUT HIS MINISTERS AS LONG AS THIS DISPENSATION LASTS because Jesus Christ said, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them, also, who shall believe on Me through their word." Hence it follows that there always will be, as long as this dispensation lasts, a people who are to be gathered and ministers to gather them in. As long as there are unsaved and unconverted persons who are the elect of God, there will be some ministers to preach to them. As long as there are those who are under conviction of sin, He will have some who will proclaim the message of pardon. Christ says in the text, "Neither pray I for these, alone, but for them, also, who shall believe on Him through their word."

Someone may object, and say, "Yes, but 'their word' signifies the word of the apostles." Then another might ask, "Are you the successors of the apostles?" There has been a vast deal of fudge in these days about "the successors of the apostles." We have people who pretend to be the successors of the apostles. There are the Roman Catholics. But, I think, if Peter and Paul were to come and see those who claim to be their successors, they would think there was a mighty difference between themselves and them! By way of parable, suppose the Virgin Mary, Peter

and Paul should come one Sunday and go to a certain cathedral? Well, when they entered, the Virgin would hear them singing together to her honor, and praise, and glory. She would nudge Peter and say, "What are these people doing? They are worshiping me! My Son said to me, 'Woman, what have I to do with you?' *He* never worshiped me! Let us get out of this place." But they stay a little longer and they hear one of them say that the Apostle Peter was the head of the church—and his successor, the Pope, was therefore the head. Peter nudges the Virgin Mary and says, "What a lie that is! I was never head of the church at all! Did I not fall into sin? I, the head of the church? A pretty head I was!" Soon afterwards, Paul hears them preaching justification by works. "Let's go," he says, "there is no gospel here! I preached justification by faith without works, and they are preaching justification by works!" And so, upon that, they all three of them leave! By and by, they come to a place where they hear the people singing, "Glory, honor, praise and power be unto the Lamb that sits upon the throne!" And they hear them speak of those who were "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." "Ah," says Peter, "this is the right place, and here I will stay."

Those are the successors of the apostles who are like the apostles! Are those the successors of the apostles who take our money from us by force to pay for their religion? Are those the successors of the apostles who go to brother so and so's house and take away his table and his spoon, and his candlestick, to pay rates for a religion in which he does not believe? I have never read about a church tax in Corinth, or about the Apostle Paul seizing some property of someone in Jerusalem! Such men successors of the apostles? They may be in godliness, for holy men are sometimes very much mistaken, but I say again, those who are like the apostles are their successors—not men who are ashamed to speak to anybody else because they think they are above them—not those who cannot speak plain words! Have we not some ministers, to understand, whom you need to take a dictionary always to chapel with you? Do you call them the successors of the apostles? Your judgments answer, "No." A downright honest man who speaks what can be understood, who declares God's gospel in unmeasured terms, as God would have him speak it—He is a successor of the apostles! And it is through "*their*" word (the apostles' word, and the word of the successors of the apostles), that men are to be saved! Successors of the apostles! I am as much a successor of the apostles as the Bishop of Bath, the Bishop of London, or the bishop of anywhere else—and perhaps more so. We are all bishops who are called of God, ordained by the Most High! We trace our ordination to the hands of the Almighty who has put His hands on our head! There will always be successors of the apostles! The Christian ministry shall never cease till the last period of time! Never has there been a spiritual night so dark as that there have been no stars to illuminate it—never a sky so clouded that the sun could not shine

through it. There always have been some lights and, until the last hour, there always shall be some who are girded with the strength of the omnipotent and made strong in the almighty God, Jehovah, who shall testify their word, which is, after all, God's word, that thereby men shall be saved!

Now, my dear brothers and sisters, having directed your attention to the fact that we are quite sure God will always have a ministry, and always use it—and since a ministry, under God, is necessary, though He could do without them, what should we do for them? I will tell you what some people say—*starve them*. I do not say it is so here, or with my people, but it is so in many country villages. Unfortunately, there are many farmers who could afford to give much to the cause of God, who, while their servant Betty sits in the gallery and pays her shilling a quarter for her pew, the master only pays a shilling a quarter, too. But Christ's ministers give themselves to the work because they feel they must preach—and they would rather preach on dry bread than be silent!

We have formed this Society just to help them. I can assure you if any one of our dear friends stood in the position I have occupied for a single year, when you come to cast up your income, if you felt any benevolence, you would have very little left—indeed, you would have nothing left if you listened to the claims made upon you!

Now, one other thought. If God sends ministers into the world to preach His gospel, how ill does it become us to hurt them! "He that touches you, touches the apple of His eye." I have always felt very careful about touching a child of God. You know that there is nothing that puts a man so much on his mettle as to touch his children. I have seen a father calm and placid and very gentle—someone has touched his children—the father flashed into his face at once! Do what you like—touch his property, or his house and he may be vexed—but touch his child and then his fury comes up at once! He cannot stand that. Oh, my friends, a heavy responsibility rests on the heads of some, even of God's people, if you view it in that light! Touch God's people? Touch God's chosen? Touch God's favorites? Touch God's darlings? Oh, let us take heed! We had better allow one to pass who professes to be a child of God, and is not, than that we should treat harshly or unkindly any of these who really are His! And I think if there is any difference in the case of gospel ministers, this has a special force. We should, above all, seek not to injure their character by spreading evil reports against them. They will have enough of that from the wicked world! We had need be tender of them and plant a hedge around them to protect them in every way. They are the standard bearers of Christendom and if the standard bearer falls, what a disgrace it brings on everything! We ought to stand by them, pray for them, plead with God for them that He will hold up their hands.

I have been talking about the gospel ministry. What is it to do? Is it to bring men to faith in Christ? Now I am tonight to attempt to do it before I leave this place! Yes, and by God's help, so I will.

Now, a word or two very briefly to two or three characters. First, there is a man sitting here tonight who says he is "no worse than others" and who believes he shall enter heaven as well as any other person. He says, "I do not see why any man should set himself above me." My mission from heaven is, under the Holy Spirit, to knock your works down and bring you to faith in Jesus Christ! Remember that it is written in Scripture, "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." You cannot get to heaven by your works! You might as well seek to mount the stars on a tread wheel as to go to heaven by works, for as you get up a step, you will always come down as low as before! If you cannot be perfect, God will not save you by works. If you could truly say, "I never committed a sin in all my life and never had a wicked thought, and never shall have," *possibly* you then might be saved by works. But since that is impossible, if you trust in the law and hang yourself upon it, you shall find it will break by your weight. You stand on a sandy foundation and when the wind blows and the storm rises, you will be led to see it is a refuge of lies—that your confidence was ill founded, that your works were bad at the bottom, after all, and that though you fancied you were righteous, you were deceiving yourself and others—and must suffer the sentence of the wicked!

Someone among you may say, "I know that I am a very great sinner, but then I intend to reform. I shall turn to Christ and then I shall be saved." You intend to reform, do you? So did the damned in hell once! You intend to reform? So doubtless did Judas when he went and cast down the money in the temple! But instead of his reformation being good, he went out and hanged himself. You intend to reform? Your intention is like a bubble blown by the mouth of a child, who shall soon be broken in the air! You intend to reform? Your reformation is like the smoke of a chimney which the wind shall sweep away. Suppose you do reform and you really get better? You think Jesus Christ will save you and so you will get to heaven between the two? Have you never heard the old proverb, "Between two stools he came to the ground?" Verily, I tell you, that if you trust in two things, you will be lost! Works cannot help you. Any man who trusts so much as a single hair's breadth to his works is a lost soul! He who trusts to the least atom of works, though it is so small that he cannot discern it, will be lost! It must be—

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Your cross I cling"—

or else a man must be lost! For it is no use his trusting partly in works, and partly to the Savior. You must feel, "I am quite stripped of everything."

I love to find those who have not got anything good at all about them. Some like to find something good in men before they preach to them, but I like to find men who think there is nothing good in them—and then to preach God's sovereign mercy to them. You who have any good of your

own, throw it away! You who have nothing, come to Christ! I advise you who think you are good, not to say you are so when you are before God. If you were in a hospital and needed to be attended to, what would you do? Would you write over your bed, or tell your doctor you were not so bad, after all? You would be rather inclined to appear worse than you really were! See if you can describe yourself worse than you really are. You may say, "That is wicked advice." No, it is not, because I am quite sure you cannot do it. Go and write bad characters against yourselves tonight. I speak to you who know this is true—not to you who are deceiving yourselves with your own righteousness. You who now feel your need of a Savior, exaggerate that feeling before God, if it is possible. He who felt himself the guiltiest of all sinners said, "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."

If there is anyone here tonight who thinks himself, "the chief of sinners," I have called him and God has called him! I wish he would act like a man I once saw in the County Court, when I was sitting there. He said, "Make way! Make way! His Honor has called me." And He elbowed his way up, because the judge had called him! God says, "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Say, "Stand back, for God calls me and I will come!" Sinner, it is Jesus you must rely on, and it is not yourself. It is nothing that you have, or can have—it is nothing that you do, or can do—you can be saved by Jesus Christ alone. Have faith in Him and rely on the Savior. Do you feel your need of a Savior? Then come and cast yourself upon Him! Leave off being *anything* and let Christ be everything! Leave off doing, and let Him do! Say—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I fall!
He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all."

If any are awakened tonight by my words, I have not done it, nor has the sinner done it—but to God's praise be it spoken! And to His name be all the glory!

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THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN THE NEW CREATION
NO. 3134

A SERMON
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ON THURSDAY EVENING, *JANUARY 23*, 1873.

"And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."
Genesis 1:2.

[See Sermons #660, Volume 11—LIGHT, NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL, and #1252, Volume 21—THE FIRST DAY OF CREATION—
Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

WE cannot tell how the Spirit of God brooded over that vast watery mass. It is a mystery, but it is also a fact. And it is here revealed as having happened at the very commencement of the creation, even before God had said, "Let there be light." The first divine act in fitting up this planet for the habitation of man was for the Spirit of God to move upon the face of the waters. Till that time all was formless, empty, out of order and in confusion. In a word, it was chaos. And to make it into that thing of beauty which the world is at the present moment, even though it is a fallen world, it was necessary that the movement of the Spirit of God should take place upon it. How the Spirit works upon matter, we do not know, but we do know that God, who is a Spirit, created matter, fashioned matter and sustained matter—and that He will yet deliver matter from the stain of sin which is upon it. We shall see new heavens and a new earth in which materialism itself shall be lifted up from its present state of ruin and shall glorify God! But without the Spirit of God, the materialism of this world would have remained forever in chaos. Only as the Spirit came, did the work of creation begin.

That fact I intend to use this evening, spiritualizing it. It is a literal fact and we are not to regard this chapter of Genesis or any other part of Genesis as being a mere parable. But having said so, we think we may now say that these real facts may illustrate the work of God in the new creation and our main thought, just now, is that the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul of man is comparable to His work in creation. As in various books by the same author you can trace the writer's idioms and as in many paintings by one great artist there are certain touches which betray the same hand, so in the great book of nature we see traces of the same hand as in the book of grace! And in this great picture of material beauty we may see the handiwork of that same master artist who has drawn lines and curves of spiritual beauty upon the souls of the redeemed!

I. I am going, first, to try to draw A PARALLEL BETWEEN THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN THE OLD AND NEW CREATION.

And first I want to remind you that as the movement of the Holy Spirit upon the waters was the first act in the six days work, *so the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul is the first work of grace in that soul*. There may have been a thousand sermons heard, but there has been no effectual work within the soul until the Spirit of God comes there! Sabbaths may have passed over the man's head for 50 years and during every one of those Sabbaths that man may have been a regular attendant at the house of God—but there has been nothing savingly done for him unless the Spirit of God has entered into him and begun to work upon his soul. He may have been baptized and joined the church and partaken of the Lord's Supper—but, for all that, his heart is still without any sort of form or fashion which God would have it to bear. It is void—there is no life of God within it, no faith in Christ, no true hope for the future. It is emptiness, itself, notwithstanding all that has been done, if the Spirit of God has not been at work in it!

It is a very humbling truth of God, but a truth, notwithstanding its humiliating form, that the best man that mere morality ever produced is still "without form and void" if the Spirit of God has not come upon him. All the efforts of men which they make by nature, when stirred up by the example of others or by godly precepts, produce nothing but chaos in another shape! Some of the mountains may have been leveled, but valleys have been elevated into other mountains. Some vices have been discarded, but only to be replaced by other vices that are, perhaps, even worse. Or certain transgressions have been forsaken for a while, only to be followed by a return to the same sins, so that it has happened unto them, as Peter writes, "according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Unless the Spirit of God has been at work within him, the man is still, in the sight of God, "without form and void" as to everything which God can look upon with pleasure. What? Is it so when a man has made great efforts and has really done his best? Yes, for, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." Even when the flesh does its best, its fairest offspring is still only flesh! Water will naturally rise as high as its own source, but without extraneous pressure, it will never rise any higher. And humanity may rise as high as humanity can rise, but it can never get any higher until the Spirit of God imparts a supernatural force to it. "Except a man be born again (born from above), he cannot see the kingdom of God." The very first act in the great work of the new creation is that the Spirit of God moves upon the soul as He moved upon the face of the waters.

The second thing I ask you to note is that *to this work nothing whatever is contributed by the man himself*. "The earth was without form and void," so it could not do anything to help the Spirit. "Darkness was upon the face of the deep." The Spirit found no light there—it had to be created. There was nothing whatever there to help the Spirit of God—no agencies at work to say to Him, "We have been preparing the way for Your

coming. We needed Your assistance. We were waiting for You and we rejoice that You have come to finish the work that we have begun." There was nothing of the kind! And sad as the truth is, in unregenerate man there is nothing whatever that can help the Spirit of God. The heart of man promises help, but, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." The will has great influence over the man, but the will is depraved, so it tries to play the tyrant over all the other powers of the man—and it refuses to become the servant of the eternal Spirit of truth! If I am never to preach the gospel to a sinner till I see something in him that will help the Holy Spirit to save him, I shall never be able to preach the gospel at all! And if Jesus Christ never saves a man till He sees something in that man that cries to Christ to save Him, then no man will ever be saved! We are, by nature, not merely like the man who was wounded on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho and who was left on the road half dead, but we are wholly "dead in trespasses and sins." And in the dead sinner there is nothing that can help his own resurrection! There is not a hand there to be lifted, nor even an ear to hear, nor an eye to see, nor a pulse that can beat. We do not exaggerate nor go beyond the truth of God when we say this. And every man is thus dead till the Spirit of God comes to him! And when the Spirit comes to him, He finds nothing in the man that can cooperate with Him, and everything that is to be good must be *created* in him, *brought* to him and be *infused* into him. What is needed is not the flaming of sparks that have almost expired—not the strengthening of a life that was almost dead through faintness—the Spirit has to deal with death, rottenness and corruption! Man's nature is a morgue and a sepulcher—and a little hell—and God's Spirit must bring to it that which is living, good and pleasing in God's sight if it is ever to be there!

But more than that, in the old creation, not only was there nothing whatever that could help the Holy Spirit, but *there seemed nothing at all suitable to the Spirit*. I mean, for instance, that the Spirit of God is the Spirit of order, but there was disorder. He is the Spirit of light, but there was darkness. Does it not seem a strange thing that the Spirit of God should have come there at all? Adored in His excellent glory in the heaven where all is order and all is light, why should He come to brood over that watery deep and to bring the great work of bringing order out of chaos? And, in a similar fashion, often and often have we asked—Why should the Spirit of God ever have come into our hearts? What was there in us to induce the Spirit of God to begin a work of grace in us? We admire the condescension of Jesus in leaving heaven to dwell upon earth, but do we not equally admire the condescension of the Holy Spirit in coming to dwell in such poor hearts as ours? Jesus dwelt *with* sinners, but the Holy Spirit *dwells in us*. If it were possible for the condescension of the incarnation to be outdone, it would be in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men! This is a miracle of mercy, indeed, for I say again, there is nothing in the heart by nature that can at all please the Holy Spirit, but there is everything there that can grieve Him! The Spirit

would beget in us repentance for sin, but the heart is hard as a rock. The Spirit would work in us faith, but the heart is full of unbelief. The Spirit would make us pure, but the heart is fond of sin. The Spirit would lead us towards God, but all our passions incline us to run away from Him and to run to everything that is contrary to Him. Yet does the Spirit of God come and work in us while our heart is nothing but chaos and our nature is full of darkness! For this wonderful mercy, let us bless and love the Spirit of God!

Notice, also, that *the Spirit of God is as mysterious in His coming into human hearts as He was in His working in the old creation*. I said before that we cannot explain how the Spirit of God brooded over the face of the waters. Some try to fetch a meaning out of the Hebrew word, but I believe it helps them very little. It is one of the deep mysteries of Scripture. Ever must the contact of the Spirit with materialism remain a marvel—and can we ever tell how the Spirit of God comes and deals with sinful men? We know that our Savior, Himself, said to Nicodemus, "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell from where it came and where it goes: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit."

But mysterious as it is, it is real—as those who have experienced it know—and as those may see who will watch the effects which the Spirit produces upon the hearts of men. I would like to ask all in this present assembly whether they know anything about the mysterious working of the Holy Spirit in their souls. Beloved hearers, there may be many things of which you may be ignorant and yet you may be none the worse for that ignorance. But if you are ignorant of the working of the Holy Spirit in your spirit, then you are ignorant of eternal life—ignorant of the one thing necessary to deliver you from hell and lift you up to heaven! Have you ever experienced within your spirit a divine power that turned you from your old habits and old ways—and that made such a radical change in you that you are no longer what you once were—a change that was practically to you a new birth, a new creation? I pray you not to deceive yourselves about this matter! Sinners had to be born again in the apostles' time and they must be born again now if they are ever to see or to enter the kingdom of God! It was necessary that they should be regenerated in the days of Christ, but it is equally necessary now. And it is not merely necessary for people who have been to prison or who have been thieves and drunks—it is equally necessary for you, the children of godly parents, for you respectable people, for you who have never done a dishonorable action in all your lives! You are not yet partakers of the divine nature unless the Spirit of God, in the deep mystery of His almighty power, has worked that new life in your soul! Solemnly have I asked myself this question, "Have I been born-again?" And I urge each one of you earnestly to examine yourselves upon this all important matter. Do you know that this new life has been put within you? Let none of us be satisfied unless we know that it is so! What an awful thing it would be to be in doubt whether I am a child of God or not—whether I am on the road to heaven or not! May God grant that none of us may be in such doubt,

even for an hour—but may we have absolute certainty upon this point, mysterious though it is!

We have so far noted that the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters as the first act of the six days' work and that by this movement nothing on the earth contributed or was congruous, that this movement was a mystery and yet very real. Note, next, that *this movement was most effectual*. "The earth was without form, and void," but that did not defeat the purpose of the Spirit of God. "Darkness was upon the face of the deep," but He could work in the dark. The darkness did not hinder Him and, blessed be God, the deep depravity of our nature does not prevent the Holy Spirit from creating it anew in Christ Jesus! Without God, the turning of a heart of stone into flesh would surely be impossible! And if there had ever been an impossibility of impossibilities, I feel that the changing of my nature would have been that impossibility—and each Christian here may feel the same with regard to himself or herself. But nothing is too hard for the Lord! Though a man may have had no knowledge of the gospel up to the time when the Spirit of God came upon him, or though he may have been as violently opposed to that gospel as he possibly could be, yet let the Spirit of God savingly deal with that man and all hindrances disappear, all opposition gives way and the work of grace is effectually accomplished! Light came when God said, "Let there be light." The waters were separated, the dry land appeared and the winged fowl, the fish that swim in the deep, the cattle that crowd the fields and man, himself, in the image of God—all these came at the Lord's command! Chaos had become a garden and death blossomed into life!

It only needed the Spirit of God to come and then the work was effectually done. And this is a point I want to mention as good cheer to some who are here. You may be dead in sin, but the Spirit of God can quicken you! Dear brother, you may be preaching to those who are dead in sin, but preach the gospel to them all the same! It is your business to preach the gospel to dead sinners, for it is the gospel that makes the dead to live! If we had to look for some natural goodness in the sinner before we preached the gospel to him, we would never preach to him at all! But we have to go to him where he is, with darkness over his soul and ruin and confusion all around—and while we preach the word, the Spirit of God accompanies it with saving power and the man is made to live—and he is fashioned in the image of God! Blessed be God, the Spirit's work is always effectual! It is possible to grieve and to resist the Holy Spirit, but when He puts forth His almighty power, then He is irresistible! The will is sweetly inclined and the man cries, "Great God, I yield, constrained by mighty love. I throw down my weapons of rebellion and I willingly go as Your gracious Spirit leads me."

I want you to also notice that *where the Spirit came, the work was carried on to completion*. The work of creation did not end with the first day, but went on till it was finished on the sixth day. God did not say, "I have made the light and now I will leave the earth as it is." And when He had

begun to divide the waters and to separate the land from the sea, He did not say, "Now I will have no more to do with the work." He did not take the newly fashioned earth in His hands and fling it back into chaos, but He went on with His work until, on the seventh day, when it was completed, He rested from all His work and, glory be to God, He will not leave unfinished the work which He has commenced in our souls! Where the Spirit of God has begun to move, He continues to move until the work is done. And He will not fail or turn aside until all is accomplished. How we ought to bless His name for this! If the Spirit of God ever did utterly leave His work in any man's soul undone, then each one here might feel, "He may leave it unfinished in me"—and there would remain no solid comfort for any one of us! If a child of God could ever fall from grace, then you and I might be among the first to fall, but Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them *eternal* life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." Rightly do we sing—

"The work which wisdom undertakes
Eternal mercy never forsakes!"

As surely as there is a first day, there will come a seventh day in which God will rest because His work will be completed. And as surely as the Spirit of God has moved upon our soul and there has come to us light instead of darkness, so shall there be a day of rest in which we shall keep the Sabbath of God with Him forever, because the Spirit's work has been completed in us even as the work of Christ has been finished on our behalf.

II. Now, having thus tried to draw a parallel between the Spirit's work in the old and the new creation, let me go on to the practical part of this evening's meditation and try to show you, in the second place, that THE PARALLEL WE HAVE DRAWN FURNISHES MANY ENCOURAGEMENTS.

And first, it furnishes encouragement *to those distressed sinners who fear that they are utterly beyond the possibility of salvation*. "I," says one, "am conscious that there is no good in me of any sort whatever. And I am so wicked that grim despair has settled down upon my heart." Listen to the text, my brother—"The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." Is not that an exact description of your heart? "Oh, yes," you say, "that is a terribly true picture of myself!" Well, what comes next? "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." While there was confusion, while there was darkness—before there was any sort of preparation for the coming of the Spirit, any kindling of flaming torches with which to break the darkness, or anything that would have seemed like the beginning of order, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters! Then why should He not move in your soul? Others who were in just as sad a condition as you are now in, have been saved—then why should you not also be saved? You have been a gross sinner, but other equally gross sinners have received the Spirit of God, who has brought Christ to them—so why should not you? If you have been the vilest of the vile, there is one text that still gives you good cheer. It is that one where Paul speaks of himself as the chief of

sinners and yet declares that he was saved. You cannot be a greater sinner than the chief of sinners! The chief is first of all and you can only be second to the chief. Or if you are even equal to him, God has proved His power to save you by saving Saul of Tarsus! Think of what Saul's case was like when he was on the road to Damascus. Why, if it were possible, it was more chaotic than chaos, itself, and darker than the primeval darkness! He was exceedingly angry against the people of God and was bent upon their destruction! Yet the Spirit of God came upon him and within a few minutes he was crying out, "Lord, what will You have me to do?"

Let me further say to you, poor despairing soul, suppose such an one as you are should be saved—would it not be a wonder of grace? "Yes," you say, "it would, indeed." Well, God is the great wonder worker! It is His delight to do things which are very wonderful, for these bring Him the most glory. Men can do commonplace things, but wonders are worked by God! If He were to save you, would you not forever feel indebted to His grace? "Yes," you say, "that I should, if He would take such a black and sinful one as I am and save me." Very well. This is just what He wants in His children, that they should forever love Him and praise Him—and feel that they are under gracious obligations of love to Him. When God means to make a great saint, He often uses a great sinner as the raw material. It is the man who is greatly in debt who loves the friend who discharges his debt. If I were a physician and I wanted to establish my fame, do you think that I should trouble about you who have a finger ache or some other trifling complaint? No! If I wanted London to ring with the story of my cures, I would try to find out the man who is nearest to the gates of death, or one who is afflicted with many diseases at once, for if I healed *him*, all would be amazed and it would be reported everywhere, "This man has worked this great marvel." Now, Christ is the physician and you are the patient. And the worse you are, the more glory can He get out of you! He is certainly able to save you, bad as you are, and so He will glorify His name as a Savior. "It shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." Thus I say unto you, O soul, though you are empty of everything but sin, the Spirit of God can fill you with grace! And though darkness enshrouds you, the Spirit of God can come upon you and make you light in the Lord! So you need not despair, but rather give your ear attentively to this promise of the Lord Jesus Christ—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Or this, "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." May the Spirit of God lead you to believe in Jesus!

There is an equal encouragement in this text *for those who are the people of God, or who once thought that they were, but who have fallen into a very sad and miserable condition*. There are some who have walked in the light of God and enjoyed sweet fellowship with Him, but they have been very careless, or they have neglected private prayer, or perhaps they have fallen into sin and now they have got into such a state of heart that

they cannot see anything gracious in themselves. "Oh," says such an one, "I am worse than the sinner who never knew Christ! I feel as if I had played the apostate, like Judas, or as if I had turned aside, like Demas, loving the present world, or as if I were a tree without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots. I feel that in myself there is no order of grace and no light of love." Listen, dear friend, to my text—"And the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." I bless God that I have many a time known what it is, when I felt most barren, to be made to blossom and bring forth fruit—and when apparently most dead, suddenly to be quickened into ecstatic life! And when I have, in my own estimation, lain at hell's door, yet by one promise applied with power, by one flash of the divine energy, to be lifted up and made to say, even in that place wherein my soul slept, like Jacob did at Bethel, "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

Has not the Spirit of God often dealt so with you experienced saints who know what the ups and downs of the Christian life are? Has He not made you strong when you have been weak and made you to sing just after you had been sighing—and made the waters to be calmest just after the fiercest storm and your brightest days to follow just after the hurricane? Then have you rejoiced in the clear shining after rain, when the winter was over and gone and when the voice of the singing of birds was heard in your land! I know you have found it so! Then do you *now* think that the Lord waits to find some good thing in you before He will bless you? Did He not love you when you were in your blood, like an infant cast out into the field unwashed and unswaddled? Do you think that His arm is shortened, or that His love is diminished? You say that you have been unfaithful to Him, but He abides faithful! Your faith may seem to be dead, but "your life is hid with Christ in God." You feel so foul, but—

"There is a fountain, filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains!"

Do not despair, dear friend—look again to the cross—begin again where you began before! Remember the simple story that I told you long ago of poor Jack the huckster, [See Sermon #47, Volume 1—CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR HIS PEOPLE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] who used to sing—

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

Get back to that point, dear brother or sister, and so you will get back to light of God and once more you will realize that the Spirit of God is working within your spirit!

I think our text also gives encouragement *to those who are working for God*. You are not now thinking about yourself. You have, by divine grace, advanced beyond that stage, and you are thinking about others. You are going to take a district and visit it—and there are places there that swarm with the worst of characters. You do not know any good people there who are at all likely to welcome and assist you. Go there, my dear

brother! Venture there, my dear sister, without any fear, remembering that although "the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, the Spirit of God moved upon the waters." Go to that dark spot, for the Spirit of God will go with you! He will guide you through the darkness and through the chaos—and will help and bless you. Missionaries have gone to lands where the people were cannibals, but they have not been unsuccessful. The gospel has been carried to people who were so degraded that they did not seem to have any sense of possessing even a soul—yet the gospel had not been without fruit among them! No race of men has ever been discovered that has been sunk too low for the Spirit of God to work upon them and to save them! Let us never despair of any, or think that they are beyond the Spirit's power.

"But," says one, "I would like to speak to those who are willing to hear me and who are anxious to be saved." No doubt you would, for most people like easy work, but if the Lord sends you to those who do not wish to be saved, and who have no care at all about religion, you must not pick and choose your work—you must go where God sends you! Would you not like to go where God would get the most glory? Of course you would! Well, He gets the most glory when big sinners are saved, when those who hated Him most begin to love Him, when those who were most opposed to His truth gladly receive it! Then there is the greatest triumph of His grace and the greatest glory to His holy name. I have sometimes thought that I would like to have lived in England in the days of the Puritans. It must have been a great privilege to have heard some of those old masters of theology preaching the gospel and to have mingled with the holy multitudes that worshiped God in those days when this land was a very paradise. But there is more need of the preacher of the gospel now than ever there was and, therefore, he ought to be glad to be where he is most needed. A good servant would rather that his master put him where there is plenty for him to do than let him be where there are more workers than work! I see the thick clouds of Popery spreading over the land in every direction and see scarcely anything in the signs of the times that tends to cheer one's heart. I see plenty of comfort in the Scriptures! I have abundant joy in the Lord and rest in Him, but as for the way in which things are going in all the churches—ah, Lord God, how has Your Spirit been restrained and how little work does He appear to be doing in these evil times! But because the times are dark, shall we despair? No, but still remember that when "the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep"—then "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

Was it not so in Christ's own day and in the time of the apostles? The world was sunk in sin, superstition and cruelty—but after Pentecost thousands were converted! Was it not so in Luther's day? The professing church, like another Samson, was lulled to sleep upon the lap of the Delilah of Rome! And the church's locks were utterly shorn—its strength was gone and it was delivered over to the Philistines. But, in due time, the Spirit of God came into the darkness and the great truth that we are

justified by faith—not by the works of the law—was like a repetition of the ancient command and its sequel, "Let there be light, and there was light." Blessed be God, the darkness of those days could not keep back the light of Luther's preaching! Nor Calvin's clear transparent preaching and Zwingli's burning words! And if all England should become black as night and things grow worse, and worse, and worse, and worse, until they come to the worst—and Satan lords it over all—there would be no cause for fear even then! Fearlessly should the soldiers of Christ still go on, for the Spirit of God will again move when chaos and darkness reign! Be of good cheer, brothers and sisters in Christ! Pray on, work on, trust on and God will indeed bless you!

I earnestly pray that those to whom I have spoken may receive whatever of the truth of God I have uttered. And especially do I pray this for the seeking sinner. How I long that he may realize that the only power that can save him lies outside himself! If you are ever to be accepted before God, you will never be accepted through anything that you are in yourself. You will have to be accepted in Christ Jesus and, in order to be accepted in Christ Jesus, you must have faith in Jesus. If you are ever to be a living child of the living God, the Spirit of God must quicken you! There is in you nothing whatever that can recommend you to God. He and He, alone, must save you if you are ever to be saved. "Why," says one, "you drive me to despair by talking like that!" I wish I could drive you to such despair as would make you cease from your own works and leave off all ideas of self-salvation—and make you fall as one dead before the throne of mercy and cry, "Lord, save me, or I perish!" We cannot too plainly preach that salvation is of the Lord alone! Everything that is of nature's spinning will have to be unraveled and the soul must be clothed in the spotless robe of the righteousness of Christ. You may build on the sandy foundation of creature merit, but all you build will surely come down! Oh, that you may cease from such foolish building and that you may build upon what Jesus Christ has done! There you will build upon the Rock, the real foundation! If the Spirit of God will enable you to build there, you will have built for eternity! May grace, mercy, and peace be with you in so doing, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 50.

Verses 1-4. *The mighty God, even the LORD, has spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun until the going down thereof. Out of Zion the perfection of beauty, God has shined. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before Him and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people.* To profess to be the people of God is a very solemn thing, for the Apostle Peter tells us that "judgment must begin at the house of God." Those who profess to be His people shall be like the wheat on the threshing floor. John the Baptist, preparing the way for the first coming of Christ, said of Him, "whose fan

is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor." When He comes again, He will separate the precious from the vile, the true saint from the mere pretender!

5, 6. *Gather My saints together unto Me, those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare His righteousness: for God is Judge, Himself. Selah.* He will not depute this office to another. He knows the details of each case, He knows the motives that have been at the back of every action, He knows the law and He knows what sentence ought to be passed in every instance. "God is Judge, Himself."

7-9. *Hear, O My people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against you: I am God, even your God. I will not reprove you for your sacrifices or your burnt offerings, to have been continually before Me. I will take no bullock out of your house, nor he goats out of your folds.* Observe what contempt God expresses in this Psalm for all mere ceremonial sacrifices. They were ordained by God and were acceptable to Him when offered with a right motive. But apart from that motive and apart from their spiritual significance, what was there in them to make them acceptable to the Most High? Does the Lord delight in the fat of bulls or the blood of goats? There can be nothing in these things, in themselves, that can please His infinite mind, so He says of them, "I will take no bullock out of your house, nor he goats out of your folds." Where the heart was not given with the offering, it could not be well pleasing unto the Lord.

10, 11. *For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are Mine*. If any man thinks that he can make God his debtor by any offering that he brings to Him, what a great mistake he makes! Whatever you bring to God, you will only bring to Him what is already His! The silver and the gold are His as well as "the cattle upon a thousand hills." What we willingly bring to Him out of heartfelt gratitude, He will graciously accept, but if we imagine that there is any merit in what we give, He will have nothing to do with it.

12, 13. *If I were hungry, I would not tell you: for the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?* "Think you that there is any offering that man can present to Me which can appease My wrath, or give Me pleasure?"

14. *Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay your vows unto the Most High.* The offering of the heart is better than the gift from the purse. The praise and thanksgiving that come out of the very soul—these God will accept.

15, 16. *And call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me.* [See Sermons #1505, Volume 25—PRAYER TO GOD IN TROUBLE AN ACCEPTABLE SACRIFICE and #1876, Volume 31—ROBINSON CRUSOE'S TEXT—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *But unto the wicked, God says, What have you to do to declare My statutes, or that you should take My covenant in your mouth?* There were, in those days, wicked priests who taught the people what they did not themselves

practice, just as there are, in these days, men who because of their official position, have dared to stand up and declare the gospel of Christ by which they were not, themselves, saved! And in which, indeed, they were not even believers! Are they the men to preach the truth of God? Are they fit to teach others? Assuredly not! "Unto the wicked God says, "What have you to do to declare My statutes, or that you should take My covenant in your mouth?"

17-20. *Seeing you hate instruction, and cast My words behind you. When you saw a thief, then you consented with him, and have been partaker with adulterers. You give your mouth to evil, and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother's son.* How, then, can you hope to please God with your formal ceremonies, with your mere attendance at the house of God while your heart is estranged from Him? You do but mock God with all this empty formalism!

21, 22. *These things have you done, and I kept silence, you thought that I was altogether such an one as yourself: but I will reprove you, and set them in order before your eyes. Now consider this.* "'Consider this,' you who are full of heartless religiousness, you who are so particular in your observance of the outward forms of religion and yet do not think of God as you should—'consider this.'"

22. *You that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.* What a terrible God is this Jehovah whom we serve! If our hearts are not right towards Him, if we dare to mock Him with solemn sounds uttered by false tongues, this verse warns us as to how He will deal with us!

23. *Whoever offers praise glorifies Me and to him that orders his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God.* So that what God really desires is living, loving hearts and holy gracious lives and, therefore, if we do not give Him our hearts and our lives—our sacrifices and oblations are all in vain—they are an abomination in His sight!

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A GOLDEN SENTENCE
NO. 3135

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 11, 1909,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Jesus said unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work."
John 4:34.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon, upon the same text, is Sermon #302, Volume 6—JESUS ABOUT HIS FATHER'S BUSINESS and another, *upon verses 31 to 38, is* #1902, Volume 32—MYSTERIOUS MEAT—
Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THIS text contains in it: *much consolation for those who are desirous of salvation; more of example to those who are saved; and most of all of matter for praise concerning our Lord Himself, who is its spokesman.*

I. Let us begin by noticing that THE TEXT CONTAINS MUCH CONSOLATION FOR THOSE ANXIOUS ONES WHO WOULD FIND MERCY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

You who are trembling under a sense of sin will perceive that *the work of saving souls is called by Christ, "His Father's will."* I know you are very prone to imagine that Christ is full of pity, but that the Father is austere, severe, an avenging judge. You slander your God by such a supposition! "The work of mercy is the will of Him that sent Me," says Christ. "All that I am doing, when I am seeking the soul's good of a poor sinful Samaritan woman at the place of this well is according to My Father's mind." Christ was not, as it were, introducing men to a mercy from which God would keep them, but He was bringing to reconciliation with God those concerning whom the benevolent will of God was that they should be saved—and more—concerning whom the effectual will of God was that they should also be brought into covenant relation with Himself and should enjoy eternal life!

Sinner, if you get into the garden of the Lord's grace, you have not come there as an intruder. The gate is open. It is God's will that you should come in. If you receive Christ into your heart, you will not have stolen the treasure—it was God's will that you should receive Christ! If with broken heart you shall come and rest upon the finished sacrifice of Jesus, you need not fear that you will violate the eternal purpose, or come into collision with the divine decree—God's will has brought you into a state of salvation! One of the vainest fears that a man can entertain is the dread that the Father will be unwilling to forgive or the equally absurd fear that he may possibly find a decree of God shutting him out when he is anxious to be reconciled. Where God gives the will to come to Jesus, we may be sure that the eternal purpose has gone before! O awakened sinner, your anxious desire, your prayerfulness, your

longing for God are but the shadows of the divine will upon your own will! Imagine not that you can get the best of God in the race of mercy—

"No sinner can be beforehand with Thee—
Your grace is almighty, preventing and free."

If you desire, God has long ago desired. If you purpose in your heart, God has long ago purposed. You need never be troubled about divine predestination. The gospel which we preach is that to which you should give your attention. Rest assured that God has never spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth and said, "Seek you My face in vain." He has never passed a secret decree in the council chamber who shall contravene the open promise of His mercy. "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." If you come to Christ and cast yourself upon Him, you need entertain no suspicion that you are violating the will of God, for salvation is the will of God which Jesus Christ has come to fulfill!

Another consolation is here given to every seeking soul, namely, that *Jesus Christ is sent into the world on purpose to save*. If I know that I am sick and that a physician has come into the street on purpose to heal, I feel no difficulty about inviting him into my house. If I know that I am poor and that a princely social worker has come with plentiful generosity to distribute to the poor, I have no difficulty in asking of him! Why should I, if I know that he has come with the very objective and intent to do that which I need him to do? Now, wherever there is an empty sinner, a full Christ has come on purpose to fill that empty sinner! Wherever there is a thirsty spirit, the river of the water of life is poured out on purpose for that thirsty soul to drink! If you hunger after Christ, rest assured that Christ has met with you and discerns in you one of those whom He came to call. He would not have made you hunger, nor made you thirst, nor made you feel your emptiness if it had not been His intention to remove your hunger, slake your thirst and fill your emptiness to the full! Look upon the Savior as being commissioned by His Father to save sinners. Never indulge the thought that He came to save better ones than you are and that you are just beyond the pale of His mercy! Instead thereof, let your sinfulness, your nothingness, your conscious weakness, your utter ruin and hell deserving inspire you with a surer hope that you are such a sinner as Jesus Christ came to deliver! He came to seek and to save that which was lost. Who is more lost than you are? Believe, then, that He came to seek and to save *you*—and cast yourself upon Him—and you shall find it so!

Perhaps the greatest consolation to a despairing sinner which this text affords is *the delight which Jesus Christ experiences in the work of saving souls*. It was His one objective. From of old He looked forward to the day when a body would be prepared for Him that He might come into the world to redeem His people. When the fullness of time was come, He was no unwilling servitor to our souls. "In the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God!" Down from the portals of the skies the Savior came with glad liveliness—willing, panting to save! When He was on earth, He was not loath to seek out the guilty—no, it was alleged against Him, "This Man receives sinners, and eats with them." He could have healed the leper, if He had pleased, while He stood at a distance, but He chose to touch Him when He healed Him, to show how

near He had come to humanity, that He did not shrink from it, but that it was His delight to come into contact with all the woe and suffering of our fallen race! He did not retire from sinners to guard His holiness in solitude. He did not surround Himself with a bodyguard to keep off the throng, but there He was among them, surrounded by a press of common folks. Many thronged Him and some touched Him who received healing virtue through their believing touch. He was at the beck and call of everybody! He had not time so much as to eat. And when He did, through weariness, seek a little rest, they followed Him on foot and hounded Him with their entreaties. Yet He was never angry, but always full of compassion towards them.

He was a willing Savior and found His soul's delight in winning souls. That great crowning work of suffering and death, by which souls were effectually redeemed, was no unwilling service. He said He had a baptism to be baptized with and that He was straitened until it was accomplished. The cup was bitter as hell, but He longed to drink it. His death was to be at once the most ignominious and the most painful that could be devised, and yet He thirsted for it. "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer," said Christ to His disciples. He did not hide Himself away when He was hunted, but He went to the garden of Gethsemane—and Judas knew the place—and when they found Him, He was willing to yield Himself up. No bonds could have bound Him, yet He bound Himself. They could not have dragged Him to the cross, nor could myriads like them—but He went like a lamb to the slaughter—and like a sheep before her shearer He was dumb and opened not His mouth. All that wondrous passion upon Calvary was a freewill offering for us! It was a voluntary sacrifice to the fullest possible extent. What if I say that even in His deepest agony, Christ had an unknown joy? I think we have too much forgotten the wonderful joy which must have filled the Savior's heart even when going to the cross. Beloved, you cannot suffer for others if you have a benevolent nature, without feeling joy that you are taking the suffering from them! And we know that it was because of "the joy that was set before Him" that He "endured the cross, despising the shame." As He dived into the black waves of grief, He could see the precious pearl which He counted to be of greater price than all—and that sight sustained Him with a latent joy, if I may so call it, which did not sparkle at the time, but which lay there slumbering within even when His soul was "exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." And now that Christ has gone up on high, poor trembling sinner, He has no greater joy than this—in seeing of the travail of His soul in souls redeemed by Him, both by price and by power, from death and sin! Jesus wept over Jerusalem because it would not be saved, but Jesus rejoices greatly over sinners who repent! This is His joy and His crown of rejoicing—even you poor tremblers who come and look to Him upon the cross and find life in His death and healing in His wounds!

I cannot bring out the comfort of this text to you as I could wish. Words fail me, but I would urge those of you who want to find peace and faith, to make a point of thinking very much about Christ. We not only lay hold on the cross by faith, but it is the cross which works faith in us.

If you would think more often of the mercy of God and the will of God, and the mission of Christ, and the loving kindness of Christ, your soul would probably be led by the Spirit, by that course of thought, to believe in Jesus! Your constant dwelling upon your sin and your hardness of heart has a great tendency to drive you to despair. It is well to know your heart to be hard and your sin to be great, but as a man is not healed by simply *knowing* that he is sick and is not likely to get his spirits comforted by merely studying his disease, so you are not likely to find faith by raking amongst the filth of your fallen nature, or trying to find something good in yourselves which is not there and will never be there! Your wisest course is to think much of Jesus and look to Him. You will soon find hope in Him if you look for it there. You will soon discover grounds for comfort if you look to God in the person of His Son. If you regard the will of God as it is revealed on Calvary, and read it in the crimson lines written upon the Savior's pierced body, you will soon perceive that His will is love. Turn away from the wounds which the old serpent has given you and look to the bronze serpent! Look away from your own death to the death of Jesus and recollect that your repentance, apart from Christ, will only be a *legal repentance*, full of bondage, and will be of no use to you. As old Wilcocks says, "Away with that repentance which does not weep at the foot of the cross!" If you do not look to Jesus Christ when you repent, your repentance is not an evangelical repentance, but a repentance which needs to be repented of. Do, I pray you, receive the truth which I have put before you, or rather, which the text so plainly presents to you. The salvation of sinners is the will of God, the work of Christ and the joy of Christ! Is this not good news?

II. But I said that the text was MUCH MORE AN EXAMPLE TO BELIEVERS, and so it is.

Note in the text, first of all, *Christ's subservience*. He says, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." He says nothing about His own will. Thus early did He say, "Not My will, but Yours be done." The man of the world thinks that if he could have his own way, he would be perfectly happy—and his dream of happiness in this state or in the next is comprised in this—that his own wishes will be gratified, his own longings fulfilled, his own desires granted to him. This is all a mistake! A man will never be happy in this way. It is not by setting up his own will and crying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," but perfect happiness is to be found in exactly the opposite direction, namely, in the casting down of our own will entirely and asking that the will of God may be fulfilled in us! "This is my meat," says the sinner, "to do my own will." Jesus Christ points to another table and says, "This is My meat, to do the will of Him that sent Me. My greatest comfort and the most substantial nourishment of My spirit are not found in carrying out My own desires, but in submitting all My desires to the will of God." Beloved, our sorrows grow at the roots of our self-will. Could a man have any sorrow if his will were utterly subdued to the will of God? In such a case, would not everything please him? Pain, if we did not kick against it, would have a wondrous sweetness. Losses would positively become things to rejoice in as affording opportunities for patience! We would even take joyfully the

spoiling of our goods. When we have conquered ourselves, we have conquered all. When we have won the victory over our own desires and aversions, and have subdued ourselves, through sovereign grace, to the will of God, then must we be perfectly happy!

Notice in the text, however, in the next place, not only subservience, but also *a recognized commission*. O Christian, cultivate full submissiveness to the divine will and let it also be your desire to see clearly your commission from on high! It is the will of God, yes, but it is well for us to add, "the will of Him that sent me." If I am a soldier, when I am sent upon an errand, I have not to consider what I shall do, but having received my commander's orders—I am bound to obey them. Do not many Christians fail to see their commission? It has come to be a dreadfully common belief in the Christian church that the only man who has a "call" is the man who devotes all his time to what is called "the ministry," whereas all Christian service is ministry and every Christian has a call to some kind of ministry or another! It is not every man who will become "a father in Israel," for "you have not many fathers." It is not every man who can become even an instructor, or an exhorter, but each man must minister according to the gift he has received. You are a nation of priests! Instead of having some one man selected who becomes a priest and so maintains the old priestcraft in the Christian Church, Jesus our Lord and head has abolished that monopoly forever! He remains the one great apostle and High Priest of our profession and we in Him are made, through His grace, kings and priests unto God. You are, each of you, as believers, sent into this world with a distinct commission—and that commission is very like the commission given to your Master! In your measure, the Spirit of the Lord is upon you and He has sent you to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord! Into the atonement you cannot intrude. Christ has trod the wine press alone and of the people there was none with Him. But in the place of service you will be no intruder, it is your dwelling place. You are called to follow Christ your Lord in all holy labor for souls. "As the Father has sent Me, even so send I you." Is not this a part of His dying commission, not to the apostles, only, but unto all the saints? Let us endeavor to recognize this. When Christ was sent of God, He did not forget that He was sent. He did not come into this world to do His own business after He had been sent to do His Father's will. So you and I must not act as though we were living here to make money, or to bring up our families and make matters comfortable for ourselves. We are, if we are Christians, sent into the world upon a divine errand and oh, for grace to recognize the errand and to perform it!

Further, notice *the practical character of our Lord's observations on these two points*. He says, "My meat is"—what? To consider? To resolve? To calculate? To study prophecy as to when the world will end? To meditate upon plans by which we may be able, one of these days, to do something great? Not at all. "My meat is *to do* the will of Him that sent Me." The meat of some people is to find fault with others who do Christ's will—they never seem to have their mouths so well filled as when

remarking upon the imperfections of those who are vastly better than themselves! This is like gorging one's self with carrion and is unworthy of a man of God! Did you ever know a man whom God blessed who had not some oddity or singularity? I think I never knew such a man or woman either! Whenever God blesses us, there is sure to be something or other to remind men that the vessel containing the treasure is an earthen vessel! Foolish people are so fond of crying, "Look at the meanness of the vessel," as though no treasure were contained within. Were they wise, they would understand that this is a part of the divine appointment, that we should "have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God, and not of us." Do *you* think you could do God's work better? I wish you would try! It is generally true that those who quibble at others find it inconvenient to walk in any path of usefulness at all.

There are others, of a somewhat better disposition, who find it their meat to project new methods. They invent grand schemes! There is a house to be built for God's people to worship in—they always know how to build it! They say so many people are to give so much, and so many so much—the practical part of the business being how much they will give, themselves! But upon that point they have remarkably little to say. They are always talking of some grand scheme or other for impossible Christian union, or some magnificent but impracticable Christian effort. Our Lord was practical. You are struck, in the whole of His life, with the practical character of it. He was no visionary and no fanatic. Though His holy soul was on fire as much as the most fanatical zealot who ever lived, all His plans and methods were the wisest that could possibly be arranged, so that if men had sat down in their coolest prudence to devise schemes, had they been rightly led, they would have devised the very schemes which this warmhearted, passionate Savior carried out! He did not theorize, but acted! My dear brothers and sisters, I hope we shall earn the same commendation!

Many Christians are too fond of mysticisms, quibbling, oddities and strange questions which minister not unto profit. I heartily wish they would try to win souls for Jesus in the old fashioned, Biblical way. Every now and then some particular phase of truth crops up and certain Christians go perfectly mad about it, wanting to pry between leaves that are folded, or to find out secrets which are not revealed, or to reach some fancied eminence of self-conceited perfection in the flesh. While there are so many sinners to be lost or to be saved, I think we had better stick to preaching the Gospel! As long as this world contains millions of those who do not know even the elementary truths of Christianity, would it not be as well for us, first of all, to go into the highways and hedges and tell men of our dying Savior, and point them to the cross? Let us discuss the millennium, the secret rapture and all those other intricate questions, by and by, when we have got through more pressing needs! Just now the vessel is going to pieces—who will man the lifeboat? The house is on a blaze, and who is he that will run the fire escape up to the window? Here are men perishing for lack of knowledge and who will tell them that there is life in a look at the crucified one? He is the man who shall give men meat to eat! But all others, though they may carry a dish of most

exquisite china, will probably give them no meat, but only make them angry at being tantalized with empty wind. Christ's satisfaction of heart was of a most practical kind—He was subservient to God as a commissioned servant, and busy with actually *doing* the will of God!

But the gist of the text lies here. *Our Lord Jesus Christ found both sustenance and delight in thus doing the will of God in winning souls.* Believe me, brothers and sisters, if you have never known what it is to pluck a brand from the burning, you have never known that spiritual meat which, next to Christ's own self, is the sweetest food a soul can feed upon! To do good to others is one of the most rapid methods of getting good to yourselves. Read the diaries of Whitefield and Wesley and you will be struck with the fact that you do not find them perpetually doubting their calling, mistrusting their election, or questioning whether they love the Lord or not. See the men preaching to their thousands in the open air and hearing around them the cries of, "What must we do to be saved?" My brothers and sisters, they had no time for doubts and fears. Their full hearts had no room for such lumber. They felt that God had sent them into this world to win souls for Christ and they could not afford to live desponding, mistrustful lives. They lived unto God and the Holy Spirit so mightily lived in them that they were fully assured that they partook of His marvelous power! Some of you good people who do nothing except read little Plymouth books, go to public meetings, Bible readings, prophetic conferences, and other forms of spiritual dissipation, would be a good deal better Christians if you would look after the poor and needy around you! If you would just tuck up your sleeves for work and go and tell the gospel to dying men, you would find your spiritual health mightily restored, for very much of the sickness of Christians comes through their having nothing to do! All feeding and no working makes men spiritual sick persons. Be idle, careless, with nothing to live for, nothing to care for, no sinner to pray for, no backslider to lead back to the cross, no trembler to encourage, no little child to tell of a Savior, no gray headed man to enlighten in the things of God, no objective, in fact, to live for, and who wonders if you begin to groan, to murmur and to look within until you are ready to die of despair? But if the Master shall come to you and put His hand upon you, and say, "I have sent you just as My Father sent Me—now go and do My will," you will find that in keeping His commandments there is great reward. You would find meat to eat that you know nothing of now.

Let us have practical Christianity, my brothers and sisters! Let us never neglect doctrinal Christianity, nor experimental Christianity, but if we do not have the practice of it in being to others what Christ was to us, we shall soon find the doctrines to be without savor and the experience to be flavored with bitterness! Christ found joy in seeking the good of the Samaritan woman. Her heart, up to now unrenewed, satisfied Him when He had won it to Himself. Oh, the joy of winning a soul! Get a grip from the hand of one whom you were the means of bringing to Christ—why, after that, all the devils in hell may attack you, but you will not care—and all the men in the world may rage against you and say you do not serve God from proper motives, or do not serve Him in a discreet way—

but since God has set His seal upon your work, you can afford to laugh at them! Do but win souls, beloved, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and you shall find it to be a perennial spring of joy in your own souls!

But, notice also that our Lord says, in addition to His finding it His meat to do God's will, that He also *desired to finish His work*. And this is our satisfaction—to persevere till our work is finished. You do not know how near you may be to the completion of your work. You may not have to toil many more days. The chariot wheels of eternity are sounding behind you. Hurry, Christian! Use the moments zealously for they are very precious. You are like the work girl with her last inch of candle. Work hard! The night comes wherein no man can work. "I paint for eternity," said the painter, so let us do—let us work for God as those whose work will endure when selfish labors shall burn as wood, hay and stubble till the last tremendous fire. To finish His work! To finish His work! Be this our aim. When the great missionary to the Indians was dying, the last thing that he did was to teach a little child its letters. And when someone marveled to see so great a man at such a work, he said he thanked God that when he could no longer preach, he had at least strength enough left to teach that poor little child. So would he finish his life's work and put in the last little stroke to complete the picture. It should be our meat and our drink to push on, never finding our meat in what we have *done*, but in what we are doing and still have to do—finding constantly our refreshment in the present work of the present hour as God enables us to perform it—spending and still being spent for Him. Never let us say, "I have had my day. Let the young people take their turn." Suppose the sun said, "I have shone so long, I shall not rise tomorrow"? Imagine the stars in their beauty saying, "We have for so long a time shot our golden arrows through the darkness, we will now retire forever." What if the air should refuse to give us breath, or the water should no longer ripple in its channels, or if all nature should stand still because of what it once did—what death and ruin would there be! No, Christian, there must be no loitering for you—each day be this your meat—to do the will of Him that sent you and to finish His work!

III. And now, lastly, I have not strength, neither have you the time to consider THE GLORY WHICH JESUS CHRIST SHOULD HAVE FROM us, when we know that He could truly say, "It is My meat to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work."

How could He ever have loved us? It is strange that the Son of God should have set His affections upon such unworthy beings. I should not have wondered, my brother, at His loving you, but it is a daily marvel to me that Jesus should have loved me. It is a wonder of wonders that He should come to save us—that when we were so lost and ruined that we did not even care about His love, but rejected it when we heard of it, and despised it even when it came with some degree of power to our hearts—that He should still have loved us notwithstanding all. "'Tis strange! 'Tis passing strange, 'tis wonderful!" Yet so it is. He has no greater delight than in saving us and in bringing us to glory. Shall we not praise Him? Do not our hearts say within themselves, "What shall I do, My Savior to praise You? How shall I crown His head? How shall I show forth my gratitude to Him who found such delight in serving me?" Beloved, may

the love of God be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us! From this day forth may it be our meat and our drink to do the will of Him that sent us—and to finish His work!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 4:1-39.

Verses 1-3. *When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus Himself baptized not, but His disciples), He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee.* Our Savior was not a man of strife. He was quite ready to contend with the Pharisees on fit occasions, but just then He avoided an encounter with them. Besides, one woman of Samaria, whom He was going to save, was worth more to Him than ten thousand Pharisees who would not be saved by Him! Most of the learning and culture of Palestine was possessed by the Pharisees, but Christ thought nothing of it in comparison with the soul of the one poor woman of Samaria whom He was going to save.

4-7. *And He must go through Samaria. There came He to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son, Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well, and it was about the sixth hour. There came a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus said unto her, give Me a drink.* [See Sermons #2570, Volume 44—JESUS SITTING ON THE WELL and #2423, Volume 41—THE MODEL SOUL-WINNER—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The "sixth hour" means noonday, and that was a very unusual time for a Samaritan woman to draw water. But the reason why she went at that unusual hour was because she was one whom other women shunned so that if she went to the well at all, she must go alone, for they would not be seen in her company. What a wonderful thing it is that this woman who was not thought to be fit company for her fellow creatures was, nevertheless, thought by Christ to be worth looking after and saving! But those who are the castaways of men are often among those who are the sought out and chosen ones of Christ.

8. *(For His disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat).* This was quite a right thing for the disciples to do, for meat must be bought for men to eat. No doubt it is better to pray than to eat, but if one never ate, he would not long be able to pray. I have heard these disciples condemned for their worldliness and carnality, but I fail to see anything of the kind—it seems to me necessary that somebody should go into the city to buy meat—and although it is not the noblest kind of work, yet, being necessary, it may be the steppingstone to higher service.

9, 10. *Then said the woman of Samaria unto Him, How is it that You, being a Jew, ask drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If You knew the gift of God.* [See Sermons #782, Volume 13—SAVING KNOWLEDGE and #2277, Volume 38—SYCHAR'S SINNER SAVED—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] How much we lose

through ignorance! Ignorance is often like a great stone laid upon the well so that the flocks cannot be watered—blessed is everyone who helps to roll away that stone! It is a great thing to know the gift of God—"If you knew the gift of God."

10. *And who it is that says to you, give Me a drink; you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water.* There are two things worth knowing—what grace is and Who it is that gives it. Lack of this knowledge often leads to lack of prayer—and lack of prayer leads to lack of receiving. Perhaps someone asks, "Why does not God give without prayer?" Because it is not His will to do so! His will is that we should pray about everything. Did you ever notice that even when the harvest is ripe, it cannot be gathered in without prayer? Jesus said to His disciples, "The harvest is truly plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray you, therefore, the Lord of the Harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest." Prayer seems indispensable! It is part of God's necessary machinery. He has pleased to make it so. But what condescension of love it is that the prayer of man should be necessary to effect the purposes of God! God even said to Christ, Himself, "Ask of Me and I shall give You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession." So that, from the woman at the well up to the Lord Jesus, Himself, prayer seems to be the indispensable requisite of blessing!

11. *The woman said unto Him, Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from where, then, have You that living water?* [See Sermon #2897, Volume 50—THE SOURCE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] You who reverence the majesty of Christ's deity, the perfection of His humanity, the glory of His atoning sacrifice, the splendor of His resurrection power—you who know from where He has this living water, the power to save and to bless—worship and adore Him with all your heart and soul!

12-14. *Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again: but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.* You know that there are some who preach of a salvation that does not save—they teach that one may be a child of God today and a child of the devil tomorrow! That is like the water in Jacob's well—"Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again." But Christ's salvation is of a very different kind—"Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst."

14. *But the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.* [See Sermons #770, Volume 13—THE WATER OF LIFE; #865, Volume 15—LIFE'S EVER-SPRINGING WELL and #1202, Volume 20—HOLY WATER—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The grace of God is a living thing, a springing and abiding thing, an everlasting thing—and he that has it in his heart has that which has saved him forever!

15. *The woman said unto Him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come here to draw.* Christ's words were coming true. He said that if she had known, she would have asked. And then, in her poor groping

way, she began to pray, hardly knowing what she was asking for! I advise you, also, to pray even before you quite understand your own prayers, before you are sufficiently instructed to know what you really need! Ask God to give you what you need. Very often we make a discovery of our needs through having them supplied.

16-19. *Jesus said unto her, Go, call your husband, and come here. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, You have well said, I have no husband: for you have had five husbands; and he whom you now have is not your husband: in that said you truly. The woman said unto Him, Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.* She perceived that there was something about Him which marked Him out as a prophet, so she seemed to say to Him, "As You are a prophet, solve me this riddle."

20-24. *Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and You say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus said unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour comes when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship you know not what: We know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour comes and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.* Let us never forget this. Even if we all believe it, we do not always act according to that belief. For instance, we sing through a hymn, but it might almost as well be an old song, for our hearts do not go with the words. Or while our heads are bowed in prayer, perhaps our thoughts are back with our children, or our shops, or far away in some foreign land. Yet there is no benefit in coming up to a place of worship, or in listening to sermons and prayers, or joining in the singing of sacred songs unless our heart is there! Let us always remember this, and sigh and cry rather than rejoice if we have been up to the holy assembly and yet have not worshiped God "in spirit and in truth."

25, 26. *The woman said unto Him, I know that Messiah comes, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things. Jesus said unto her, I that speak unto you am He.* Now she had made the greatest of all discoveries, for the Messiah, Himself, had come to her and told her "all things." This was her test of the Messiah and Christ had answered it!

27. *And about this time His disciples came and marveled that He talked with the woman: yet no man said, What are You seeking? or, Why do You talk with her?* They had too much respect for Him to ask such questions, except in their own hearts, but their Oriental prejudices made them marvel that He was talking with a woman!

28-33. *The woman then left her water pot and went her way into the city and said to the men, Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city and came unto Him. In the meanwhile His disciples prayed Him, saying, Master, eat. But He said unto them, I have meat to eat that you know not of. Therefore said the disciples, one to another, Has any man brought Him something to eat?* They did not like to ask Him plainly, although they were very curious

about the matter, they scarcely dared to pry further into it. And His next words may have deepened the mystery still further.

34, 35. *Jesus said unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work. Say not you, there are yet four months, and then comes harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.* [See Sermon #707, Volume 12—FIELDS WHITE FOR HARVEST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "Look at those Samaritans trooping out of the city, drawn by that woman's testimony concerning Me. They are coming, at her invitation, to learn more about the Christ."

36-38. *And He that reaps, receives wages, and gathers fruit unto life eternal: that both he that sows and he that reaps may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One sows and another reaps. I sent you to reap that whereon you bestowed no labor: other men labored, and you are entered into their labors.* The prophets had spoken and written concerning the Messiah. Their words had prepared the minds of the Jews and also of the Samaritans, to receive the gospel. So the great success of the apostles must not be traced merely to their teaching, but also to the preparatory work of the other laborers who had gone before—"Other men labored, and you are entered into their labors." The church is always ready to praise her reapers, but let her not forget her sowers. There are some of us who bring many souls to Christ, who are greatly indebted to the work which was done by other men who preceded us. There are some who, perhaps, have few conversions although they preach the gospel faithfully—they are sowing and there shall come others, by and by, who shall reap bounteous harvests as the result of their sowing the good seed of the kingdom! No matter who sows, or who reaps, the glory of the harvest shall be unto the Most High.

39. *And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.*

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LESSONS FROM THE MALTA FIRE
NO. 3136

A SERMON
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"They kindled a fire, and received us, every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold."
Acts 28:2.

AS much as lies in us, we should seek to do good unto all men, and we can never know to whom we may be rendering service. These people of Malta never dreamed that they were entertaining an apostle and it never entered into their heads that their simple act of hospitality would be recorded in the sacred Scriptures—and that millions of eyes would read of—and millions of minds would think upon this kind act of theirs on behalf of this shipwrecked company! They really entertained an angel unawares, and they had many blessings in consequence, for we find that Paul afterwards healed the father of the chief of the island and others of the inhabitants who were suffering from various diseases. We can never tell how God may make return to us for acts of kindness which we may do to others, but just as it is said that curses, like chickens, come home to roost, and that he who throws a stone into the air will find it fall on his own head, so do good actions—deeds of kindness and charity—come back to us in some shape or other, even as Christ said to His disciples, "Give, and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you mete withal it shall be measured to you again." It is the best way to bless ourselves to be earnest in blessing others! These hospitable people were bringing down upon the island of Malta untold benedictions while they were, in their simple kindness, entertaining shipwrecked mariners! At this season of the year, in the midst of such a city as this, abounding as it does with the poor and needy, there are abundant opportunities of using "the mammon of unrighteousness" well by relieving their needs—and what you possess would be made all the sweeter to yourselves through your ministering to others in their necessities. I am not, however, going to speak upon that matter just now—I intend to use the text in this manner. First, I am afraid *we are very apt to grow spiritually cold* and, therefore, next, the text suggests that *we should be diligent in using means for getting spiritual warmth.* And thirdly, as there are a good many in this world who are cold, as Paul and his companions were when they came shivering from the deep, *it should be our constant duty to seek to kindle a fire* and to receive them, every one, because of the cold.

I. First, then, I am afraid that WE OURSELVES ARE VERY APT TO BE COLD SPIRITUALLY.

First, because *we are ourselves cold subjects*—hot enough, perhaps, in temper, earnest enough in pursuit of business, fast enough where pleasure may draw us, but ah—how chilly, how wintry when we have to do with the things of God! I know that at one time we burned and flamed with sacred ardor, but we look back upon that period with the deepest regret that it should have gone by so long ago. Even now, when we are moved by an earnest discourse, or are gathered with faithful brothers and sisters, we begin to glow again, but how easy it is for us to get back to the icy state and to have our soul frozen so that it does not flow as freely as it should! Do you not find, brothers and sisters, that you never need make any effort to be dull in religious matters, but that the effort has to be made the other way—that you have to make an effort and need God's grace to give you strength to make it towards holiness, towards fervency, towards enthusiasm? By nature, we are as hard, cold and dead as stones—and seem as if we never could be warm! And we never are unless God turns the heart of stone into a heart of flesh. And even then it often seems to grow hard and chill again, so that we need fresh grace to warm our heart and to keep it beating at anything like the pace of life. I know not how it may be with you, dear friends. Perhaps you have been so lifted up by divine grace that you have never wearied in the heavenly race. If so, you are very happy and privileged individuals! But there are some of us who, although we have not been allowed to actually stand still, have found our onward progress to be a hard climb up the Hill Difficulty because we are so lumpish and heavy. Often have we had to cry with Dr. Watts—

"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
With all Your quickening powers,
Kindle a flame of sacred love
In these cold hearts of ours!
Dear Lord! And shall we always be
At this poor dying rate?
Our love so faint, so cold to Thee,
And Yours to us so great?"

We are indeed cold subjects. Just compare your state of heart, for a while, with the ardor of apostles, confessors and martyrs who lived and died for Jesus. Compare, or rather, contrast yourselves with some other children of God whom you have known, whose fervent prayers put you to shame and whose many acts of self-denial, and whose whole persevering service now rise before you to make you blush. Above all, contrast yourselves with your dear Lord and Savior. He was a veritable flame of fire, but what are you? Alas! Alas, what am I? Cold, cold, cold! Even His great love scarcely warms us to anything like true Christian affection! We can think of hell with its unutterable horrors and yet be scarcely moved! We can think of heaven with its indescribable glories and yet be scarcely affected. We can turn to You, O You blessed Christ of Calvary, and look upon Your ghastly wounds, yet is our soul scarcely made to melt! It is

sad that it should be so, but mournfully true is it that we are cold by nature.

But then, besides that, *we live in a cold country*. Who that has to move about in this world does not know that this is true? Not only are we so chilly by nature that even when we live in the torrid zone of revival, we can scarcely keep ourselves warm, but, alas, we are often compelled to be where everything is like the Arctic regions! You who have to spend most of your time in business, do you meet with many in the market or on the Exchange who help you to make progress in the divine life? You who have to go to work with other workmen, do you meet with many who toil for their bread who speak earnest words for Jesus? I ask you who live as servants in the house, or you whose occupation calls you abroad, do you meet with many who aid you spiritually? Have you found this world helps you join to God? In the olden time, it was a world lying in the wicked one and God's people were strangers and foreigners here—and I fear it is still so. Our very employments, as they engross our attention, take our thoughts away from higher things and so tend to chill us. How often does it happen that the possession of riches brings coldness to the heart and, on the other hand, if we grow poor, chill penury represses the genial currents of the soul and prevents them from flowing freely, as they ought to do. There is scarcely any position in life that can be said to minister to growth in grace. How few heads encircled by a crown have ever been dedicated to God and how seldom have the beggar's rags covered the body of a truly gracious man! Everywhere it is a cold world in which we live—and we are cold subjects in a cold world.

But then, besides that, *there are very cold seasons that come upon us*. There are times when everything seems chillier than usual. The church at one time seems to be all in earnest—her prayer meetings are crowded and fervent, her ministry seems full of life, zeal and enthusiasm. The members seem to walk together in holy unity and love seeking what shall bring most glory to God. But the church has her winters as well as her summers—after her revivals there will come years of dearth—seven years of famine after seven years of plenty! And the canker worm will come and eat up the fruit of the land—and that by a long space together! When the church as a whole is cold, it is not easy for us as individuals to be warm. I have often heard members of this church say, when they have gone away to join other congregations, that they have felt as if they had suddenly dropped out of a conservatory into an ice well. I can easily gauge the temperature of a congregation in any place where I go to preach. I can soon see that some are warm and hearty and ready to receive the truth—while it is heavy work to preach to others because they evidently either do not understand or do not appreciate the gospel—or if they do appreciate it, they have a peculiar way of preventing the preacher from seeing that they have any enjoyment of the Word of God that he has spoken. There are churches which always seem to be very cold and there are other churches that once glowed with summer heat that have now come into their wintry season.

Let me add that there are not only these cold seasons in the church as a whole, but *we ourselves have our cold seasons*. I suppose we are very much like one another, but sometimes, for some reason we scarcely know why, we are full of fervor and ardor. We are not only in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, but we are also in the Spirit all the days of the week! The candle of the Lord shines about our path. We walk in the light as God is in the light and we have fellowship with Him—and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. The Spirit of God is with us and the time of the singing of birds has come to us! At other times the desire to pray is within us, but we cannot pray. Gloomy doubts arise, or worrying cares come crowding in upon us, or else a dreadful indifference which we cannot shake off steals over us like the sleepy fits which come on people when they need to be active, but their eyelids are so heavy that they cannot keep from sleep. This will happen again and again as we struggle against it and seek by any means and every means to keep ourselves spiritually warm. I suppose the experience of most of God's people will verify this.

Thus I have tried to show you that we are cold by nature, we live in a cold country and there are cold seasons with us all.

And then I may add that *there are some persons who live in very cold corners*. There are some who not only live in a country that is cold, but they are in the coldest part of that country. There may be a cold room that is chillier than any other in the house and some of my friends seem to have lived in that particularly cold room. Good people as they are, if they speak to you, it is very frosty talk. They never greet you with that genial smile that is born of sunshine. They seem almost to prefer to have the temperature of winter in their souls. It is constitutional with them and they communicate that cold to those with whom they come in contact. I always like a room which has a sunny aspect, but I know some people who prefer a room that is darkened by a high brick wall. If they could have a room near the Old Bailey, with a clear view of the gallows, that is the kind of prospect that would please them! They like to think of the corruptions of their own heart and of the depravity that rages within—and no preaching will suit them unless it makes them thoroughly melancholy—and if it makes them unutterably wretched, they consider that the preacher is a deeply experienced man of God sent to instruct them! I shall not quarrel with these brothers and sisters—and if they prefer the room with the dark or wintry aspect, they may have it, as far as I am concerned. I shall be quite content to take the room with the sunnier aspect and to look out on green fields, waving trees, shining water—and to see the goodness, loving kindness and tenderness of the Almighty both in nature and grace.

But, besides the fact that some people are in these cold corners constitutionally, others seem to have found their way there in the order of God's providence. A wife who has become converted has a husband who has no desire towards the things of God and, therefore, opposes and vexes her continually. A Christian is living with another Christian of totally opposite views and doctrines—they ought to have fellowship with one an-

other, but they do not—and differences constantly come up. Then there is a Christian whose unhappy lot it is to live with persons who have no sympathy whatever with true religion. Another Christian man is thrown, not by his own choice, but unavoidably amongst those who continually ridicule him, or he is compelled to dwell with fellow Christians who are all of the cold school and who freeze him. Or what is perhaps quite as bad, a Christian is compelled to live where he has no one to assist him with a word of sympathy, none with whom he can take sweet counsel and walk to the house of God in company. These are some of those who live in an especially cold corner. And if you are among them, I would say to you that if you cannot get out of that cold corner, you must, above all others kindle a fire because of the present cold! Above all others you must give heed to what I shall have to say to you directly about maintaining the warmth of the heart. As you have the severer trial, you must be the more earnest in overcoming it!

II. I will say no more about the cold lest you begin to shiver while I am speaking of it, but we will now come to THE KINDLING OF THE FIRE. Thank God He does not leave us without some means of becoming spiritually warmer! There is an abundance of fuel to overcome the cold. The Christian being subject to coldness of heart, God has provided him with the means of kindling a spiritual fire that may make him warm and keep him warm.

The first great fire is *the Word of God*. "Is not My word like a fire, says the Lord?" It is so in many ways, but especially because it has such a warming influence. When we are spiritually cold and we go to hear the word preached, how it warms our hearts! Brothers and sisters, have you not often proved it to be so? You have been trembling, downcast and almost distracted—and you have said, "I will go and inquire at the hand of the Lord," and God has given you a message that has so changed your feelings that you have gone out with unspeakable joy, blessing God that your feet have trodden that floor which has become sacred to you through the visitation of God's Spirit! It is not often that I can hear a sermon, but when I do, I have sometimes had seasons of very gracious refreshing to my soul. I remember one Sabbath morning listening to a man who was by no means literate. And as I listened, I felt the tears streaming down my cheeks as I realized afresh how precious Christ was to me! And I envied the good people who could hear the gospel preached Sabbath by Sabbath and who had not to stand up and deliver it to others—and go without spiritual food themselves. I am sure you who love the Lord will bear witness that when Christ is preached, your heart is always warmed. The preacher may have spoken very simply and not have tried to display any of the graces of oratory, yet the sermon satisfied your soul because Christ was in it! But if there is no Christ in it, you go down the aisles saying, like Mary Magdalene, "They have taken away my Lord." It is Jesus Christ that you need and when you get the truth about Him, and about the Father, and about the Spirit—when you get the doctrine of electing love, of God's faithfulness, of God's sovereignty, of God's immu-

tability and all those precious things of the covenant of grace, you feel somewhat as the two disciples did when, on the way to Emmaus, Jesus Himself talked with them and their hearts burned within them!

Is it not very much the same also in reading the Word of God? I can speak more experimentally upon this than upon hearing the word preached. Oh, to get one verse or perhaps only a few words in it—into your mouth and keep it there and roll it under your tongue as a sweet morsel! At first it tastes like wafers made with honey, and as you press it between the lips of meditation, and turn it over and over on the palate of mental discernment, at last you say, "How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" So the Word of God begins to warm your heart. You asked if there was any love there, and now it begins to flame out towards God! You thought the Spirit of adoption was gone from you, but now you say, "Abba, Father," with no faltering tongue! Your faith, which seemed to be in a swoon, suddenly revives and gains new vigor. Ah, brothers and sisters read the Scriptures diligently when you are passing through these cold seasons! Keep close to the fire of the precious promises and the other divine messages and you will not be frostbitten. That is one fire.

There is another fire which is equally efficacious. If you would be warmed when your soul is cold, *take yourself to prayer*. Pray! Pray! Pray! Some have said that it is good only to pray when you feel moved to pray, but I would rather say that you should pray *to feel moved to pray*. When you feel that you cannot pray is the very time when you should pray, for when you *can* pray there may be less need for prayer than when you feel that you cannot pray! Instead of its being wisdom to forsake the mercy seat, because you feel dead and cold, it is the most flagrant folly! A man might say to me, "If I put my hand near the fire when it is very cold, it pains my hand." No doubt it does, because the cold is in it! But you need to bear that pain in order to get the cold out. So, when we try to pray when we feel dead and cold, the very trying to pray makes us feel an inward pain—but we must try—and keep on trying. Prayer is our very life and is essential to our health and our growth. As Montgomery's well known hymn reminds us, it is the Christian's—

"Watchword at the gates of death—
He enters heaven with prayer."

If your heart is cold, multiply your seasons for prayer! Try praying with somebody else. Ask some Christian brother to come to your room and pray with you. And you, my dear sister, call in some Christian woman whom you know, and say to her, "Come, dear sister, and let us pray together." Much blessing often comes through two or more Christians joining their supplications in private. But if that does not help you, I would urge you to get to the meeting where many gather together to pray. If you can do so, come to the prayer meeting and see if your heart does not burn within you there. I cannot promise that it will certainly be so, for some of our brethren's prayers are not always fervent, but when the meeting is as it should be, we help one another to get warm and to stay warm! I cannot tell you how much I owe to the Monday evening prayer

meetings and the other prayer meetings that are held so frequently in connection with our work here. I do hope that we shall never have them less frequently, for those prayer meetings have been the strength of this pulpit. The pillars on which our ministry rests are, under God, the prayers of our people! If you want to be warm spiritually, you must keep up the spirit of prayer!

Next, I would say that in addition to hearing and reading the word, and praying fervently, *it will often tend to warm us to be much in meditation*. Having read the Scriptures, keep them in memory. Turn them over and over in your minds and let your meditation grow beyond meditation into fellowship and communion with Christ. Sit down and think of Him and of His great love to you. Try to picture to yourself Gethsemane and Golgotha. Turnover in your mind the all-important doctrine of the atonement, and meditate upon its wonderful efficacy. Think of Christ's prevailing intercession for His people. Think of His second advent. If nothing else will warm a man's heart, surely the love of Christ will do it. There is such warmth of love in the heart of Christ that it makes even the dead to live! Meditate perpetually upon Him and you shall not long have to complain that you are spiritually cold!

I would also strongly recommend anyone who feels a chill in his heart to *seek much fellowship with his fellow Christians*. I believe, under God, there is scarcely any greater blessing to a Christian than to have those to speak with who can help him by telling him their experience. If two friends are walking together and one of them stumbles, the other can help to hold him up. I recommend you young Christians, especially, to seek suitable godly companions. We are companionable by nature and we are too apt to get the wrong kind of associates. But if we have Christian companions, true helpers in the Lord, we shall find the way to heaven much smoother! Be as much as you can with the saints of God. I have sometimes spent an hour with a congenial spirit, a man whose heart has been warm with love to his Master, and when he has gone I have felt that I could bless God for having had the privilege of talking with him, yet that very man has said that he thanked God for that hour because of the good he had got from me—while it seemed to me as if I had got all the good and had given nothing in return.

If all this should not sufficiently warm you, I would strongly recommend one fire which, under the blessing of God's Spirit, is sure to warm a Christian. And that is, *kindle the flame of earnest service for God and your fellow creatures*. You may rest assured that the best way of getting good is by doing good. I mean, of course, for the man who is saved, because he is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Job's captivity was turned when he prayed for his friends, but not till then. Christ's disciples had all their baskets empty, but there was a boy in the crowd who had a few loaves and fishes. I have no doubt that the disciples, as well as the people were hungry, but they had nothing to eat except through feeding the multitude with the loaves and fishes that their Master had blessed. When the people were fed, the disciples also were fed—and when you are

awake to the necessities of others and begin to help them; you will find God blessing you. I believe that many professing Christians are cold and uncomfortable because they are doing nothing for their Lord. But if they actively served Him, their blood would begin to circulate spiritually and it would be well with them. You know what the farmer in the country says to his boys, "You say that you can't warm yourselves by the fire? Well, then, just go out into the barn and do something that needs to be done, or go and attend to the horses in the stable." And very soon the boys feel a good deal warmer and it is only because they have had something to do! And Christian people who want the minister to preach to them this doctrine and the other, if they had something to do for Christ, would be all the better for it. Let the preacher take care to keep up a good fire and put on plenty of the coals of sound doctrine—but that alone will not warm the people! But the moment they begin to seek to do good to others, they will have kindled a fire which will warm themselves as well as others!

III. Our third point is to be that like these barbarous people, we should not simply think of ourselves in the cold, but SEEK TO KINDLE A FIRE FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS, because of the present cold.

It is a very cold period, spiritually, just now. The professing church seems to be frozen so hard that those fine skaters of modern growth have a fine sheet of ice on which to perform their wonderful evolutions. If God would send us a gracious thaw, they would soon disappear! When the church is filled with the Spirit, her members do not find any room for these modern foolish notions about high culture which usually spring from ignorance of that which is really worth knowing. If God will give us back a really living church, we shall soon find that these evils have vanished. Just as the iron gets bright when it gets hot, so let the Church of Christ get red hot and it will soon throw off all this rubbish!

What is the first thing towards warming people at the fire? The first thing is that *we must get a flame.* And though the Indians are said to make a flame by rubbing two pieces of wood together, I do not think that you and I will ever get it in that way. There is no way for us to get a revival fire but from God, Himself. If anybody can "get up a revival," as it has been said that they do, in any other way, it is not worth having! The only kind of revival that is worth having is that which has come down from God, not that which has been got up by men. The fire which fell upon Elijah's sacrifice on Carmel was the fire of the Lord which fell from heaven and which "consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench." We need that kind of fire—and if we have only two or three praying people who feel that they would die of a broken heart if the Church of Christ should continue in the condition in which she now is, we shall soon see a different state of things! The heart of God is still moved by the prayers of His people! His hand is still stretched out in blessing in answer to the cries of His children! The kindling of the fire of revival must be from a live coal from off the heavenly altar!

After you get a flame, you must remember that *all fires begin with little*. At first you have only a little spark feebly glowing and you might put that spark out if you tried to make it into a big fire all at once. You must let it burn a little among the shavings and chips and wood—and then drop your coal on deftly, cunningly, tenderly—as if you loved the little fire too much to risk putting it out by putting on too much fuel at once. We must not despise the day of small things! We must give ourselves up to the full belief that God means us to do great things by doing them a little at a time. It is because we despise little things that we do not prosper as we might. You may have heard the story of a little child who was seen outside a door one day. A man had shot down a whole load of coals and she was with a little fire pan taking some of them into the house. Someone said to the child, "Do you expect to get in all that load of coal?" "Yes," replied she, "if I keep on long enough." And there are many other great tasks that can be accomplished little by little. If we are prayerfully dependent upon God, great things can be done by any one of us! But let no one say, "I am going to do great things. I mean to have a glorious revival. There will be a great stir." I do not think there will be anything of the sort if it depends upon what *you* are going to do! I have more faith in good men speaking to their children about their souls and in godly women praying for their little ones—and in Sunday school teachers praying and laboring for the conversion of their scholars and in humble, consecrated men talking about Christ to scores, or hundreds, or thousands of people! That is how God usually sends revivals of religion—and the fire will soon spread when it begins to burn in that fashion! And then there is one thing that should always be done. Have you never seen your servants—or you, good housewives, have you never done it yourselves—have you never knelt down in front of the fire when it has been nearly out and gently blown upon it? That is a fine way of getting a spark to grow into a fire. And in a Christian Church, those who often go down on their knees in prayer will soon blow the spark into living flame! Just what Mary does with the kitchen or parlor fire is what you must do in order to get the spiritual fire needed because of the present cold. On your knees you must fan it with your very life's breath—and then it will burn!

But when it does burn, *there must be fresh fuel for it.* Paul knew this and, therefore, he set to work picking up sticks. When we once get God's revival fire to warm this cold world, the church must find suitable fuel to feed it. We must get some from this brother and some from another brother, and from our good sisters, too, and we ourselves must be the glowing coals. And if we can be kept close together and be fanned by the spirit of unity and by the breath of the Holy Spirit, there will soon be a blessed furnace heat that shall warm this cold earth—

"Spirit divine, attend our prayers,
Make a lost world Your home.
Descend with all Your gracious powers
Oh come, great Spirit, come!
Come as the fire and purge our hearts
Like sacrificial flame—

Let our whole soul an offering be
To our Redeemer's name."

And perhaps while we are trying to gather all the fuel that we can, *we may pick up a viper in the process*. It was so in Paul's case and I should not wonder if it is so in ours. I have heard this fault found with revivals, that certain persons had been added to the church, who never ought to have been admitted. Very likely some people found fault with that Malta fire when, in the process of picking up sticks to feed it, a viper fastened on Paul's hand. I have noticed that whenever there is a revival in the church, there is almost certain to be a hypocrite hidden away among the converts. If you have a garden, you must have noticed that the snails come out after rain—and after a revival, slimy hypocrites are pretty sure to appear—but what if they do? The Lord Jesus Christ did not leave off preaching because He knew that there was a Judas among His apostles! And if we should have a Judas in our ranks, should that make us give up our work for Christ? No! But if there are in our midst some people who are good for nothing, let us try all the more to find out those who will be good for something. And if, in the course of the Lord's work, there should be unworthy persons added to the church, so much the greater should be our anxiety that worthy persons should be added, too, to counterbalance the mischief that the others may produce!

Oh, that we might have just now the gracious assurance sent from God that we are to have a still greater revival than any that we have ever yet experienced! As a church we have lived in revivals for nearly 20 years—there has never been a time, that I can remember, when there have not been souls converted in our midst. I do not know that there has ever been a Sabbath without a conversion in this place. I do not think there has been a sermon without a conversion. We cannot speak positively about every one of them, but we can say to our certain knowledge of many of them—and we have every reason to believe that it was the same concerning all the rest—that the message has had upon it the blessing of God. To Him be praise and to Him let us cry that everywhere that great prayer may be answered, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

Thus have I used a very simple incident to set forth very important truths of God. But, alas, there are some in this place to whom this subject may have seemed very uninteresting, for they are not themselves saved—they are not themselves converted. I would not have them go out of this building without reminding them that the gospel is to be preached to every creature in the entire world and, therefore, it is to be preached to them! And this is the gospel—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." You will observe that I have not left out half of it. It is more than I dare to do to play with Christ's gospel, or to clip one of its wings. Christ's own words are, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." To believe is simply to trust Christ. To be baptized is to be immersed in water upon profession of your faith in Jesus Christ. May God grant to all of you grace, first to believe in His Son, Jesus Christ, and then to confess that faith in His own appointed

way, by being baptized in His name, and to Him be all the glory forever and ever. Amen.

[Mr. Spurgeon's Exposition of Acts 28 was too long for insertion here. It must be used with a shorter sermon. The Exposition here given belongs to Sermon #3127, Volume 55—A PROMISE AND A PRECEDENT——Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *JOHN 16:1-14.*

Verses 1-3. *These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yes, the time comes that whoever kills you will think that he does God service. And these things will they do unto you because they have not known the Father or Me.* True followers of Christ must not reckon upon having the world's commendation. At first the Jews persecuted the Christians. Then the Romans took up the cruel work and others have continued it, in some form or other, even to this day, for the persecution of the saints has not yet ceased. There are many who still have hard times and have to endure trials of cruel mocking for Christ's sake. If you resolve to follow Christ, men will be sure to call you old fashioned, ridiculous, Puritan and I know not what besides—yet what does it matter to you if they do? Your Master foretold that it would be so.

4. *But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning because I was with you.* Christ did not deceive His disciples concerning the treatment that would be meted out to them. He did not promise that the road to heaven would be an easy path, or flatter His followers with the notion that the cross which they had to carry after Him had no weight in it. "These things have I told you, that when the time shall come, you may remember that I told you of them."

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.* They were thinking more of their loss by His going away from them than of His gain in going back to His Father. If they had thought of the glory into which He was so soon to enter, they would have ceased to sorrow and would have rejoiced with exceeding joy—but they seem to have loved themselves more than they loved their Lord—therefore His absence, which ought to have given them many reasons for rejoicing, became to them a cause for grief.

7. *Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away.* "It is not merely for My own glory that I am going away, but My absence from you will be better for you than My continued bodily presence with you could possibly be."

7. *For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.* "And He will be of more service to you than I could be even if I were to remain with you." The presence of the Spirit of

God in the church is better for the present dispensation than even the bodily presence of Christ would be!

8-12. *And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now.* "You have not yet received the Spirit of God as you shall do after My departure—then your capacities shall be enlarged so that you shall be able to understand deep truths of God which are altogether beyond your comprehension at present."

13. *Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come.* [See Sermon #50, Volume 1—THE HOLY SPIRIT—THE GREAT TEACHER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Is not that wonderful? As Jesus Christ said that He did not bear witness to Himself, but spoke the words which His Father had given Him, so the Spirit of God does not speak of Himself, but He bears witness to the truth which Christ has revealed, and also makes known "things to come." But He will never reveal anything contrary to that which Christ has revealed in His word. That which is to be revealed is that truth which was from the beginning. As we are taught it by the divine Spirit, it becomes fresh truth to us, though it was always in Christ's eternal mind.

14. *He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you.* Oh, that this blessed Spirit may continually show the things of Christ to us!

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SOUL SATISFACTION
NO. 3137

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 25, 1909,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Say unto my soul, I am your salvation."
Psalm 35:3.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is Sermon #384, Volume 7—
FULL ASSURANCE—
Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THIS text may very properly be understood as a request that God would teach the soul to rest upon Him in temporal difficulties, straits and distresses. We are all apt to try to work out our own deliverance. We would go back to Egypt, or we would climb the rock on our right hand, or we would, if it were possible, force a passage on the left, but when the Red Sea rolls in front of us, when Pharaoh is behind and there are frowning rocks on the right hand and on the left, this most delightful truth of God is learned—and probably it is the only occasion when we can learn it—God is our salvation! If you are in trouble, Christian, ask who brought you there, for He shall bring you out again. If you are sorely vexed and deeply grieved, why should you look to a human arm for succor, or why should you turn your eyes to the horses and to the chariots of Pharaoh? Lift up your eyes to the hills, from where your help came, and in the solemn silence of your soul hear the soft and cheering word, "I am your salvation; I have been with you in six troubles, and no evil has touched you; now I have brought you into another trouble, but I will deliver you out of them all; call upon ME in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you." O believer, the strongest sinew in an arm of flesh will crack and the strongest band of human strength will give way! But trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength! Learn to stand still and to see the salvation of God, as He says to you, "I the omnipotent, I the omnipresent, I who have servants everywhere will work your rescue, for I am your salvation."

It is also very necessary for us to learn this verse in its teaching *as to soul matters*, for no man is saved, or can be saved, unless he knows that God is his salvation. The greatest enemy to human souls—I think I am not wrong in saying this—is the self-righteous spirit which makes men look to themselves for salvation—

"From the cross uplifted high,
Where the Savior deigns to die"—

there comes a voice, as soft as it is potent, "I am your salvation." But the sinner stops his ears and listens, perhaps, to the enchantments of Rome, or to the mutterings of some false priest, or to the equal lying of his own

heart while these say, "We are your salvation." We must get away, brothers and sisters, from every form of confidence which would take us from the finished work of Jesus Christ! From the beginning to the end of the entire matter, the great "I AM," comprehends our whole salvation! Jesus, the "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," was, nevertheless, JEHOVAH, the "I AM," and as the "I AM," He speaks tonight to every soul that desires to know the way of salvation and He says, "I am your salvation."

Sinner, there is no hope for you anywhere else! "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid." Your hopes, poor sinner, shall be baseless—they shall be as the fabric of a dream. Rest not in them, but forsake them, pitying your own folly for having ever trusted in them. Jesus bids you renounce them now. Flee away from everything which has up to now yielded you a gleam of comfort, or a ray of joy, to the wounds of Him who suffered in the sinner's place, and to the cross of Him who was made a curse for us that we might be made a blessing! "I am your salvation." You are to trust *now*. Are you saying, "How can I be saved?" Jesus answers, "I *am* your salvation." Not "I *will be*," but "I *am*." *Present* salvation is stored up in Christ—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One!
There is life at this moment for you."

"But," you say, "what am I to do? What am I to feel? What am I to be?" The answer is—

"Nothing, either great or small,
Nothing, sinner, no!
Jesus did it, did it all,
Long, long ago!"

"Yes, but surely there is something needed to fit me for Him?" No, come just as you are. He does not say, "I will be your salvation when you have done this and that, so as to fit yourself for Me." No, but He says, "I *am* your salvation." If you do but trust Him sincerely and with your whole heart—He this moment forgives you, He this moment takes you into the family of grace, regenerates you and makes you "a new creature" in Himself! May God grant that we may all spiritually learn this doctrine, "I am *your* salvation."

Not that I intend just now to use the text in this sense alone, though I think it is highly proper both in temporal and in spiritual dilemmas to feel that God is our salvation. Rather let me show you how it embodies a prayer of the psalmist for the full assurance of faith. He is asking that, having believed in God, he may have a token for good, that he may be able to—

"Read his title clear
To mansions in the skies."

He wants to hear a still, small voice within him saying, "I am *your* salvation."

I shall try, first of all, *to describe the assurance intended in the text.* Secondly, *to show its blessedness.* And thirdly, *to set forth the way of reaching it.*"

I. First, let me DESCRIBE THE ASSURANCE INTENDED IN THE TEXT.

"Say unto my soul, I am your salvation." The assurance which the psalmist seeks in this prayer is *one concerning a very solemn business*. People like to be sure about purchasing their estates. There is a deal of searching every time the land is bought, in order to see that the title is good, valid and indefeasible. Some persons are very particular about their bodily health and they occasionally like to have an assurance from the physician that every organ is in a sound condition. But in this psalm David is perplexed, neither about his estate, though that was a kingdom, nor about his health, though that was more than a fortune to him—he is concerned only about his soul! O my brothers and sisters, if we ought to be sure anywhere, it is here! Would that we were half as diligent to make our "calling and election sure" as some are to make secure their bonds, mortgages and title deeds! Not to be sure of heaven? What a wretched state to be in! To have a question about my soul's eternal welfare—a dying mortal, whose breath may depart any second in the hour—oh, this is misery indeed! I had better know my true state. If it is bad, it will be well for me to know the worst of it while there is time, so that it may yet be mended. And if it is good, it will be a sweet thing for me to know that it is certainly so and then my "peace shall be like a river," and my joy shall flow on in perpetual waves of freshness! O my dear hearers make sure work for eternity! If you must trifle anywhere, never trifle here! This anchor, this anchor, this safeguard of the soul—see that you have a good cable to this! Let everything else go and now that the dread storm is coming on, see that the anchor holds within the veil—and see, also, that it is God's anchor of faith, worked in you by God the Holy Spirit! Breathe, I pray you, at the very outset of this address, the prayer, "Say unto my soul, I am your salvation."

And you will notice, as it is about a very solemn business, so, also, *it is an appeal to one who knows about it and who can speak on it with authority*. Brothers and sisters, if you should come to a minister, whoever he may be, and say to him, "Sir, I will tell you my evidence. I will relate my experience—tell me, are these the marks of a child of God?" You may deceive him in your statements and he himself may mislead you in his judgment. What would be the worth of the opinions of all the men in the world as to the state of a soul before God? Certainly it would be very suspicious and would give much cause for fear if God's people were afraid of me, for I should begin to be afraid of myself! But still, though they have accepted me, let me not therefore take it for granted that *God* has done so! I may stand well with His church. I may be beloved by His servants, but for all that He may know that I am none of His! I may be rather more thickly coated with gilt than some others and yet I may not be real gold. I may be better made and varnished than some and, yes, I may be but an imitation and not the true wood! But it looks well, my dear hearers, when you dare to come before God and have an investigation of your case. When a man is willing to have the title deeds

of his estate examined in any court in the world, I should think that those deeds were thoroughly sound. When you can say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts," or can even pray, as this text does, "Say unto my soul, I am your salvation," then there is hope for you!

But observe that *the evidence the psalmist wants is personal assurance*—"Say unto *my* soul, I am your salvation." How many times have we to cry out against that bad habit of generalizing in religion! Beloved, let us repeat what we have said a thousand times before, that national religion is altogether a dream! That even the idea of family religion, excellent as it is, is yet often but a mere idea. The only godliness worth having is personal godliness and the only religion which will really effect salvation is that which is vital and personal to the individual. "You must be born again." Now there is no way of being born again by proxy. The Church of England may invent its "sponsors" at will, but God has nothing to do with such things! I pray you, never let the soul damning lie of another man standing for you be tolerated in your soul for a single second! Another man cannot promise anything *for you*, or, if he should promise it, he would not be able to accomplish what he had promised. These works must be worked in you personally by God the Holy Spirit, Himself, or else you can never be saved. I love you to pray for your children. I am glad, poor woman, that you are anxious for your husband. It is a good thing that you, husband, should pray for your wife, but oh, remember, the salvation of another will be but poor comfort to you if you, yourself, should be cast into the everlasting burnings! Let your prayer be first for yourselves! Let that be the leading point and then you will breathe the prayer more hopefully for others. "Say unto *my* soul, I am your salvation. I hear that showers of mercy are dropping all around, let them drop also upon me. I hear that conversions are numerous, oh, if I am not converted, convert me! I know that You do great wonders, Lord—let me be a monument of Your power to save." It is personal assurance that the psalmist needs!

Observe, also, for it lies on the surface of the text, that *it is an assurance sent, not to the ear, but to the heart.* "Say unto my *soul*, I am your salvation." Now God does speak to us through our ears. When the word is read or preached, we often get a blessing through hearing it. But if the words you hear merely come to the ear, it involves responsibility without insuring a blessing. Certain persons *dream* that God is their salvation! Go to bed and dream again, and dream fifty times, and when you have dreamed the same thing fifty times, there can and will be nothing but dreaming in it, after all! You who build on dreams had better mind what you are doing!

"Well," says another, "but I heard a voice in the air." Nonsense! "But I did," you say. Superstition! "But I am sure I did." Well, what does it matter? I care not where the voice came from if you heard it only with your outward ears. It is as likely to have been the devil that spoke as anybody else, if, indeed, it was anybody at all! You are as likely to deceive yourself as anything in the world. The prayer of the text, is not, "Say to

my ears," but, "Say unto *my soul*, I am your salvation." Do you understand what soul talking is? Oh, dear, dear—the most of people do not understand anything that has to do with the spirit world—there are materialists in Christianity as well as in other matters. They suppose that to worship God means to sing in a certain way, to bend the knees and to say certain words. Why, you may do all that and yet there may not be a fraction of worship in it! And, on the other hand, you may worship God without any of it. A man may sing God's praises without ever opening his mouth! A man may pray unto God and yet never say a word, for it is soul singing and soul praying that God accepts! And when God speaks back again to the soul that has learned to talk with Him, He does not speak lip language, tongue language, or ear language, but *soul* language! I have already said that this soul language sometimes takes the body of preaching, or of the Word of God and so becomes, as it were, a thing to appeal to the ears, but even then the letter kills—it is only the Spirit that makes alive. It is God's soul talking to man's soul that is needed here. And mark you, dear friend, if ever God speaks to your soul, you will not have to ask who it is that speaks, for if ever the eternal God comes into direct contact with the human heart, there is no making a mistake! Do you understand this? Some of you think I am fanatical. I would to God you were all as fanatical! May you have God talking with your soul and may the Holy Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you are born of God! Pray the prayer and may God hear it now, "Say unto my soul, I am your salvation."

Then I want you to also notice that *the prayer here offered is a present one*. It means, "Say *now* unto my soul, I am your salvation." It is not, "Do it by and by," but, "now, Lord, now!" Perhaps some of you have heard God's voice in years gone by, but now you have got into Doubting Castle. Well, you may pray this prayer right now, while you are sitting in the pew, and though none shall hear it but yourself, yet God's Spirit shall talk to you and you shall hear Him say, "I am your salvation," and then your heart shall sing, "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine!" Pray the prayer now and it need not take a moment to be answered, for, while you are yet speaking it, you shall feel it. You will be bowed down under a sense of gratitude and yet you will be lifted up with a "joy unspeakable and full of glory," when you can sing—

"While Jesus whispers I am His,
And my beloved's mine."

Come, believers, let us all pray this prayer, whether we have heard this voice before or not! O my God make us true believers and may we all pray it now, "Say unto my soul, I am your salvation." The preacher often needs to use this prayer himself. And he has no doubt that many of his brothers and sisters have been constrained to use just such a cry. Well, let it go up again tonight—"O God, give us back the love of our espousals, our first faith, our early joy and speak with Your own voice to our troubled hearts, and say to our souls, 'I am your salvation.'"

II. And now shall we turn, very briefly, indeed, to the second point? It was to be THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE ASSURANCE ASKED FOR.

I do not think I shall preach on that at all, but leave you to find it out for yourselves. You who know it, know that I cannot describe it, for you cannot describe it yourselves. And you who do not know it would not understand it if I told you what it is. You will understand as much as this—that if you were able to feel tonight that God Himself had said to your soul, "I am your salvation," you would feel infinitely more happy than you do now. Some of you are very cheerful, but sometimes you do get troubled and cast down. You apparently have, I know, a great deal of hilarity and gleefulness about you, but at night, or in the early morning, or when you have to go to a funeral, you do not feel quite as you would like to feel. There is an aching void somewhere or other and you have not found out that which is to fill it yet. Now, if God, Himself, should say to you, "I am your salvation," would not that fill it? Oh, what a different life you would then lead! How happy you would be and, being saved, how holy you would try to be! And, being holy, how near to God you would try to live! "If I were but saved," says one, "then would I, indeed, praise the Lord as long as I had any being." Well, poor soul, I pray that this may be your case—but the blessedness of it you must taste to know. "O *taste* and see that the Lord is good!" There is no other way of understanding it than this.

I think I told you, once, the little story of the boy at the mission station who had received a piece of sugar from a missionary. When he went home he told his father that he had had something so sweet. The father asked if it were as sweet as such and such a fruit? Oh, sweeter than that! Was it as sweet as such another? Yes, much sweeter than that, and when the boy could not make his father understand how sweet it was, he ran down to the station and said, "Oh, sir, would you give me another piece of that sweet stuff? Father wants to understand how sweet it is and I want to make him understand it, but I can't tell him." So he got another piece of sugar and back he went to his father with it. "Here, Father, now you will understand how sweet it is." A very good illustration is this of the text I just quoted, "O taste and see that the Lord is good!" Taste for yourselves—and then you shall know for yourselves.

III. Now let us go to the third point without delay. HOW ARE WE TO GET THIS ASSURANCE? HOW SHALL THE BELIEVER KNOW THAT HE IS SAVED?

The way to assurance is *through the door of simple faith*. The gospel is, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." To believe is to trust Christ. Now, if I know that I trust Christ and that I have, in obedience to His command, been baptized, then God says I shall be saved and is not that enough for me? Ought it not to be, at any rate? If God says it, it must be true! I believe His book to be inspired and He has put it thus, "He that believes on Him is not condemned." Well, if I do believe on Him, then I am not condemned. Conscience says, "You are a long way off being perfect." I know that. Ah, conscience! I know it to my shame and to my sorrow, but the Word of God says, "He that believes on Him is not

condemned." I do believe on Him and I am not condemned, let conscience say what it likes! "Well, but" the devil says, "how can this be true?" That is neither my business nor yours, Satan! God says it is so and therefore it is so. That is enough for me! We take men's word, why should we not take God's word? He who simply believes in Jesus Christ must have some degree of assurance, for the simple act of reclining, leaning on and resting upon Christ, if it is done truly and sincerely is, in its measure, assuring to the heart. At any rate, it is the milk that brings the cream. Faith is the milk and assurance is the cream! You must get your assurance from your faith—and if it is a simple faith which relies entirely upon Jesus Christ, it will, if not directly, yet very speedily, bring you some degree of assurance of your interest in Christ.

There are many good people who say, "We are trusting in Christ, and we hope we are Christians." They do not like to say that they *know* they are saved. They think they are very humble in saying, "We trust so. We hope so." Whereas there is nothing but pride, like a thick sediment, at the bottom of all that kind of talk! What right have I, when God tells me that a thing is so, to say that I *hope* it is so? If I were to promise to give a subscription of ten pounds to a charity and the person to whom I promised it should say, "Well, I hope you will give it," I should answer, "But I have said that I will." "Yes, I hope you will." "But don't you believe me?" "Yes, I hope I do, but…" Why, if such talk as this prevailed among men of the world, they would be for showing the door to one another! It would be looked upon as an insult not to believe a man—and why should you treat God in a manner in which you would not like to be treated by your fellow men? God says that I am saved if I trust Christ. I do trust Christ and I am saved—if I am not, then God's word is not true! It comes to that. Since his word must be true—then if I really trust Christ and I know that I do—if whatever else I have left undone, my soul *does* cling to Him, sink or swim, not having the shadow of a hope anywhere but in His precious blood—and if I can say this, then I know I am saved, for God says I am! Experience and conscience may say whatever they like, but, "let God be true, and every man a liar."

The way, however, to increase the measure of our assurance is to be found *in more study of the Word of God*. Some people have not the confidence they might have because they do not understand the truth. I think that certain forms of Arminianism are injurious to the faith of the Christian—those forms, for instance, which deny the election of God, the effectual calling of the Holy Spirit and the final perseverance of the saints. These denials seem to me to cut from under a man's foot everything he has to stand upon! And I do not wonder that the man who believes them has no assurance. If I believe that God's children may fall away and perish, it seems to me that full assurance, at any rate, becomes an impossibility, for if they may fall, why may not I? What is there in me that I should stand where others fall? But when I rest alone upon the finished work and righteousness of Jesus and believe it is finished, then I can sing, "Now unto Him who is able to keep me from

falling, and to present me faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, be glory, majesty, dominion and power, forever and ever. Amen." Study the Word of God much, dear Christian brothers and sisters. Never mind the magazines! Never mind the newspapers! Further than they are necessary to your business, you need not trouble yourself with them. We would, all of us, be a great deal better if we kept to the one book. Let us be as expansive in our knowledge as possible, but let us keep the Bible as the sun and center of the solar system of our knowledge—and let everything we know revolve around that center! If we knew more of God, we might be content to know less of men.

Next to this, I think if we would have full assurance established, *we must be more in prayer than we are*. You will not be in a healthy state if you live without prayer. You cannot live without it if you are a Christian—and I mean you cannot be healthy if you live without much prayer. I am persuaded that none of us pray as we ought. I am not given to swapping accusations against God's saints without thought, but I am afraid that this is not a praying age. It is a *reading* age, a preaching age, a working age, but it is not a praying age! When one reads of the Puritans prayers, one is astounded! Why, their public prayers were sometime three quarters of an hour in length and sometimes one hour and a half by the clock. I do not like that. But their private prayers were far longer and days of fasting and of prayer were quite common things. I wish we could have a day of fasting and of prayer about this cattle disease, but I only say this by the way. I wish we all of us prayed a great deal more than we do. We just pray for a short season because we say that we are so busy, but we forget that the more we pray, the more we are able to work. The mower grudges not the time he spends in whetting his scythe, or the scribe the interval for mending his pen. Martin Luther, when he had twice as much to do as he usually had, said, "I must pray for three hours today, at least, or else I shall never get through my work." The more work he had, the more did he pray in order that he might be able to get through it! Oh, that we did the same! We would have more assurance if we were more on the mountain with God!

Let me also advise you *to attend an edifying ministry and to get with well advanced Christians*. Some of the young plants here, when they get moved away, suffer terribly from the cold. They come, perhaps, from the country full of doubts and fears, and then some of my good brothers and sisters get round them and talk to them, and cheer them up, and then they are so glad. Oh, that all churches were warmhearted, cordial and affectionate! There is so much haughtiness, so much keeping aloof from one another that there can be no talking, one to another, about the things of God! By the grace of God we will try to break this down and get a little warm-heartedness to one another—and so we will hope to get the full assurance by talking to one another of the things of the kingdom of God and so strengthening each other in our work.

But, dear friends, if you want to get full assurance, I can recommend to you another thing and it is this, *work for Christ*. We are not saved by works, but working for God brings us many blessings. Rest assured that

if you spend and are spent for Christ, you shall never be out of spending money! If you lay out your strength for Him, He will lay in for you fresh stores of strength! He does not give us faith that we may bury it as the man buried his talent, but if we have five talents of faith and use them, He will give us five talents more—and so we shall have assurance if we use our faith well.

And then, again, *praise God for what you have*. Old Master Brookes says, "If you only have candlelight, bless God for it and He will give you starlight. When you have got starlight, praise God for it and He will give you moonlight. When you have got moonlight, rejoice in it and He will give you sunlight. And when you have got sunlight, praise Him still more and He will make the light of your sun as the light of seven days, for the Lord, Himself, shall be the light of your spirit." Praise and bless Him and your assurance shall grow!

Above all, *press through ordinances, and means, and prayers, to the person of Christ, Himself!* Thomas found that putting his finger into Christ's wounds was a cure all for his unbelief. And so will you. Ask Him to—

"Wrap you in His crimson vest,
And tell you all His name."

Pray Him to reveal Himself to you in His sufferings and in His Glory. Ask Him that you may read His heart that He may speak to you and show you the great unspeakable love wherewith He loved you from before the foundation of the world. Then your communion with Christ shall be as eagle wings to bear you up to heaven! Your fellowship with Jesus shall be like horses of fire to drag your chariot of flaming love up to the throne of the Most High! You shall walk the mountaintop, talking with God, for you will have learned to commune with Christ! Your spirit shall make its nest hard by the throne of the Most High. You shall get above the cares of earth, you shall mount beyond the storm and strife of worldly conflict and you shall even now bathe your soul in the unbroken sea of everlasting calm before the throne of God!

Let us ask Him to say to each of our souls tonight, "I am your salvation." Some of us are going to the communion table. Perhaps He will say it to us there. And if He does not, we will go home to pray. And if He does not speak to us then, perhaps in the night watches He will say it. And when we awake, we will still plead on until those lips which said, "Let there be light," and there was light, shall again say, "Let there be light," to us, and we shall know that He is our salvation! May God bless you very richly for hearing this prayer, for Jesus' sake.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PHILIPPIANS 1:21-30; 2:1-11.

Philippians 1:21. *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* [See Sermon #146, Volume 3—THE GOOD MAN'S LIFE AND DEATH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "To me to live is Christ." If he lived, he lived to know more of Christ studying His person and learning by his

happy experience so that he increased in his knowledge of his Lord and Savior. If he lived, he lived to imitate Christ more closely, becoming more and more conformed to His image. If he lived, he lived to make Christ more and more known to others and to enjoy Christ more himself. In these four senses, Paul might well say, "For to me to live is Christ"—to know Christ more, to imitate Christ more, to preach Christ more and to enjoy Christ more!

"And to die is gain," because death, he felt, would free him from all sin and from all doubts as to his state in the present and the future. It would be gain to him, for then he would no longer be tossed upon the stormy sea, but he would be safe upon the land where he was bound. It would be gain to him, for then he would be free from all temptations both from within and from without. It would be gain to him, for then he would be delivered from all his enemies—there would be no cruel Nero, no blaspheming Jews, no false brethren then! It would be gain to him, for then he would be delivered from all suffering—there would be no more shipwrecks, no more being beaten with rods, or being stoned! Dying, too, would be gain for him, for he would then be free from all fear of death and, having once died, he would die no more forever. It would be gain to him, for he would find in heaven better and more perfect friends than he would leave behind on earth. And he would find, above all, his Savior, and be a partaker of His glory. This is a wide subject and the more we think over it, the more sweetness shall we get out of it.

22. *But if I live in the flesh.* That is a very different thing from living *to* the flesh.

22. *This is the fruit of my labor.* He lived to work for Christ and to see souls saved as the fruit of his labor.

22, 23. *Yet what I shall choose I know not. For I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.* [See Sermons #274, Volume 5—PAUL'S DESIRE TO DEPART and #1136, Volume 19—"FOREVER WITH THE LORD"—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] There were the two currents flowing in opposite directions. The apostle seemed to hear two voices speaking to him. One of them said, "Live, and you will gather the fruit of your labor. You will see sinners saved, churches established and the kingdom of Christ extended in the earth." The other said, "Die, and you will be with Christ!" So he knew not which to choose.

24-26. *Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more necessary for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.* The apostle desired to die, yet he was willing to live. Death would have been gain to him, yet he would endure the loss of living if he might thereby benefit others. Let us also always prefer the welfare of others before our own—and care rather to serve others than to make ourselves ever so happy. Now the apostle gives these saints at Philippi a loving exhortation.

27. *Only let your conversation be as it becomes the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else am absent, I may hear of your*

affairs that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel. The unity of the church is of the utmost importance. When there is a lack of brotherly love, the perfect bond is lost—and as a bundle of rods, when once the binding cord is cut becomes merely a number of weak and single twigs, so is it with a divided church. May we always be kept in one holy bond of perfect union with each other!

28. *And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition.* "Away with them! Away with them!" cried the heathen. "Those who are not ashamed to acknowledge the crucified Christ are only worthy of perdition." But of what was their courage a token to themselves?

28. *But to you of salvation, and that of God*. For when saints can bear fierce persecution without flinching, it is an evident sign that they are saved by the grace of God!

29. *For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him*. Which is a great gift.

29. *But also to suffer for His sake.* Which is a still greater gift!

30. *Having the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me*. "The same agony," it is in the Greek, as if every Christian must, in his measure, go through the same agony through which the apostle went striving and wrestling against sin, groaning under its burden, agonizing to be delivered from it and laboring to bring others out of its power.

Philippians 2:1, 2. *If there is, therefore, any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill you my joy, that you be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.* Paul knew that these saints at Philippi loved him. They had sent once and again to relieve his necessities, so he pleaded with them, by their love to him, to love each other. He does as much say, "If you really love me, if it is not a sham, if you have any sympathy with me and with my labors and sufferings. If you really have the same spirit that burns in my breast, make my heart full of joy by clinging to one another, by being like-minded, 'having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.'"

3. *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory*. This would be a good motto for those who are intending to build new places of worship! Let them not be built through strife, because of a squabble among the people of God, but make sure that all concerned are actuated by right motives and seeking only the glory of God. But sometimes, if one gives a guinea, another feels that he must give two, so as to excel him—this is giving out of vainglory. Let nothing be done in this way, but as unto the Lord and as in His sight, let us do all our works and give all our gifts.

3, 4. *But in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not, every man, on his own things, but every man also on the things of others*. Consider how you can help others and in what way you can prosper them both in temporal things and in spiritual. You are members of a body, so one member is not to think for itself alone—the

unity of the whole body requires that every separate and distinct part of it should be in harmony with the whole.

5-8. *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* [See Sermon #2281, Volume 38—OUR LORD IN THE VALLEY OF HUMILIATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] He humbled Himself, so be you not unwilling to humble yourself. Lower than the cross, Christ could not go, His death was one of such extreme ignominy that He could not have been more disgraced and degraded. Be you willing to take the lowest place in the church of God and to render the most humble service! Count it an honor to be allowed to wash the saints' feet. Be humble in mind—nothing is lost by cherishing this spirit, for see how Jesus Christ was honored in the end.

9-11. *Therefore God also has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* [See Sermon #101, Volume 2—THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Some foolish and superstitious persons make this passage a pretext for bowing their heads at the name of Jesus whenever it is mentioned. Nothing can be more senseless, because the passage means no such thing!

What we are taught here is the great truth of God that Jesus Christ, though once He stooped to the lowest shame, is now exalted to the very highest glory and even the devils in Hell are compelled to acknowledge the might of His power! We are also to learn from this passage that the way to ascend is to descend. He who would be chief must be willing to be the servant of all. The King of kings was the servant of servants—and if you would be crowned with honor, by and by, you must be willing to be despised and rejected of men now! The Lord give us this gracious humbleness of mind, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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MOCKING THE KING
NO. 3138

A SERMON
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"And they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand: and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the head."
Matthew 27:28-30.

[There are two other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon on verse 29—Sermons #1168, Volume 20—THE CROWN OF THORNS and #2824, Volume 49—MOCKED OF THE SOLDIERS—
Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

I AM certain that I would fail if I were to attempt to preach a sermon that should be worthy of such a text as this. I shall make no such attempt but, during the few minutes available for the address of this evening, I shall try to set forth our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, as He was when—

"Sinners in derision crowned Him."

I pray the Holy Spirit to enable me to do this, for unless He shall do so, my words will be of no avail.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we have before us a King—such a King as was never known before! His pedigree is more glorious than that of any mere earthly monarch. His right to reign is indisputable. His power to subdue all to Himself is infinite, whether He chooses to use it or not. His character is such as never belonged to any king before. He is as eminent in goodness as He is supreme in power—"the Son of the Highest," "who is over all, God blessed forever"—yet who became the Son of Man for our sakes! This is the King who is now before us.

But what an enthronement was accorded to Him! See that scarlet robe? It is a contemptuous imitation of the imperial purple that a king wears. See that old chair into which the soldiers have thrust Him so that He may be seated upon a mockery of a throne? See, above all, that crown upon His head? It has rubies in it, but the rubies are composed of His own blood, forced from His blessed temples by the cruel thorns! Look, they pay Him homage, but the homage is their own filthy spit which runs down His cheeks. They bow the knee before Him, but it is only in mockery. They salute Him with the cry, "Hail, King of the Jews!" but it is done in scorn. Was there ever grief like His? It amazes us that such superlative goodness should have been treated with such fiendish malice, that such mercy should have been in such misery, that such majesty should have been reduced to such despising! Truly, He was "despised and re-

jected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." And they do not exaggerate who speak of Him as the emperor of sorrow and the enthroned prince of misery. Look at Him and then restrain your tears if you can. Gaze upon Him, you who love Him and who know how fair was His glorious countenance before it was marred more than the face of any man—and see it all stained with His own blood—and then let your heart delight if it can. No, rather let me say indulge your griefs and let your sorrow flow in copious streams, for of all spectacles that were ever witnessed by human eyes, this surely is the most grievous!

There are three things upon which I am going to speak. There are many other things to be seen in this strange exhibition of majesty in misery, but these three things will suffice to occupy our thoughts at this time.

I. The first is this. I see in our Savior thus mocked and put to shame, THE EMBLEM OF WHAT OUR SIN HAS DONE.

Remember that *Jesus Christ stood in the sinner's place*. This is an old truth of God with which you are very familiar, but of which you are never tired of hearing. Having been "made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man," and having agreed to stand in the place of sinners as if He had been, Himself, a sinner, you see in Jesus Christ the full result of epitomized sin. Man wanted to be a king, or to be more than a king. "You shall be as gods," said the serpent to Eve in the garden of Eden, insinuating that the great God was jealous of man and fearful that man would grow so great as to be His rival! Thus tempted, man put out his hand and touched the fruit of which he had been forbidden to partake. He had been a happy subject, but he hoped that he might become a happier king! It had been his delight to do the will of the Lord, but now he thought he would be able to do his own will and that he would be able to reign side by side with God, or even in His place!

Ah, foolish man, see what kind of royalty it is that sin can bring you! Come here and see as in a mirror the image of the coronation which sin gives to man. See how it crowns him with mock dignity and honor. It makes him look like a king, but it is only a tinsel splendor—all outside show and sham. It gives him no royal rank or regal character in any case whatever. It is true that there is a crown upon man's head, but it is a crown of thorns and this is the only crown that sin can ever give to poor humanity. Man wanted to be lord of the earth and so he was in a certain sense, but his first act of lordship was to cause a blast and blight upon paradise and to sow the earth with thorns and thistles so that from then on he should never eat bread without being reminded of his sin through the very sweat on his face! O yes, man, you are a king! I can see your crown! Set great store by it if you can—proud, foolish monarch! You scorned to be a subject of the great ruler of the universe and now you have become a monarch yourself! Behold your royal regalia! Especially notice your crown—a crown of thorns! This is how sin crowns us! We see the same thing in our Savior, when He stood in our place—He was mocked, despised, rejected, crowned with thorns—and this is what we become through sin. "Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death." Christ on the cross is a yet fuller type of what man would have become had sin

been let alone. It brings manhood ever lower and lower until it plucks his very life out of him and lays him dead beneath the clods of the valley. Sin's only throne is a mock one! Its only crown is a painful one and its only reward is sorrow and shame. In Jesus, mocked by the soldiers, we see what sin had brought our race to and all that sin could do for us.

But our Lord, as a spectacle of shame, was also a representative of all of us in another way as to what sin would make of us. *In the time of His shame nobody had a good word for Jesus*. All His disciples forsook Him and fled. He was deserted by all other men and given over to mockery. That is just what our condition would be apart from Christ! And, mark you, it is just what will be the condition of every sinner who has no share in Christ's substitutionary sacrifice. The angels that kept their first estate must be ashamed of men—and redeemed men, themselves, will, throughout eternity, be ashamed of ungodly men. Daniel tells us that when men shall awake, after the resurrection—unforgiven, unsaved—they will wake up "to shame and everlasting contempt." Among the pains and miseries of the world to come, to the ungodly, this will perhaps be one of the most crushing—that the whole universe will ring with scorn of them! There will not be any beings capable of thought that will have any admiration for sinners, then! They will all wonder with the wonderment of contempt how men could ever have acted as they have done. I think some angel will say to them, "You, created by God and fed by His bounty, used your breath only to speak against the Most High. Though every day you owed every morsel that you ate and even the garments on your backs to the benevolence of God—the gifts of His charity—you ungratefully lifted up your heel against Him! You were constantly receiving favors from the plentiful benefactor and yet were never grateful for them. Shame on you, you ungrateful men and women!" And then the angel might say, "And after you had sinned so foully, the gospel was brought to you and you were bid to believe in Jesus. Christ crucified was set before you, but even that wondrous sight never touched your heart, or, if your heart was touched for a little while, the impression soon wore off, for you turned your back upon that wondrous sight and said, by your actions, if not by your words, that it was nothing to you that Jesus should die!" It seems to me that an angel, looking down upon a sinner who has rejected Christ, will think of him as some sevenfold atrocity of nature!

My dear hearers do not think that I am speaking too strongly. I am not, for there can be no crime that can be equal to that of the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ by a sinner who has had the gospel preached to him! It will be proven to be so in the world to come if not in this. And I believe that you impenitent sinners will be ashamed of yourselves, then, and that you will call upon the mountains and rocks to fall upon you, to hide you from the face of Him that sits upon the throne, because you will feel so mean, so wretched, so contemptible even to yourselves as you remember that Jesus Christ upon the cross, with unparalleled love, had no charms for you! You will then see what you do not appear to see now—that you must have been the meanest creature that ever existed that you did not at once fly to His arms, kiss His feet and then and there say,

"Blessed be God for such a Savior! I love Him and will spend and be spent for Him all my days."

Jesus Christ there, as an object of shame and scorn, is only a picture and emblem of what every sinner is and what every sinner will be unless renewed by grace—he will be an object of everlasting shame and contempt! How the very devils in hell will mock him throughout eternity! He shall wear his mock crown—it will not even be a crown of thorns—it will be a circle of flames of fire! But how terrible will be the laughter of the fiends in the pit as they gather around him and cry, "You would be your own master, would you not? You would be a king, would you not? You would not kiss the Son, you would not yield to His sway, and you would have your own way! Now see what it has all come to—a crown of fire that cannot be quenched! You said that you could save yourself—why did you not do so? You said that you could make yourself fit for heaven any day without a Savior—why did you not do so?" Such mocking as these, which will come as much from the man, himself, as from his companions in misery, will make him realize that the fruit of sin is shame—and that it is bitter beyond all description or imagination!

II. Now, secondly, our Savior thus mocked, despised and rejected of men, gives us A PICTURE OF THE WORLD'S ESTIMATE OF HIM.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to this earth as the Savior sent from God, not, "to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." What does the world think of Him? He has lived upon the earth 33 years and all that time He has done nothing but deeds of kindness to all with whom He has come into contact. And now the world is about to give its verdict concerning Him. What eulogy will it pass upon this great lover of humanity? What will it say to this grandest of all philanthropists? What are the rewards with which it will seek to ennoble Him? There they are! There they are! Coarse laughter and cruel mockery in the common room of the Praetorian Guards! That is what the world thinks of Christ—it thinks *nothing* of Him! It ridicules and despises Him!

"But," some of you say, "we have never treated Christ like that!" Listen, sirs, there are some of you in this house who are quite indifferent to the Lord Jesus Christ. You pay some outward deference to religious worship, but you have never given your hearts to Christ. You have never spent even an hour in your whole lives in seriously meditating upon His blessed person and His glorious work. You are not in a right state of heart to speak to His praise and glory; neither can you do anything to extend His cause and kingdom in the earth. It is true that you do not blaspheme Him—you are not openly in opposition to Him, but you are just indifferent. Can there be anything much worse than indifference to the Lord Jesus Christ? He is so loving and gentle, and so tender of heart that to be indifferent to Him is to cut Him to the quick! Oh, had He been indifferent to us—when there was no other eye to pity us and no other arm to save us—if He had been indifferent to us, then, instead of meeting in this place tonight to hear of Him, we would, all of us, have been in hell! But He was not indifferent to us, so let none of us be so cruel as to be indifferent to Him.

There are some who are not indifferent, for they are opposed to Christ—not to the Christ whom they have imagined, but to the real Christ of Calvary! If they hear the gospel preached simply as we find it in the Bible, they are very angry. They can admire any false gospel that men have manufactured, but the gospel of the Bible does not suit them. When they listen to that, they are carried away with wrath and indignation. For instance, the great central doctrine of substitution—Christ suffering in the sinner's place—how many turn away with contempt from that plainly revealed truth! Then the doctrine of justification by faith, which is the very marrow of Christ's gospel—how many are incensed at that and cry out against it! The true Christ, the real Christ—they are angry at every mention of Him! Perhaps there are some of you who have been persecuting your children because they have been speaking about the Savior. Do I address a husband who has spoken very bitterly to his wife because of her religion, or a brother who has been persecuting his sister because she is a Christian, or an employer who has been sneering at and ridiculing his godly employee? Do you not know that in acting thus, you are ridiculing Christ Himself? For, if these people are really followers of Christ, He counts that whatever is done to them is done to Himself. He said to Saul of Tarsus, "Why do you persecute *Me?"* Saul had no idea that he was persecuting the Lord—he thought it was only a few poor deluded men and women that he was hauling off to prison or to death—but it was Christ, Himself, in the person of His followers, whom Saul was persecuting! Take care what you are doing, I pray you, you who are thus persecuting the Christ of God, for it is very common for Christ, in this way, to receive from the world nothing but indifference and contempt, or actual opposition and persecution!

And, alas, I grieve to have to say it, but I fear that Christ is crowned with thorns and mocked by a great many who scarcely think they are doing so. I mean, for instance, do you not feel that it is mocking the Savior to have His image set up in many countries as an idol to be worshiped? Even in our own land you may find tens of thousands bowing down before what they think to be the image of Christ or before a picture of His cross! I would rather die a thousand deaths, if I could do so, than that anyone should set up my image and turn it into a god! Yet I am only a poor weak, sinful man and, therefore, so to degrade me would not matter much—but to take Jesus Christ, the pure and perfect Son of God, and make an idol of Him—a detestable loathsome thing, for such is an idol—must cut Him to the quick! It must daily crucify Him afresh and put Him to an open shame. If you will make idols, take devils and make idols of them! But to take the Son of God and make an idol of Him is infamous! When the poor heathen bow before their ugly idol of wood or stone, it is degraded by being put to such an evil use—but when the immaculate Son of God has His image prostituted to such a vile use as that of being made part of the machinery of idolatry, it is atrocious! Now is He mocked indeed!

But there are other people who seem determined to mock Christ in other ways. He instituted the ordinance of believers' baptism to be the in-

troductory rite into Church fellowship, but the mockers have changed the subject, mode and meaning of the ordinance and turned it into a piece of witchcraft which, they say, regenerates unconscious babies and makes them members of Christ, children of God and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven! Christ also instituted a simple supper of bread and wine to be a memorial of His death. But the mockers have changed that ordinance into the sacrifice of the "mass," a thing for "priests" to perform, saying that they make the bread and wine into the *actual flesh and blood* of Jesus Christ! Oh, these are dreadful horrors! I sometimes marvel that the earth does not open and swallow up these mockers and that Almighty God still allows these abominations to continue! Surely the mockery of Christ by the Praetorian Guard was not such a crime as this! Then there are others who mock Christ in another way. They preach Christ but say that He is nothing but a man. They exalt His humanity, but deny His deity! Is not this doing spiritually what the soldiers did literally? Such preachers put on Christ a purple robe but, as they deny His deity, it is only a mock robe—it is not the true purple of omnipotence and omniscience which belongs to Him of whom the Psalmist said, "The Lord reigns, He is clothed with majesty." They put on Him the crown of humanity, but it is only a crown of thorns! They put in His hand a scepter, but it is nothing but a reed! Their christ is nothing but a man and not the co-equal and co-eternal Son of God, Christ Jesus our dear Lord and Savior! They have taken away the King's real regalia, His real scepter and His real crown—and thus they have degraded Him to their own level. Or rather, I should say that they would do so if they could! It is thus that Jesus is still mocked and shamefully entreated by some whose preaching consists of philosophical essays in which there is no mention of the precious blood of Christ—the atonement and all the other grand old doctrines of Christianity are utterly ignored! This is just imitating the Roman soldiers who set Christ up on an old chair and mocked Him with all the emblem of royalty travestied and with everything that constituted regal power and majesty taken away from Him.

Worst of all, there are some professors who, in a certain sense, hold the truth, but who hold it in unrighteousness! There are some who say that they love the Lord Jesus Christ and they will probably come with us to the communion table tonight pretending that they do love Him, yet knowing all the while that Christ has no real power over their lives. I marvel at some of you who can degrade yourselves by drunkenness and by even worse sins, or who can be guilty of dishonesty in business, or who live altogether graceless lives and yet dare to talk as if you were trusting in the precious blood and righteousness of Christ! Oh, how you mock Him and insult Him by acting thus! Never did the soldiers' spit, which ran down His blessed cheeks in that season of shame, dishonor Him as much as when His praises are sung here by you who will, tomorrow, be singing a lascivious song, or who even dare to come to His table fresh from the haunts of sin! May God have mercy upon you and turn you from your evil ways, for, if He shall not do so, there shall be no punishment too stern to mark His sense of your gross insults to His Son! I charge you, in the name of the thrice holy Jehovah, if you are living in

sin, to refrain from pretending to be saints! If you cannot keep close to the Lord Jesus Christ; if you will not follow after holiness, I beseech you not to play the fool with God and the liar to yourselves by saying that Christ is your king! The devil is your king, so you cannot love the cup of the Lord while you love the cup of the drunkard! And you must not sit down to feast with the saints while you revel in uncleanness! How can you enjoy the pleasures of religion while you are satiated with the pleasures of the world?

You think that I am speaking severely and so I am, for I sometimes feel almost brokenhearted over some whose inconsistencies make sad havoc in the church, "of whom I have told you often and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." Talk not of Roman soldiers mocking Jesus while there are wanton professors, while there are dishonest professors, while there are unforgiving and unchaste professors who dare even to come to the table of the Lord! May God preserve all of us from ever mocking Christ in such a way as this!

III. Time fails me, or it would do so if I lingered over this theme as I might and, therefore, my last point shall be this. The Lord Jesus, thus mocked and despised, is THE MODEL TO US OF WHAT OUR CONDUCT SHOULD BE.

Oh, how He loved us! Oh, how He loved us! I cannot find any other sentence coming to my tongue but that same one a third time as I look at Him—oh, how He loved us! This is He whose "eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk and fitly set," whose "lips are like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh," whose "head is as the most fine gold and His locks are bushy and black as a raven." He is the altogether lovely one, yet He was most shamefully treated—and He willingly endured it for our sake! There is a famous picture which represents the Savior wearing the crown of thorns. And at the bottom of it are these words, written in German, "I suffered this for you; what have you done for Me?" Count Zinzendorf, then frivolous and worldly, walked into the picture gallery and read those words. He stopped a while and then he went out a new man in Christ—to be a most devoted servant of the Lord for the rest of his days! I wish I could paint that picture now by my words so that Christ might be visibly set forth before you and that you might then hear Him say, "I suffered this for you; what have you done for Me?" What actions can ever be worthy of such self-sacrificing love? What gifts can ever be equal to such unparalleled affection? What high and fervent thoughts shall ever rise to the height of this great argument? What consecration shall ever be worthy of Him? What all-consuming zeal, eating us up for His sake, shall ever approach the ardor of His love for us? I ask you that say that you love Him, to judge for yourselves how you ought to act towards Him who was willingly put into the place of scorn for you!

One or two things are perfectly clear. First, that *none of us ought, henceforth, to ever court ease, pomp and show.* When the Crusaders took Jerusalem and Baldwin was proclaimed king, he refused to have a crown put on his head, for he said, "How can I wear a crown of gold where my Master wore a crown of thorns?" I sometimes wonder how professing

Christians can dress as finely as some of them do. I wish they had clearly before their eyes the likeness of their Lord dressed in the scarlet robe, crowned with thorns and made the subject of the soldiers' cruel mockery. They would not then care as they do now for those pretty things which, after all, are often only ugly things to those who have true taste. Jesus Christ would not pick out as His imitators those who make a grand display—He was notable for His poverty and His shame—but some professing Christians are never happy unless they are notable for show. Let us give all that sort of thing up for the love of Jesus Christ our Lord!

Then, again, it is quite clear that *we ought not to care about scorn.* Scorn? Let us scorn scorn! Does the world laugh at us? Let us laugh at the world's laughter and say to it, "Do you despise us? It is not one half as much as we despise you! Our fathers despised your sword, O world—your dungeons, your racks, your gallows, your stakes—and do you think that we shall tremble at your scoffs and jeers?" Certain infidel writers, when they caricature Christian people or the church as a whole, think they have done a clever thing—but how insignificant and trifling it all is—a thing scarcely worth mentioning! Our Lord was so scorned, that any satire we may have to endure will be only a compliment in comparison with what He had to bear! And present day ridicule and scorn cannot mix a cup anything like that which He drank to the dregs. His cup was so bitter that anything they can give us to drink is comparatively sweet. They began so fiercely with Him that they cannot do anything as bad as that to us! They called the Master of the house, Beelzebub, so they cannot call His servants by any worse name than that! They mocked Him and put Him to death. They brought forth their sharpest weapons, first, so that the puny laughter and scorn that they bring against Christians, now, are really not worthy of a moment's consideration! Yet I know some who are very much troubled by them.

"Ah," says one, "I am a Christian, I hope, but I have been misrepresented by those who ought to know what I really am." Well, but is that a new thing? You need not be astonished, for that is just what they did with Jesus. You might doubt whether you were a true servant of Christ if they did not tar you with the same brush that they used for Him! "Ah, but they say such cruel things about me and have such a way of jeering at me that it quite stings me." Just so, but if they even crown you with thorns, you may be sure that the points of the thorns are first broken off, for Christ had them on His head and He has taken away the sharpness of them! And if the ungodly mock you, it never can be with that refined irony with which the soldiers mocked Him when they said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Who is ashamed to be a Christian? Yes, who is ashamed to be a nonconformist Christian? Who is ashamed to be called by the name of that church to which he belongs? If there are any such here, let them sneak out the back way, for cowards are not needed in the army of God! But if you know that you are followers of Christ, glory in that blessed fact and never blush at being put to shame for it! No, rather count "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt."

Before I close, I just want to say that I think such a text as this ought to stir up all of us who love the Lord *to be doing something for Christ that*

will demand self-denial. I think it must be the reading of such a passage as this that has made some of our brothers and sisters go and labor among the very lowest of our population—where filth and vice abound. I can understand a delicately nurtured lady devoting herself to such work as that, and a gentleman of the highest culture toiling heroically among the people in the worst slums in London, after having seen Christ wearing the crown of thorns. I can understand a missionary, for Christ's sake, living and laboring in the midst of tenfold filth in China, and making himself a Chinaman among the Chinese that he may win them to the Savior. I can understand something of the spirit that has made men and women devote themselves entirely to the causes of Christ, going about preaching the word, or ministering to the poor or the sick. I can understand how some have even gone to plague infested cities and lived and died among the sick and the dying.

When once we have seen Christ and His crown of thorns, there ought to be such enthusiasm as would make us capable of any deed of daring for Him! As I look at my Master's head covered with thorns, I feel that any man who loves the Savior must grow heroic at the sight if the Spirit of God will but help him to see it as he should. But, my brothers and sisters in Christ, it is not for me to suggest what you should do, but for each one of you to suggest it to yourselves. But I would ask each one of you whether you cannot do something for Jesus which you have never done before. Make some sacrifice, wear a crown of thorns—I mean spiritually—for His sake. Go a step farther than you have ever gone before, plunge deeper into the waters of consecration, give yourselves up to Christ more completely from this night forward! I pray that you may. I pray the Spirit of God to enable you to do it and unto the Lord Jesus shall be honor and glory in compensation for His shame—and surely He richly deserves that compensation! May He have it now, for His own dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ACTS 28.

Verses 1-3. *And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Malta. And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us, every one, because of the present rain and because of the cold.* [See Sermon #3136, Volume 55—LESSONS FROM THE MALTA FIRE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks.* It must have been a fine sight to see the great apostle of the Gentiles gathering a bundle of sticks to put on the fire! But the men who can do great things are usually the men who do not disdain to do little things.

3-5. *And laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffers not to live. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.* Was

not this a fulfillment of the Master's words concerning the signs following faith in Him? "They shall take up serpents." Whether this viper had bitten Paul so as to really fill his veins with venom, we do not know—but it is an equal miracle whether it had done so or not. Whether the sting had already poisoned him or not, his life was preserved, and that was sufficient.

6. *Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.* Those who saw what had happened to him regarded it as so marvelous that they thought he must be one of their heathen deities who had come down to the earth! He was not a god, however—but he was a man of God, and God had preserved him in the hour of peril.

7-10. *In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island whose name was Publius, who received us, and lodged us three days courteously. And it came to pass that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him and healed him. So when this was done, others, also, which had diseases in the island, came and were healed: who also honored us with many honors; and when we departed, they loaded us with such things as were necessary.* Happy island of Malta to have such a missionary driven on its shore, to heal the sick and preach the gospel to the people! The calamities of ministers are often a benediction to the people. The shipwreck of Paul resulted in blessing to that island which otherwise it might have missed. Let us, as God's servants, leave ourselves in His hands and believe that He can sometimes use us better by means of a shipwreck than if He had given the winds and waves charge concerning us to bear us safely to our desired haven!

11-13. *And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux. And landing at Syracuse, we tarried there three days. And from there we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli.* Those who have ever been there regard the spot as almost sacred where Paul set his foot on his way to Rome. It is a place where there is an abundance of hot springs, a place which of old was frequented for healing. I have stood there with intense delight! "We came the next day to Puteoli."

14. *Where we found brethren.* There were some Christians there. See how soon the gospel had spread as far as to this seaport town? Probably some Christian sailors carried it there. Blessed will it be when the ships of Tarshish shall bear not only men especially set apart as missionaries, but when every sailor shall be a missionary for Christ! "We came the next day to Puteoli: where we found brethren."

14. *And were desired to tarry with them seven days.* So they were able to have one Lord's Day together! They were probably only a very small company of poor Christians, but what a joyful privilege it was for them to have the beloved Apostle with them for that memorable week in their lives!

14. *And so we went toward Rome*. Now it was a marching band of soldiers taking them as prisoners to appear before the emperor at Rome.

15. *And from there, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and the Three Inns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage*. It must have cheered his heart to see that there were some who loved him sufficiently to make a weary tramp along the Appian Road to meet him and salute him in the name of their common Lord!

16. *And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was allowed to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him*. This was a great favor, no doubt, but do not forget that he had to have his right hand chained to the left hand of the soldier day and night and that was not very pleasant either for him or for the soldier! Yet he thus had an opportunity of personal conversation with the soldiers of the Praetorian Guard and as they were continually being changed, Paul no doubt had opportunities of conversation with hundreds of them—and thus the gospel was spread in a very unlikely quarter! Would you like to be chained to a soldier day after day, and month after month? There are some who would not have that experience for half an hour without putting the gospel plainly before the soldier so that he should at least know what it is, even if he did not accept it. That is a wonderful way of preaching—man to man! When they were chained hand to hand, there was no getting away from what Paul had to say!

17. *And it came to pass, that after three days*. That was quick work! He had only got into his house three days when he began to work. "After three days,"

17. *Paul called the chief of the Jews together*. There are said to have been seven synagogues in Rome at that time, so the apostle sent for a number of the chief men in the various congregations.

17-20. *And when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. But when the Jews spoke against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had anything of which to accuse my nation. For this reason, therefore, have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain*. They were all looking for the Messiah, for there was at that time a general expectation of His coming.

21, 22. *And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judea concerning you, neither any of the brethren that came showed or spoke any harm of you. But we desire to hear of you what you think: for as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against*. Although men did not understand it, they spoke against it. This is often a blessing. This is the kind of advertisement that helps the Gospel, for if men will only be sufficiently interested in it to speak against it, they will be likely to come and hear it—and some of them will be almost certain to receive it. The truth never spreads so fast as when men oppose it!

23. *And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified of the Kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus,* [See Sermon #1970, Volume 33—LOVING PERSUASION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.* It was a long and blessed day, a grand opportunity for Paul thus to be able, hour after hour, to expound the gospel. But see the result—the result which always seems to follow the faithful preaching of the truth.

24-28. *And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.* [See Sermon #516, Volume 9—THE MINISTER'S STOCK-TAKING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after Paul had spoken one word, Well spoke the Holy Spirit by Isaiah the Prophet unto our fathers, saying, go unto this people and say, Hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see, and not perceive: for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.* Oh, blessed confidence of the Apostle! If some reject the gospel, others will receive it!

29-31. *And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves. And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.* What a subject Paul had to preach about—"the kingdom of God, and those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ," and how faithfully and fearlessly he proclaimed this great theme!

31. *With all confidence, no man forbidding him.*

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

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A PROMISE FOR THE BLIND
NO. 3139

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 8, 1909,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE BAPTIST CHAPEL, CHURCH STREET, BLACKFRIARS ROAD, ON TUESDAY EVENING, APRIL 3, 1855.

[ON BEHALF OF THE CHRISTIAN BLIND RELIEF SOCIETY.]

"Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child, and she that travails with child together: a great company shall return there."
Jeremiah 31:8.

POOR Israel, as a nation, had its ups and downs. It was sometimes in captivity and soon it experienced a deliverance. At one time it was diminished and brought low through affliction, persecution, or sorrow. At another, it was multiplied and increased exceedingly. It was the deliverance from one of these evil seasons that Jeremiah was commissioned to announce by the promise that the Lord's people would come again to their own land.

Let us consider, for a few minutes, the circumstances of these Israelites. It must have been a sorrowful thing for them to dwell in a land that was not their own, to hear a language they didn't understood, to see the fierce inhabitants, their enemies, and the idolatrous worship of the heathen gods. We can well conceive of their mournful spirit and the feeling with which they gave utterance to their plaintive song, "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yes, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hung our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" But God sent among them prophets who told them that they would be restored and herein lay the glory of the promise—that it included *all* the captive people of God—whatever might be their rank or position! The blind, the halt and the lame would all come back. The hoary headed man with his staff, equally with the young and vigorous—the lame as well as he who could run like the rabbit—all would come to the mountain of the Lord! Nor should even women be left behind—"The blind and the lame, the woman with child and she that travails with child together: a great company shall return there." Had the prophet not said that the blind and the lame would come, that their faces should be turned towards the holy city—had he not said that they would enter into the temple of the Lord—they might have thought that being poor and blind, they would never be allowed to come unto the holy mountain, even Zion.

But, my friends, this text has a further prophetical signification in its reference to the gathering in of the Jews in the latter times. And with this

we have more particularly to do. I believe in the restoration of the Jews to their own land in the last days. I am a firm believer in the gathering in of the Jews at a future time. Before Jesus Christ shall again come upon this earth, the Jews shall be permitted to go to their beloved Palestine. At present they are only at the entrance gates. I am told that the Jews have a practice of bringing some of the soil of their own country to England under the seal of the chief rabbi. And that at their death it affords them the highest joy to know that they will have a portion of this soil buried with them, even were it no more than sufficient to cover a sixpence. They have another idea—of course, it is a very foolish one—that every Jew dying in a foreign land travels underground direct to Palestine. It is because they love their country that they believe such a lie!

But whatever may be our opinion respecting the Jews and their position, this I know—though they ought not to be fettered and oppressed, though they ought to have a vote in Parliament, though they ought to be freed from civil disabilities, yet they never can amalgamate with other nations. The time will come when they shall leave their sordid ideas in the pursuit of gain to secure the treasures of paradise. They are now a scattered people and must be till the last times. Then suddenly they shall rise, touched by the influence of the Spirit of God, again to be His people. Their temple shall again resound with the worship of God and old Zion will be again built! Then may we truly expect the latter day glory shall come. Certainly, if I read my Bible aright, I must believe that the downtrodden, despised Jew shall again be glad and poor old Judea, that has been the scoff and scorn of mankind, shall again be lifted up and restored—and shall shine forth "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners!"

If it is so, mark you, the blind Jew and the lame Jew will as surely go to Jerusalem as any of the rest of the Jews! They will all go—the blind, the lame, the woman travailing with child will all meet in God's holy temple.

However, I leave this case of the Jews, their coming up from Babylon and the last gathering in of Israel. I know very little of them, but would rather speak of my text under another aspect. You know that God has a peculiar people, as much a chosen nation as the Jews ever were—a called and elected people whom the Father has chosen from before the foundation of the world—a redeemed people whom Jesus has purchased with His precious blood. They are a sanctified people because God has separated them from the rest of mankind. Well, all these people are to be brought in, to be gathered to Christ—everyone whom God has chosen, redeemed and sanctified shall come to Mount Zion! Blessed be God, they shall all come to this city above! God's wheat shall all be gathered into God's garner. The ransomed of the Lord shall all join the throng around the throne of God forever—

"To bless the conduct of His grace,
And make His glories known."

My text says the blind and the lame shall meet there. Now I am about to speak, first of all, of *the characters named in the text. And then I am going to try to show you the duties of Christians to the persons so designated, or spoken of, as the lame and the blind.*

I. First, I am to speak of THE CHARACTERS NAMED IN THE TEXT—"the blind and the lame."

We will speak of the blind first. There are three classes of blind people—the physically blind, the mentally blind and the spiritually blind. In illustration, I would take you to the London Road and there you will find these three orders of blind people. There is the school for the blind, where you will find the physically blind. And further on is the Bethlehem Hospital, commonly called Bedlam, where you will find the mentally blind. Just before you is the Roman Catholic cathedral—there you will find the spiritually blind. These are, then, the three divisions—the naturally, or physically blind, the mentally blind, and the spiritually blind.

Well, first, we refer to *the physically blind*. If chosen of God, they will love Him and they shall all come to heaven. Ah, poor Adam, how many are the infirmities which your one sin has entailed upon your offspring! Oh, mother Eve, how did your act of transgression bring on us a train of woes! Lameness, blindness, deafness along with all the sad ailments of the paralytic, the dumb, the deformed! But all honor to the second Adam! He overcomes these infirmities! He saves "the blind and the lame." Through His sovereign grace, He loves many of the poor, darkened sons of men. Blind men are not chosen for soldiers except in the army of God, but in that army He enlists many blind warriors and makes them the best of His soldiers! Yes, blind saints, God loves you and will not exclude you from heaven! The man who has to go leaning on his crutch all through the journey of life is not refused at heaven's door because of his crutches. You blind men, groping along in the world, when you arrive at heaven's gate, are you to be excluded because of the lack of your eyes? Rather, the moment they come to its threshold, God speaks the word and the withered limb regains its strength, the dim eye its luster and thus, "the blind and the lame" become fitted to join the shining multitude around the throne of God!

We know that if we die aged, we shall not be aged in heaven—there are no furrows on the brow of the glorified ones! Their eyes know no dimness—they know not what it is to have infirmities of body, for mortality is exchanged for immortality! It may be that we are weakly here. It may be that we have a feeble, diseased, emaciated body here. But there we shall have a spiritual body, like unto Christ's glorious body, clothed in light and majesty! We shall then be partakers of the bliss of heaven, shining as the stars in the firmament forever and forever! Now, you physically blind, you who do not see the glorious rays of the sun, do not be downcast, but remember that there have been many illustrious saints who have endured the same calamity. Chief and foremost, remember the Blind Bard of Paradise, who, when his eyes were darkened, saw things that others had never imagined! I mean Milton. Though you are deprived of your temporal sight, you may see far into the deep things of God! Others have been blind as well as you. Many blind men have been great men. You physically blind, rejoice that blind though you are, if you look to Christ, by faith, you will join "the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven."

But, then, secondly, *the mentally blind* shall be restored. I have referred to Bedlam for an illustration. I do not mean, by that, to refer to those who have suffered the entire loss of their reason. It would be a very doubtful question to discuss whether a person born without the use of his natural reason can be an object of divine grace. It would lead to a great deal of discussion, without any practical result, so I leave it alone. But there is such a thing as practical mental blindness. There may be the mastermind, gigantic conceptions, a fruitful imagination with the power of leading and governing other minds—and yet there may be a degree of mental blindness. We are all somewhat blind. We have all, we must confess, an imperfect vision—except the "Pope" who claims to be infallible, and therefore proves that he is *more blind* than the rest of us! There are some of us who feel our fallibility in point of judgment and who are obliged to acknowledge our ignorance and lack of clear mental perception.

But, my friends, some of the mentally blind shall enter heaven. I now refer to those whose mental powers are very weak. I sometimes meet with these mentally blind people. They do not know much of their own language and, perhaps, have never put as many as a half a dozen words together in their lives in public. I once heard of one of these, an old woman, who had heard a most uninteresting discourse upon metaphysics, but she called it "a blessed sermon, for," she said, "the minister told us all about the Savior being both meat and physic, too." I think that was a good mistake! She, like many of the mentally blind, could not understand one half of the words that are used by some of our preachers. She belonged to the somewhat mentally blind folk who have not had the benefit of teaching or training. Well, blessed be God, they do not need it to find the way to heaven! "The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein."

Well, all these mentally blind shall come. There will be people in heaven who never read a word in their lives. I know not how low the grace of God can go. Some poor creatures who know nothing of the things of earth, even these may understand the gospel, it is so plain! We do not need a giant intellect in order to grasp its doctrines. Its element and substance is, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Believer, ignorant though you may be, you can comprehend this grand scheme of man's redemption, so do not say that because you are poor and ignorant, you will not enter heaven!

But, then, thirdly, there are *the spiritually blind*. Whenever you find a person spiritually blind, you ought to be very careful how you speak to him, or of him. I do think this is a matter in which we often fail. The discussion between Catholics and Protestants has been far from what it ought to have been. We seem bent upon forcing them to submit at once to our views, but this is wrong of us. We may condemn wrong principles, but let us always speak gently of the men who hold them. They are spiritually blind, so we should deal kindly with them, avoiding that bitterness of spirit which is so often manifested. Sick men will not take your medicine if you give them vinegar with it—give them something sweet with it and they will take it. So be kind and loving to the spiritually blind and they will be likely to give heed to you.

To say nothing of the Church of Rome, the Puseyites, or Arminians—to go no further than the present congregation—there are many spiritually blind here! Oh, men or woman, do you see your lost and ruined state by nature? No. Did you ever, by faith, see Christ crucified on the cross for man's redemption? No, you did not! Did you ever understand the sufficiency of the mediatorial sacrifice of Christ? No, you did not! Did you ever realize what vital union with the person of Christ means? No! Has the Holy Spirit ever spoken in your heart? You are obliged to confess that you know nothing about His purifying influence! Ah, then, you are blind—spiritually blind! Chapelgoer, churchgoer—having the form of religion without the power, you are blind as a bat which can only fly in the night! Or like the owl—when daylight comes, you will not be able to find your way. Unless the scales are removed from your eyes, you will be exposed to the judgment of God! But if the Holy Spirit illuminates you, though *now blind*, you shall come to Zion with the rest of the chosen race!

But my text also mentions the lame. These are not so much the subject of our consideration tonight and may, therefore, be passed over briefly. But many of the lame are to get to heaven. Who are they? Well, brothers and sisters, *there are some of God's people who are lame because they are weak in faith*. We sometimes hear a great deal said about possessing a full assurance of being a child of God and then, every now and then, we hear of others who have a doubt, or only a hope, concerning their salvation. As good Joseph Irons used to say, "They keep hope, hope, hoping—hop, hop, hopping all their lives because they can't walk." Little Faith is always lame. Yet, although some of you never could say with certainty that you are the people of God, yet one or another of you can say with sincerity—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Your kind arms I fall;
Be You my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my all."

You lame ones, fear not—you will not be cast out! Two snails entered the ark—how they got there, I cannot tell. It must have taken them a long time. They must have started rather early, unless Noah took them part of the way. So, some of you are snails—you are on the right road, but it will take you a long while to get into the ark unless some blessed Noah helps you!

Again, *backsliders are lame*. There are Christians to be found who believe that it is possible to fall from a state of grace. Here I would speak cautiously. God's people cannot fall finally—but they can fall a long way. When a Christian falls, it is no light matter. I hear some talking of falling and getting up again, as if it were nothing. But let them turn to Hebrews 6:4-6. [See Sermon #75, Volume 2—FINAL PERSEVERANCE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] But we will rejoice that—

"Grace will complete what grace begins,
To save from sorrows or from sins."

I do not say that a Christian may not fall and break a limb—but I do say that a child of God cannot fall, spiritually, and break his neck! He cannot fall without grievous injury. The result, in his experience, will be

unhappiness and misery. Look at poor David—after falling into that great sin, his history was nothing but troubles from rebellious sons and enemies! You loving, living children of the blessed God, I know that you will not talk lightly of falling into sin. Backsliders, fallen ones, God will have mercy upon you if you are truly penitent. It is a glorious fact that the sorrowing backsliders shall not be left behind. Backsliders shall sing above, as God's restored children, whom He always has loved. Blind and lame ones, believe in the Lord and you shall be found amongst the followers of the Lamb at the last!

II. Now secondly and very briefly, WHAT ARE OUR DUTIES TO THESE BLIND PEOPLE?

I answer, first *to the spiritually blind, our duty is to pray for them*. Yes, I believe we should never do anything without prayer. However much you may profess to love them, yet if you do not pray for them, I cannot believe what you say! An infidel once met a Christian and said to him, "You don't believe in the Bible. You don't believe in the gospel!" "I do," the Christian replied. "Well, then, how is it that as I pass you in going to my business every day, you have never spoken to me concerning my soul? You don't believe the Bible!" "I do." "I cannot believe you," he said, "for if you do, you are very unfeeling."

Now, Christians, if you believe that you have spiritually blind people around you, what is your duty towards them? Sirs, unless you feel a deep concern about their state, I fear that the heavenly physician has not removed the spiritual cataract from your eyes! If we believe their position to be one of extreme peril—that they, for lack of the light of God to guide them—are perishing, how we ought to exert ourselves on their behalf! The ministers do not feel enough for souls in this degenerate age, but keep on preaching, preaching, preaching, or read, read, reading their good for nothing manuscripts—and yet there is no increase to their churches! The minister is here in the pulpit and the people are down below in the pews. There is no golden link of sympathy between them. We need more of this sympathy! We need more intense love to souls, the souls of the ungodly! We need to go more to God's throne to plead *for* you and then to plead *with* you! As God's ambassadors, we say with Paul, "We pray you, in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God." It is no trifling matter to be spiritually blind! It is no light matter to have no eyes! No, the blind are sure not to enter heaven if they die spiritually blind! They must have their eyes enlightened by God if they are to be found above! May the ever blessed and glorious God awaken all the spiritually blind! May we who are ministers and all others who have the opportunity use it, under God's blessing, to throw the light of God upon their dark minds! Try to get your neighbors to the house of God, but take care that it is a gospel ministry to which you invite them! Take care that you prove the value of the gospel you possess by your own consistent practice. Pray for them and it may be that God will give them repentance unto life.

And then, next, *our duty to the mentally blind is to be very charitable and try to instruct them*. We must manifest, in all our dealings with them, a kindness of disposition, never attempting to thrash them into what we believe to be right. I do not believe in the utility of bigoted denunciations. I sometimes differ from my Christian brothers, but I do not quarrel with

them on that account. All I can say is, "Well, brother, if you can't see it, I cannot help it. It is in the Bible and I can see it plainly enough." We, as Calvinists, believe that men cannot see the truth of God unless it is revealed to them by God. We should, therefore, be the last to condemn the ignorant, but should do our utmost to instruct them and to open their eyes. It is of no use to attempt to force a man to believe. It has been said—

"Convince a man against his will,
He's of the same opinion still."

So, whenever you get into an argument with a mentally blind man, suppose it to be a Roman Catholic, don't get cross with him. If you do, you will never make a friend of your opponent. Suppose others do not see as you do on some matters, on infant baptism or anything else—and I think we Baptists very often err in our temper in some of our discussions—well, don't try to compel them to see as you see! Brothers and sisters, that is not the way to convince them of the truth of our beliefs. Instead of acting like that, we should try to show them the truth as it is in the Bible—and then they must shut their eyes or else see it. "It is there," you say—"if you can't see it, I shall not be cross or out of temper with you." Never let us be cross with the mentally blind. You know that the policeman, when he meets a man at night, turns his lantern straight upon the man's eyes—so must we turn the light of truth upon these blind eyes and not take out the billy club to thrash them! We should also reflect that there was a time when we, too, knew nothing. It therefore behooves us to act kindly to the younger scholars in the school, seeing that we have not always been in the highest class.

But now to conclude, we have to speak of our duty to the *physically blind*. There are some good people who would be glad to work for their living, but they are disabled through affliction. Among these are the blind. When I go among the sick and poor, I find so many to relieve that when I have given all I can afford, there is still more to do. Well, there they are, and to do them any permanent good you must give them something week by week. I was thinking, suppose another globe were created and rolled up alongside this world, so that when any in this world became sick, or blind, or helpless, we could put them over into the other world to get rid of them? Well, suppose that were done, brothers and sisters? You would soon want them back again! "There is dear sister so and so. She is entirely dependent upon the charity of her friends, but she has such rich deep experience—we have derived so much comfort from her society that we must have her back." Then, if these poor sufferers were in another world, you would have no way of doing good by relieving them—and then you would wish you could do doing something for them for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. You would then have to complain, "Here is this shilling—I don't know what to do with it. Here I have money that I cannot use because there are no objects of charity to whom I can give it—I wish Jesus Christ would come down to earth again. Would I not minister to His necessities if He were here? Yes, that I would! I would give Him the best of things that were to be found anywhere. Then I would sit

at His feet, washing them with my tears and wiping them with the hair of my head."

You say that, but if all these poor blind people were in another world, there would be no one to whom you could minister for His sake, so Jesus Christ has sent some of them to us that we may have the opportunity of doing good to them and that, by and by, He may be able to say to us, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these, My brethren, you have done it unto Me." He has cast some blind people upon the church on purpose—to give us the treat of doing something for them. He has said, "The poor you have always with you." He allows you the opportunity of showing your love to Him by relieving those who need your help. When I hear of a church where they are all gentlemen, I always say farewell to that, for where there are no poor, the ship will soon sink! If there are no poor there, Christ will soon give them some if they are a real gospel church.

Now, the reason we have a Blind Society is simply this—there are some good people who cannot help themselves because they are blind and helpless. There is one from my church and some from other churches. It is not a very large Society—it is all the better for that, for I find that in the great Societies, there is so much influence needed and so many votes required, that those who need help most cannot obtain it! And those who do not need it so much, but have the influence, get it all! Well, in this Christian Blind Relief Society, some of these poor blind people receive a trifle every week and I assure you they are all needy and deserving objects of your charity.

This is what we ask you tonight to support. Jesus Christ stands at the door and says to you as you leave, "Give Me something, this night, if you love Me."

I have to appeal so often, and am followed so much by my own people, that I have not the face to ask you for anything tonight, so Christ shall ask, instead, and I will ask next time. Remember the poor! Take care of the blind!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 9:27-35; 20:29-34.

[The first page of the preceding Sermon shows that it was delivered in the year 1855, before the beloved preacher had come of age. The Expositions given by Mr. Spurgeon at that early period were not reported, as they were in the later years of his ministry. Consequently, two passages relating to Christ's healing of the blind have been selected from *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, the popular Exposition of the Gospel according to Matthew which was being prepared by Mr. Spurgeon almost up to the time of his home going in January, 1892. Readers will therefore have the opportunity of comparing the messages left on record by him near the beginning and near the close of his long and prosperous London pastorate.]

Matthew 9:27. *And when Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying, and saying, You Son of David, have mercy on us!* No sooner does Jesus move, than fresh candidates for His bounty appear! The blind seek sight from Him. Two sightless men had become companions in affliction—they may have been father and son. They were in downright earnest, for they "*followed Him, crying, and saying, Have mercy on us.*" Persevering, vehement, yet intelligent was their appeal. They

were of one mind in reference to Jesus and, therefore, they went one way and used one prayer, to one and the same person. Our Lord is here called by His royal name—"*You Son of David*." Even the blind could see that He was a king's son! As Son of David, He is entreated to show mercy and act according to His royal nature. It is mercy which gives us our faculties and mercy alone can restore them. This prayer suits us when we perceive our own darkness of mind. When we cannot see our way into truth, let us appeal to the Lord for gracious instruction, always remembering that we have no claim except that which originates in His mercy.

28. *And when He was come into the house, the blind men came to Him: and Jesus said unto them, Believe you that I am able to do this? They said unto Him, Yes, Lord.* They were most eager for the gift. They gave Him no leisure—they pressed *into the house* where He had sought privacy and rest—*they came to Him*, even to Jesus Himself! The Lord would have them express their faith and so He makes inquiry of them as to what they believe about Himself. Jesus makes no inquiry about their eyes, but only about their faith—this is always the vital point! They could not see, but they could believe and they did so. They had a specific faith as to the matter about which they prayed, for our Lord put it plainly, "*Believe you that I am able to do* THIS?" They had also a clear view of the character of Him to whom they applied, for they had already styled Him, "*Son of David*," and now they called Him, "*Lord*."

29. *Then touched He their eyes, saying, according to your faith be it unto you.* Again He questions their faith and this time He throws the whole responsibility upon their confidence in Him. "*According to your faith be it unto you*." He touched *them* with His hand, but they must also touch Him with their faith! The word of power in the last sentence is one upon which He acts so continually that we may call it, as to many blessings, a rule of the kingdom of God. We have the measuring of our own mercies—our faith obtains less or more according to its own capacity to receive! Had these men been mere pretenders to faith they would have remained blind. If we will not in very truth trust our Lord, we shall die in our sins.

30. *And their eyes were opened and Jesus immediately charged them, saying, See that no man knows it.* They both saw the double miracle was worked at the same moment. Comrades in the dark, they are now companions in the light! Singular that for two souls there should thus be one destiny! It was a singular double fact and deserved to be made widely known, but our Lord had wise reasons for requiring silence. He "*immediately charged them*." He left them no option—He demanded complete silence. He that opened their eyes closed their mouths. Jesus did not desire fame—He wanted less crowding, He wished to avoid excitement and, therefore, He was express and peremptory in His order—"*See that no man knows it*."

31. *But they, when they were departed, spread abroad His fame in all that country.* They most industriously published what they were told to conceal till "*all that country*" rang with the news! In this they erred greatly and probably caused the Savior so much inconvenience by the pressure of the crowd, that He had to leave the town. We may not hope that we are doing right if we disobey our Lord! However natural disobedience

may appear to be, it is disobedience and must not be excused. Even if the results turned out to be advantageous, it would not make it right to break the command of our Lord. Silence is more than golden when our King commands it. He does not seek applause, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets that He may be known to be doing a great work. His followers do well to copy His example.

We do not wonder that our Lord's name became famous when there were such persons to advertise it. How earnestly and eloquently would the two formerly blind men tell the story of how He opened their eyes! We are not forbidden, but *exhorted to make known the wonders of His grace*. Let us not fail in this natural, this necessary, this useful duty. More and more let us "*spread abroad His fame*."

32. *As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a dumb man possessed with a devil*. As a pair of patients leave the surgery, another poor creature comes in. Note the, "*behold*." The case is striking. He comes not freely, or of his own accord—"*they brought*" him—thus should we bring men to Jesus. He does not cry for help, for he is "*a dumb man*." Let us open our mouths for the dumb. He is not himself, but he is "*possessed with a devil*." Poor creature! Will anything be done for him?

33. *And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spoke: and the multitudes marveled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel*. Our Lord does not deal with the symptoms, but with the source of the disorder, even with the evil spirit! "*The devil was cast out*" and it is mentioned as if that were a matter of course when Jesus came on the scene. The devil had silenced the man and so, when the evil one was gone, "*the dumb spoke*." How we should like to know what he said! Whatever he said, it matters not—the wonder was that he could say anything. The people confessed that this was a wonder quite unprecedented—and in this they only said the truth—"*It was never so seen in Israel*." Jesus is great at surprises! He has novelties of gracious power. The people were quick to express their admiration, yet we see very little trace of their believing in our Lord's mission. It is a small thing to marvel, but a great thing to believe! O Lord, give the people around us to see such revivals and conversions as they have never known before!

34. *But the Pharisees said, He casts out devils through the prince of the devils*. Of course they had some bitter sentence ready! Nothing was too bad for them to say of Jesus. They were hard pressed when they took to this statement which our Lord, in another place so easily answered! They hinted that such power over demons must have come to Him through an unholy compact with "*the prince of the devils*." Surely this was going very near to the unpardonable sin!

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*.

Matthew 20:29, 30. *And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. And, behold, two blind men sitting by the wayside, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, You Son of David!* On *Jericho* a curse had rested, but the presence of Jesus brought it a blessing! We suppose He must go through Jericho as once before He must go through Samaria. Our Lord *departed*

from Jericho and a vast crowd attended Him, for His fame had spread far and wide. Nothing striking is noted concerning His doings till two beggars come upon the scene. Mercy needs misery to give it an occasion to work. *Behold, two blind men sitting by the wayside*. They could not behold Jesus, but we are asked to behold them. They had taken up a hopeful position, by the wayside, for there they would be likely to hear any good news and there they would be seen by the compassionate. They had ears if they had not eyes and they used their hearing well! On inquiry, they learned *that Jesus passed by* and believing that He could restore their sight, they grew earnest in prayer to Him—*they cried out*. Their plea was pity—"*Have mercy on us*." Their appeal was to the royal heart of Jesus—"*O Lord, You Son of David*." Our Lord's sermon was interrupted by the repeated outcries of these two blind beggars of Jericho. But this never displeased Him—neither would true preachers of the gospel be disconcerted if some of their hearers were to cry out with similar eagerness for salvation.

31. *And the multitude rebuked them, told them they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, You Son of David!* The crowd desired to hear Jesus, but could not do so because of the shouts of the blind men—therefore *the multitude rebuked them*. Did they upbraid them for ill manners, or for noise, or for harshness of tone, or for selfishly wishing to monopolize Jesus? It is always easy to find a stick when you wish to beat a dog. The people wanted them to be quiet and *hold their peace*—and found plenty of arguments why they should do so. This was all very well for those who were in possession of their faculties, but men who have lost their sight cannot be quieted if there is an opportunity of obtaining sight—and as that opportunity was rapidly passing away from these poor men, they became vehement in their earnestness! Unhindered by the threats of the crowd, *they cried the more*. Some men are urged onward by all attempts to pull them back. When we are seeking the Lord, we shall be wise to make every hindrance into a stimulus. We may well bear rebukes and rebuffs when our great aim is to obtain mercy from Jesus Christ!

Unvarying was the blind beggars' cry—"*Have mercy on us, O Lord, You Son of David*!" Variety of words they had no time to study. Having asked for what they needed—in words which leaped from their hearts—they repeated their prayer and their plea. And it was no vain repetition!

32. *And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will you that I shall do unto you*? *Jesus stood still*. At the voice of prayer, the Sun of Righteousness paused in His progress! Believing cries can hold the Son of God by the feet! *He called them*—and this because they had called Him. What comfort that call yielded them! We are not told that they came to Him. There is no need to tell us that. They were at His feet as soon as the words were uttered! How sadly blind are those who, being called a thousand times by the voice of mercy, yet refuse to come! Our Lord enlightened minds as well as eyes and so He would have the blind men intelligently feel and express their needs. He puts to them the personal inquiry—"*What will you that I shall do unto you*?" It was not a hard question, yet it is one which many an attendant at our places of worship

would find it difficult to answer. You say you "wish to be saved"—what do you mean by those words?

33. *They said unto Him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.* Just so. They needed no time for second thoughts. Oh, that our people were as quick to pray, "*Lord, that our eyes may be opened!"* They went straight to the point. There is not a word to spare in their explanatory prayer. No book was needed, no form of words—the desire clothed itself in simple, natural, earnest speech.

34. *So Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.* So—that is, since they thus stated their desire and had so great a need, *Jesus had compassion on them*, pitying their loneliness in the dark, their deprivation of enjoyment, their loss of power to follow a handicraft and their consequent poverty. *He touched their eyes.* What hands were those which undertook such lowly fellowship with human flesh and worked such deeds of power! *Immediately their eyes received sight.* Only a touch and light entered! Time is not necessary to the cures of Jesus. Proof of their sight was at once forthcoming, for *they followed Him.* We best use our spiritual sight when we look to Jesus and keep close to His heels.

Oh, that the reader, if he is spiritually blind, may ask for the touch of Jesus and receive it at once, for immediately he will receive sight! An inward light will, in an instant, shine forth upon the soul and the spiritual world will become apparent to the enlightened mind! The Son of David still lives and still opens the eyes of the blind! He still hears the humble prayer of those who know their blindness and their poverty. If the reader fears that he, too, is spiritually blind, let him cry unto the Lord at this very instant and he will see what he shall see—and he will forever bless the hand which gave sight to the eyes of his soul!

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THE GLORY OF OUR STRENGTH
NO. 3140

A SERMON
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"For You are the glory of their strength."
Psalm 89:17.

THE Psalmist Ethan is here speaking of the covenant people—the people of God, the people who know the joyful sound of the covenant of grace and who, therefore, walk in the light of God's countenance. It is said of these persons that God is the glory of their strength. All strength of every sort comes from God. Since He is the author of all being, it is He who gives strength to every form of existence. Read the remarkable chapters which close the book of Job and see how God there claims to have given strength to the eagle in her lofty flight and to the horse when he paws in the valley—and leviathan and behemoth, those mighty creatures of the sea and the land! God claims to have given all the strength that there is in any of these members of the inferior creation and we are certain that He also lays an equally just claim to all the strength that there is in man. The power of the arms, the swiftness of the feet, the keenness of intellect—all these come from the Most High who has worked such wonders in the formation of the human frame! Whatever of vigor and capacity there may be in it, all must be traced to the almighty hand of God! Even the glory of man's physical strength, whether he knows it or not, belongs to God. He makes the young man vigorous and the full grown man mature in strength, so He ought to have the service of the strength which He has, Himself, created!

Equally is this true of all mental power. The craftsmen learn their art from God. Bezaleel and Aholiab were instructed of the Most High, "to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass," as truly as Moses was taught of God in the writing of the law. The poet receives his power for grand conceptions from God, who is beyond all human conception! And he who is most learned in any particular science—the great discoverer, the man who measures the stars or maps the seas—receives all his mental strength from the Most High! It would be well if this were always remembered, for it often happens that men who are great in wisdom ascribe their greatness to themselves and then prostitute their native talents and their acquired knowledge to their own ambitious ends, or to some mean and groveling purpose. Oh, that all men would lay out their talents for God, for He is the great owner who has given to one of His servants one talent, to another two and to another five talents—and who will, at His coming—require from them an account of what they have done with

them! Oh, that all that are mentally strong would ascribe the glory of their strength to God!

But there is a higher and nobler form of strength than either the physical or the mental. We rise into another realm when we come to speak of *spiritual* things. There are some men whom God has raised up from spiritual death. When they "were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly," and so He saved them from their death in sin and they have been made spiritually strong by God through the effectual working of His Son. By divine grace they are the sons of the Almighty God and they have become mighty through Him, so the glory of their strength is all to be ascribed to God. The Psalmist's declaration, "You are the glory of their strength," is true in reference to the whole of the spiritual seed—the covenant people who are made strong in spiritual things by the grace of God.

I. Now, in trying to lead your thoughts into the meaning of this text, I want you first of all, by way of contrast, to spend a few minutes in considering the opposite of our text. God is *the glory of our strength*, but what I want you now to think of is THE SHAME OF OUR WEAKNESS.

This is a very humiliating subject, but it is one that should never be far from our thoughts, for we shall never realize to the fullest, the glory of the strength which comes from God until we are deeply conscious of the shame of the weakness which is in our nature as the result of the fall and of our own sin. What poor weak creatures we are! It is no shame to us that we have not the strength of the elephant or the lion. It is no shame to us that we have not the wings of eagles or of angels. It is no shame to us that we are often the sport of the elements, so that we shiver in the cold or are blistered in the sun. It is no shame to us that when the storm sweeps over the sea, it drives our navies before it like so many cockleshells. It is no shame to us that there are many things in this world which are far more powerful than such a puny creature as man is! Such weakness as that which God intended us to have is no cause for shame—no, we turn to God in the full consciousness of it and remind Him that we are but animated dust and that He made us weak as we are—and intended us to be weak as we are! That is not where the shame lies. The shame lies in the moral weakness which is natural to us in our fallen state!

I mean that, left to ourselves, *we are weak enough to allow our baser spirits to be our masters* and our meanest capacities to have the sway over our entire nature. God has put the earth under our feet, but we often put ourselves under the earth by permitting that which is earthy to dominate us. We have a nature that, in its origin, was akin to the divine, yet how often we allow the passions of our fallen nature to control our whole being! We let that part of our nature which is worst be supreme over that which is best, yet it should never be so. Look at the weakness of the strongest man ever born of a woman! See him lying helpless at Delilah's feet and there committing suicide for I can call it by no other name—by revealing the secret of his strength and so delivering himself into the hands of the Philistines! Look at the weakness of the wisest man who ever lived and see how Solomon's heart was turned aside from God!

Look at the weakness of one of the best of men who ever lived, the man who was as great as a saint as he was as a poet—David, the sweet singer of Israel—who was weak as water when left to himself! I need not mention other cases. God grant that we may not, ourselves, become instances of such weakness! But we have been, I do not doubt, in some way or other, foolish enough to let our baser passions consent to sin while our nobler spiritual nature has hated the evil thing and fought against it.

Our weakness may also be seen in another way—*we are very apt to be carried away by circumstances*. We think we are standing very firmly, but a very slight change in our position or condition will affect us very seriously. It is really extraordinary how easily a holy man, who has been truly communing with God, will be put out of temper by a circumstance so infinitesimal in importance that he would be ashamed to have it known that he had been influenced by it! I think some of you must have known what it has been to have close fellowship with God and yet, afterwards, the merest trifle in the household has sufficed to rob you of all the good you had gained. Possibly if God should give you, at this service, a very special manifestation of His presence and you were to meet with a great trial at home, you would be enabled to bear it with calmness. Yet some little insignificant thing—I shall not conjecture what may cause you to lose your temper or put you off your guard in some other respect, or cause you to become concerned about other things than the highest and best things and effectually bring you down from your privileged position as follower of the Lord Jesus Christ to the common level—I was about to say of an ordinary worldling! Oh, how weak we are! How weak we are in such a case as that!

It is also amazing to think how *good men have been led into sin and overcome by the very smallest adversary*. Look at Peter, for instance—bold, lionhearted Peter. Who was it that led him to deny his Master? If some huge Roman legionary had come up to him with his drawn sword and said to him, "You Galilean, if you dare to say, 'I know Jesus,' this sword shall smite off your head," I should not wonder but that Peter would have been equal to that emergency and certainly he would have wished to have in his hand the sword with which he cut off the ear of Malchus so that he might at least defend himself. If the high priest had pointed to Peter and said, "I believe that yonder stands one of the men who were with Jesus of Galilee," it may be that he would have been bold enough to confess his Lord. But it was only a damsel, one of the high priest's maids who saw him as he was warming himself at the fire, and who said to him, "You, also, were with Jesus of Galilee"—and he denied it—and so the strong man was overcome! It is thus that little foes have frequently mastered us where great foes could not do so. I think it was Admiral Drake who, in a storm at the Nore, said to his sailors, "Surely we have not braved many tempests out in the open sea to come here to be drowned in a ditch." Yet it has often been so. Men who have done business in great waters, (who have encountered huge Atlantic waves of temptation), have nevertheless been allured into sin by a temptation that was utterly contemptible! And perhaps it was just because it seemed to

them so contemptible that they became carnally secure and so it proved to be doubly dangerous to them. But oh, what weak creatures we must be when trifling circumstances can turn us aside and when little things suffice to conquer us!

One thing in which we all betray our littleness is *the readiness with which we fall into the gross sin of idolatry*. We are, none of us, likely to bow down before blocks of wood and stone as the heathen do. Nor are we likely to worship the god made of bread which is the god of so many in this country—yet we are all too prone to make unto ourselves gods that are really idols! At one time it is a favorite child who is thus worshiped. "There never was a fairer child than mine. She is more like an angel than a human being," says the fond and foolish mother whose heart is wrapped up in her little one! Then comes God's great hammer that breaks all idols—and the dead child is carried to the silent tomb. After such a painful experience as that, will the mother ever make an idol of another child? Yes, there are some who have done that, to their own confusion, time after time! If it has not been a little child who has been thus idolized, it may have been the partner of one's own life. Perhaps it has been some cherished idea which we have pursued with such avidity that it has become a god to us. It is very, very easy to put your trust in an arm of flesh—either your own or somebody else's. But as soon as you do that, you bring yourself under that ancient curse, "Cursed is the man that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord"—for all trust in the creature is a subtle form of idolatry! After we have trusted in the creature once, twice, 20 times and been deceived, will we do it again? Yes, for such is the shame of our weakness that we still turn away from the eternal arm which can never fail us and cling to that poor puny arm of man that is often as false as it is weak! We still we make gods of things that are not gods, for, like the children of Israel, we are weak as water in this point also!

There is another thing that shows the shame of our weakness, namely, our *unbelief*. Have you never caught yourself saying, "After this, I shall never have a doubt again"? I have frequently found some such expression as that come to my lips, for I have had such extraordinary deliverances and such proofs of God's gracious loving-kindness that when I have received them, I have said, "Oh, what a blessed God! Oh what a faithful God! Oh, what a prayer-answering God!" And then the thought has come, "The next time I am in trouble, I shall not be so timorous and so unbelieving!" Yet I fear that many of you will have to join me in confessing with deep shame and confusion of face that it has only needed a new trial to come to us to cause us to find out that what we thought was strength was utter weakness! Have not you also found it so? Why, we are weaker even than our own children, for our children can and do trust their father! But sometimes we, the loved ones of heaven, cannot and do not trust our Father who has never deceived us! We may well lament the shame of our weakness.

If I were to keep on speaking of this part of my theme, I might show you that *we are weak everywhere and weak in every way*—weak to all good and weak in the presence of all evil if God once withdraws Himself

from us. You who are most mighty in prayer, are you not sometimes weak when you are upon your knees? You who often bear testimony to Christ with much courage, are you not sometimes weak in holy boldness? You who can generally rejoice in the Lord, are you not sometimes weak and feeble through despondency? Apart from God, our whole head is sick, our whole heart is faint and we are a mass of misery and a heap of weakness!

II. Now, having spoken thus by way of converse, I hope it is a fitting preparation for our dwelling a little while upon the second point which is, according to the text, THE GLORY OF OUR STRENGTH. True believers, though they are a very feeble folk in themselves, are very strong when God is with them! They are so strong that their strength has a great glory in it of which we will now speak. The strength of the true Christian is so great that nothing can overcome him and he is more than a conqueror in every engagement into which he enters!

What strength God gives to us, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, *at the very first, when we rise out of the grave of our spiritual death.* There we lie, bound hand and foot in that dark sepulcher—and a great stone is rolled over the mouth of it. The moment the Lord says to us, "Come forth," we open our eyes and begin to discover the gloomy grave in which we lie. Then and there God gives us the power to unbind ourselves, to remove the stone and to come forth into liberty! I mean that men, quickened by divine grace, deliver themselves from evil habits, from customs which had bound them as with bands of iron, from inveterate sins which had held them captive as in a net! They become free from all these things in the strength of the Holy Spirit when He has regenerated them and brought them up from their spiritual captivity. The achievements of a newborn soul, in its first conflicts with its old sins, are perfectly marvelous! There are many wonders in the Christian life, but I believe that the first stroke he gives when he is but newly born and, therefore weak, has a marvelous degree of power in it. Many men have been swearers. Many have been drunkards. Many have been guilty of all manner of evil, but those old sins have been laid dead at their feet by one blow struck in the power of the ever blessed Spirit. Truly, the glory of the strength of the newborn child of God must lie in his God!

The man being divinely quickened, we now find him contending for the right. And *wherever he contends, he overcomes!* The world frowns on him and he laughs at the frown. Then it fawns on him and he despises its flattery. Sham faith soon yields to the enemy, but real faith wins the victory over the world! If the whole world should attack a true believer, the believer would overcome the world and break through all its toils. Faith also overcomes the flesh and that is no small victory. He who has true God given faith in Christ contends with inbred corruptions, strong passions and the deceitfulness that is ingrained within the human heart. Where the life of God is in the heart, there is strength given to overcome the flesh. Though the man may have been sensual and devilish before conversion, Divine grace is more than a match for the flesh and grace gains the victory! It is a great thing to be able to overcome the world, the

great world without and the little world within—but Satan comes into the field and sets himself among those who are arrayed against the believer—and, blessed be God, the devil fares badly in the fight, for many a time the dread Apollyon who has stretched himself across the way and said that he would slay the saint, has himself been pierced by the sword of the Spirit and has fled away wounded! What strength there must be in the believer when he is able to overcome that accursed trinity of antagonists—the world, the flesh and the devil!

When God is in him, *the Christian finds himself able to do anything.* "By You," says David, "I have run through a troop, and by my God have I leaped over a wall." And God said, "Fear not, you worm Jacob, and you men of Israel, I will help you, says the Lord" and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. "Behold, I will make you a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth; you shall thresh the mountains and beat them small." Weak as we are, with God's help, nothing is impossible for us! What feats of valor some believers have performed! Read the histories of the saints of the olden ages and think of the apostles and their immediate followers. What strength was theirs and it was only faith that made them strong! You have read *Foxe's Book of Martyrs;* perhaps till you have felt your blood boil with indignation and you have shut the book up and said, "I can read no more of the dreadful story lest it should disturb my dreams." But if you cannot even bear to *think* of the tortures which the saints underwent, what must it have been for them to *bear* them so heroically as they did? Women and even children defied their tormentors and there were saints who, in the midst of the fire, bravely quoted verses of Scripture against their persecutors and with holy joy sang Psalms in the midst of the flames! How the saints baffled Nero, Domitian and other cruel tyrants! The Inquisition, in its dreary vaults, almost rivaled hell in its pains and torments, but it was not able to quench the noble spirit of God's faithful servants! The persecutors may do what they will, but only give us a band of men and women who have God's Spirit in them—and even though their foes may tear them limb from limb—they shall not conquer them! It is impossible that God's true saints should be overcome, for they have a glory of strength that nothing can destroy!

Neither persecution, nor tribulation, nor nakedness, nor distress, nor famine, nor peril, nor sword, no, nor even death, itself, has been able to make the saints deny their Master! And we see the same strength upholding them still! I have, in my mind's eye now, one dear sister, a member of this church, in whom I have seen, within the last few days, the matchless way in which the saints can conquer death. When they have been almost worn out by disease and incessant pain. When sleep has been banished from their eyes. When their whole body has been only a road for the feet of pain to traverse—even then they have never been impatient and they have rejoiced in the prospect of departure—not merely because they wished to be free from pain, but because the presence of Christ had already made them so happy that they longed to get to the fountainhead of those sweet streams which were even then making them glad! Death has never yet conquered a saint! The children of God have all been conquerors. Every sepulcher of a saint is but another monument of

the victory of faith! "These all died in faith," might be inscribed over the vast mausoleum of believers—and then the palm branch might be put at the bottom of the inscription, for, dying in faith, they, every one of them, achieved the victory!

Let me add that God's servants have a glory of strength which I must not even mention without much humbleness of heart. God's people are, through His grace, so strong that they not only overcome the world, the flesh and the devil, but *they overcome God Himself*. Oh, matchless mystery, that the omnipotent should yield to the believer's strength! Do you ask, "How is this?" Let me remind you of the brook Jabbok and the memorable wrestling there when the divine wrestler said to Jacob, "Let Me go, for the day breaks," but the brave man of faith replied, "I will not let You go, except You bless me." And so he won the blessing—and with it came that new name, so full of meaning—"Your name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel, for as a prince have you power with God and with men, and have prevailed." Truly did Joseph Hart, write, concerning God given faith—

"It treads on the world and on hell!
It vanquishes death and despair!
And what is still stranger to tell
It overcomes heaven by prayer!"

Surely there is a great glory in the strength of a Christian when even heaven is moved by the pleading voice of a true believer!

III. Now let us notice, in the third place—and may the Spirit of God give His own unction and power with the thought!—that believers, thus having God given strength, know that ALL THE GLORY OF THEIR STRENGTH LIES IN GOD.

I hope you have understood this truth of God even while I have been speaking about it, for it is true that the Christian has no other strength than that which has come from God. *It is so in every individual Christian*. The glory of any strength that he has must be given to God because God has given that strength to him. Have you all learned this lesson yet or are any of you proud of anything that you are, or of anything that you have done? Have you not yet learned the truth of the text, "You are the glory of their strength"? Have you been foolish enough to say, "I preach well," or, "I work well," or, "I suffer well," or, "I am growing in grace, so there is some credit due to me?" Dear brother, if you talk like that, may the Lord deliver you from all such delusions! He is the glory of our strength—let us keep to that and never get away from it, for the Lord our God is a jealous God and He is especially jealous of His own glory! And if He sees that we give that glory to ourselves, or to any other but Himself, He will take away from us the strength that He gave and make us cry out once again because of our weakness. So do not destroy your own strength by taking the glory of it to yourself. Oh, how many a man has flung himself from the battlements of his pulpit by beginning to feel that *he* did it and that he had some strength of his own! How many a professor has marred a life of consistency in one dark hour—and the reason has been that self-sufficiency and carnal security were hidden away in his bosom—and at

last betrayed him. When you are strong, then are you weak. But when you are conscious of weakness, then are you truly strong! While you lay the crown at the feet of Him who gave you the strength to win it, you will always be made strong. But as soon as you begin putting the crown on your own head, your strength shall be taken from you and if, like Samson, you go out to shake yourself as at other times, you will find that the Lord has departed from you to chasten you for your pride!

Further, *what is true of individual Christians is also true of a church.* And I want to impress this truth upon the members of this church and upon the members of all other churches. When God makes a church strong, it is a very blessed and glorious thing—but the glory and strength of every church must always lie in God. It never lies in the fact that there are many wealthy persons belonging to it. If God ever sees His people worshiping the golden calf, He will send a plague upon them to punish them for their idolatry! The glory of a church must never lie in the fact that there are certain persons of intelligence connected with it. I believe that is the worm at the root of many churches and that it will lead to their decay. Everything is done with the view of pleasing two or three people who are supposed to be very intellectual—yet those very people, if they are the Lord's people—do not need "intellectual preaching" at all! They have enough work for their intellect on the other six days of the week and they need the simple gospel—plain spiritual food for their souls to feed upon on the Sabbath! There are a great many ministers who cause their hearers to break the fourth commandment for the labor involved in hearing them preach is indeed terrible—it must rack the soul instead of resting it! I should like to see a Lord's-Day Rest Society established to keep the people's mind at rest instead of their being tortured with all manner of quibbles and questions! They need to hear of Jesus Christ, for He is the true rest for the soul and it is the very essence of the divine commandment to leave your own work and to rest in Christ! That is the way to keep the Sabbath holy and he who has not done that cannot know the true Sabbath rest which is the portion only of those who are resting in the Lord Jesus Christ!

So it will not do to make the glory of our strength to lie in the wealthy people or the intelligent people. And it will not do to make the glory of our strength to lie in fine speech. "The wisdom of words" appears to have strength in it, but when it makes the cross of Christ of no effect, it is sheer weakness! It was one of the worst days that ever dawned upon the church of Christ when it began to cultivate the art of oratory and turned aside to "enticing words of man's wisdom." But when men speak out of an overflowing soul of what God has done for them, that is the power which the Spirit of God gives to them and the power which He will bless to their hearers! They do not then try to use out of the way words and nicely rounded sentences, nor to pile up perorations—for that is magnifying the preacher and dishonoring the Word of God that has come out of the mouth of God!

The glory of our strength must never lie in any of these things—it must lie in God alone. If it does so lie, then we shall glory in the gospel which is one of the great supports of our strength! We shall glory in the

cross of Christ which is the main strength of the gospel. And we shall glory in the Holy Spirit, who alone can raise the spiritually dead, who alone can give the eyes that look to Christ upon the cross and who alone can make the heart long after its Redeemer! O brothers and sisters in Christ, we have need to pray for God the Holy Spirit to work mightily among us! We have the Holy Spirit still with us, so we have no need to pray that He would come down from heaven. He came down at Pentecost and He never went back to heaven, so He is still here. He is in all His people! He is in this assembly right now. He dwells among us, though we are apt to forget that He does. We reckon that the glory of our strength lies in our ministers, or in our organizations, or in our creeds. We forget that the glory of our strength is *spiritual* and lies in the Holy Spirit, Himself, who is in us and who shall be forever in us if we are truly the Lord's! Cry mightily in prayer, beloved, that this true glory of our strength may continually be revealed in our midst as a church, for so often we restrain Him, grieve Him and bind Him, as it were, with chains! He cannot do many mighty works among us because of our unbelief. He withholds His richest blessings because of our sinfulness. Let us turn to Him again! O Lord, turn us and we shall be turned, and then we shall see the glory of our strength among us, and we shall give all the glory to Him who gives to us all our strength!

I offered a prayer, this evening, (and I prayed in faith), that the Lord would, in His mercy, save some souls tonight. And I expect to hear that He has done so. I do not expect that blessed fact to remain concealed until we get to heaven, but I expect to know *tonight* that same of my hearers have come and found rest in Jesus!

I think I hear someone say, "I would gladly be saved, but I am so weak." But the almighty Savior came to save weak sinners! "Oh, but I am *so* weak I do not feel any repentance." But Christ was exalted to give repentance! O poor weak ones, it is to just such as you are that Jesus says, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." It is but a *look* that is needed—and even *that* the Holy Spirit gives you! He gives it to you *now*—He enables you *now* to look to Jesus, the great atoning sacrifice! And as you look, you are saved in a moment, saved through His grace by that simple looking unto Jesus! Oh, to leap out of death into life, out of thick darkness into unutterably glorious light in one moment! I pray that the Holy Spirit may speak to many a soul here through the words that I am now uttering. "Awake, you that sleep and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." The Lord grant that it may be so—and to Him shall be the glory, for He is the glory of our strength. Amen!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 89:1-38.

Verses 1, 2. *I will sing of the mercies of the LORD forever: with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever: Your faithfulness shall You establish in the very heavens.* [See Sermon #1565, Volume 26—MASCHIL OF ETHAN, A MAJES-

TIC SONG—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] So far, the gracious man declares the resolution of his heart to praise his God forever and gives the reason for that resolve. Now he quotes the Lord's covenant with David.

3, 4. *I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn unto David, My servant, Your seed will I establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations. Selah.* That covenant, as you well know, was not only made with David, but it had a higher spiritual bearing, for it related to that great and glorious Son of David who still reigns and shall reign forever—and in whom every covenant blessing is secured.

5. *And the heavens shall praise Your wonders, O LORD: Your faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.* It is often very profitable when we are enjoying fellowship with God, for us to speak to God and then wait for God to speak to us. It is so here, you see. First the Psalmist says that he will praise God forever. Then God tells him of His covenant and explains to him the reason why mercy shall be built up forever. And then the man of God begins to praise God again. That will give you a hint for your own private devotion. Sometimes you feel that you cannot praise God and cannot pray to Him. Well then, if you cannot speak to God, sit still and let Him speak to you! Read a portion of Scripture and then, perhaps, some suggestive verse or word in it will set you praying. And then when you have prayed, stop a little while and read again—and so a blessed conversation shall be carried on between you and your God! Thus the Psalmist takes his turn again—"And the heavens shall praise Your wonders, O Lord: Your faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints."

6, 7. *For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD? God is greatly to be feared.* That is, reverenced.

7-9. *In the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him. O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto You? Or to Your faithfulness round about You? You rule the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, You still them.* He lets them arise and He bids them sink down again. All the providential dealings of God seem to be illustrated in the ever varying phenomena of the sea. The Lord sometimes lets tempests arise in our circumstances, but soon with a word He stills them and there is a great calm.

10. *You have broken Rahab in pieces as one that is slain.* The great crocodile of Egypt.

10-12. *You have scattered Your enemies with Your strong arm. The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours: as for the world and the fullness thereof, You have founded them. The north and the south You have created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in Your name.* Oh, what a blessed spirit the spirit of true devotion is! There is such life in it that it seems to quicken all inanimate creation and make the rocks and mountains sing, the trees of the woods to clap their hands and the waves of the sea to praise the great Creator! So the whole world is like a great organ and man, guided by God's Spirit, puts his fingers on the keys and wakes the whole world to the thunder of adoration and praise! Oh to be

taught of God to have a praising heart, for then all around us will be more likely to also praise Jehovah!

13, 14. *You have a mighty arm.* [See Sermons #674, Volume 12—THE MIGHTY ARM and #1314, Volume 22 which has the same title—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *Strong is Your hand, and high is Your right hand. Justice and judgment are the habitation of Your throne: mercy and truth shall go before Your face.* There are wells of joy in this verse to those who know how to draw it up. It is a great delight to every man who is oppressed to know that justice and judgment stand, like armed sentinels, on either side of the throne of God and to every human soul, conscious of unworthiness, it is an unspeakable delight that mercy and truth, like royal heralds, go before God wherever He goes! It has been well said that a God of all mercy would be an unjust God—but a God of all justice without mercy would be terrible, indeed!

15-21. *Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of Your countenance. In Your name shall they rejoice all the day: and in Your righteousness shall they be exalted. For You are the glory of their strength: and in Your favor our horn shall be exalted for the LORD is our defense; and the Holy One of Israel is our king. Then You spoke in vision to Your holy one, and said, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David My servant; with My holy oil have I anointed him: with whom My hand shall be established: My arm also shall strengthen him.* David was a great blessing to the nation over which God made him king. Among the choicest gifts that God ever gives to men are men and, therefore, we read concerning Christ, "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men"—and those gifts were men, for, "He gave some, apostles and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." These were the choice ascension gifts of Christ! Yet, while these verses primarily refer to David, the king of Israel, we must believe that a greater than David is here, even Christ, who deigns to call Himself God's servant, who has been anointed by the Spirit of God, with whom God's hand is always established and who is ever strengthened by the arm of omnipotence.

22-25. *The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him. And I will beat down his foes before his face and plague them that hate him. But My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with him: and in My name shall his horn be exalted. I will set his hand also in the sea and his right hand in the rivers.* Do not believe, dear friends, any of the prophecies that some men make concerning the destruction of the kingdom of Christ and the failure of His church—but be certain that the Lord will not suffer Christ to fail or be discouraged—and rest assured that the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands! The history of the church of Christ is a history of conflict, but it shall be a history of victory before it is completed—"I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers."

26-34. *He shall cry unto Me, You are my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. Also I will make him My firstborn, higher than the kings of*

the earth. My mercy will I keep for him forevermore, and My covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake My law, and walk not in My judgments; if they break My statutes, and keep not My commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless My loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, or alter the thing that is gone out of My lips. If, then, you are in the covenant, you will have the rod—you may rest sure of that! If you do not walk in God's ways, but break His statutes, you will not be allowed to go unchastened. If a father saw some boys in the street breaking windows or otherwise misbehaving themselves—and he gave one of the boys a box on the ears, you may be pretty certain that the boy is his own son. And when God sees men doing wrong, He often permits the wicked to go unpunished in this life—but as for His own people, it is written, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Our heavenly Father's hand still holds the rod and uses it when necessary—but it is in love that He corrects us. Let us, therefore, when He chastens us, plead the covenant that is here recorded and say to Him, "You have said, 'Nevertheless My loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips.'"

35-37. *Once have I sworn by My holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me. It shall be established forever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah.*

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WOMEN'S RIGHTS—A PARABLE
NO. 3141

A SERMON
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"And Moses brought their cause before the LORD."
Numbers 27:5.

BY the help of God the Holy Spirit, I want to use this incident which forms a kind of episode in the rehearsal of the history of Israel's 40 years' wanderings in the wilderness, for a twofold purpose. First, let me indicate *its general teaching,* and secondly, let me take it as *a ground of appeal to certain special classes*.

I. First, I will try to indicate ITS GENERAL TEACHING.

I would ask your attention and exhibit for your imitation, *the faith which these five young women, the daughters of Zelophehad, possessed with regard to the promised inheritance*. You must remember that the children of Israel were still in the wilderness. They had not seen the Promised Land, but God had made a covenant with them that they should possess it. He had declared that He would bring them into a land which flowed with milk and honey and there plant them. And that that land should belong to them and to their descendants by a covenant of salt forever. Now, these women believed in this heritage. They were not like Esau, who thought so little of the inheritance which was his birthright that he sold it to his brother Jacob for a mess of pottage—they believed it to be really worth having. They regarded it, though they had never beheld it, as being something exceedingly substantial and so, thinking about it, they were afraid lest they should be left out when the land was divided. And though they had never seen it, yet, being persuaded that it was *somewhere* and that the children of Israel would have it in due time, their anxiety was they, having no brothers, would be forgotten in the distribution and so would lose their rights. They were anxious about an inheritance which they had never seen with their eyes and, therein, I hold them up to the imitation of this present assembly.

There is an inheritance that is far better than the land of Canaan. Oh, that we all believed in it and longed for it! It is an inheritance, however, which mortal eyes have not seen and the sounds of which mortal ears have not heard. It is a city whose streets are gold, but none of us have ever walked them. Never has traveler to that country come back to tell us of its glories. There the music never ceases, no discord ever mingles in it, it is sublime, but no member of the heavenly choir has ever come to write out for us the celestial score, or to—

"Teach us some melodious sonnet
Sung by flaming tongues above."

It is not a matter of sight—it must be to each one of us a matter of *faith*. By faith we know that there is another and a better land. By faith

we understand that our disembodied souls shall mount to be with Christ and that, after a while, our bodies shall also rise to join our spirits so that body and soul may together be glorified forever in the presence of our gracious Redeemer. We have never seen this land, however—but there are some of us who as firmly believe in it as if we had seen it—and are as certain of it and as fully persuaded as though these ears of ours had listened to its songs of joy and these feet of ours had walked its streets of gold!

There was this feature, too, about the faith of these five women—they knew that the inheritance was only to be won by encountering great difficulties. The spies who came back from the land had said that the men who dwelt in it were giants. They said, "We were in our own sight as grasshoppers and so we were in their sight." There was many a man, in the camp of Israel, I have no doubt, who said, "Well, I would sell my share cheaply enough, for though the land is there, we can never win it! They have cities walled up to heaven and they have chariots of iron—we can never win the land." But these women believed that although they could not fight, God could! And though they had never put their fingers to a more terrible instrument than a needle, yet did they believe that the same right arm which got itself the victory when they went with Miriam, dancing to the timbrels' jubilant sound, would get the victory, again, and bring God's people in and drive the Canaanites out even though they had walled cities and chariots of iron!

So these women had strong faith. I would to God that you had the same, all of you, dear friends, but I know that some of you who believe that there is a land which flows with milk and honey, are half afraid that you shall never reach it! You are vexed with many doubts because of your own weakness, which, indeed, should not merely make you doubt, but should make you utterly despair if the gaining of the goodly land depended upon your own fighting for it and winning it! But, inasmuch as "the *gift* of God is eternal life" and God, Himself, will give it to us, and inasmuch as Jesus has gone up on high to prepare a place for us and has promised that He will come again and receive us unto Himself that where He is, there we may also be, I would to God that our doubts and fears were banished and that we said within ourselves, "We are well able to go up and attack the land, for the Lord, even the Lord of hosts, is with us! The-Lord-Is-My-Banner! The Lord Our Righteousness is our helper and we shall surely enter into the place of the beloved people of God and shall join the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven."

I commend the faith of these women to you because believing in the land and believing that it would be won, they were not to be put about by the ill report of some who said that it was not a good land. There were 10 out of the 12 who spied out the land who said, "It is a land that eats up the inhabitants thereof." They brought back an evil report. But, whoever may have been perverted by these lies, these five women were not. Others said, "Why, the land is full of pestilence and hornets and those who live in it now are dying," forgetting that God was making them die in order to bring in the children of Israel in their place. And so they said, "who

cares to have a portion there? Give us the leeks, the garlic and the onions of Egypt—and let us sit again by the fleshpots that we had at Rameses—but as for going on to this Canaan, we will never do it." But these five women, who knew that if there were troubles in the household, *they* would be sure to have their share of them, that if the bread ran short, *they* would be the most likely to feel the straitness of it, and that if it were a land of sickness, *they* would have to be the nurses, yet coveted to have their share in it, for they did not believe the ill report. They said, "No, God has said it is a good land, a land of hills and valleys, a land of brooks and rivers, a land of olive oil and honey, a land out of whose hills we may dig iron and brass—and we will not believe what you spies say—it is a good land and we will go in and ask for our share of it." So I commend their faith in this respect.

I know that some of you are occasionally met by sneering skeptics and they say to you, "There is no such place as heaven! We have never seen it—are you such fools as to believe in it? Are you going on a pilgrimage over hedge and ditch, helter-skelter, to a country that you know nothing of? Are you going to trust that old fashioned book and take God's Word, and nothing but His Word, and believe it?" Oh, I hope there are many of us—would that *all* of us were in that happy position—who can say, "It is even so!" Stand back, Mr. Atheist, and stop us not, for we are well persuaded that ours is no wild goose chase! Stand back, Sir Ironical Skeptic! Laugh if you will. You will laugh on the other side of your face one of these days and we shall have the last laugh at that time! At any rate, if there is no heaven, we shall be as well off as you will be, but if there is a hell, where, O where will you be—and what will your portion be? So we go on our own way confident and sure, doubting nothing—believing as surely as we believe in our own existence that—

"Jesus, the Judge will come
To take His people up
To their eternal home"—

and believing that one hour with Him will be worth all the trials of the road—worth enduring ten thousand deaths, if we could endure them, in order to win it and that, moreover, by God's grace we shall win it—

"We shall behold His face,
We shall His name adore!
And sing the wonders of His grace
Henceforth forevermore!"

So I hold up these daughters of Zelophehad to your commendation and imitation on account of their faith.

But there was another point. Feeling certain concerning the land, we must next commend them for *their anxiety to possess a portion in it.* Why did they think so much about it? I heard someone say, the other day, speaking of certain young people, "I do not like to see young women religious—they ought to be full of fun and mirth and not have their minds filled with such profound thoughts." Now, I will be bound to say that this kind of philosophy was accredited in the camp of Israel and that there were a great many young women there who said, "Oh, there is time enough to think about the good land when we get there! Let us be polish-

ing up our mirrors. Let us be seeing to our dresses. Let us understand how to put our fingers upon the timbrel when the time comes for it! But as for prosing about a portion among those Hivites and Hittites, what is the good of it? We will not bother ourselves about that." But such was the strength of the faith of the five women that it led them to feel a deep anxiety for a share in the inheritance. They were not such simpletons as to live only for the present. They had outgrown their babyhood—they were not satisfied to live merely for the day. They knew that in due time the tribes would cross the Jordan and would be in the Promised Land, so they began, as it were, like good housewives, to think about where their portion would be and to reflect that were they left out when the muster roll was read—and should no portion be appointed for Tirzah, no portion for Milcah and no place for any of the five sisters, they would be like beggars and outcasts in the midst of the land! The thought of all others having their plot of ground and their family having none, made them anxious about it. O dear friends, how anxious you and I ought to be to make our calling and election sure! And how solemnly should that question of the Countess of Huntingdon come home to our hearts—

"But can I bear the piercing thought—
What if my name should be left out
When You for them shall call?"

Suppose I should have no portion in the skies? O you foundations of chrysolite and all manner of precious stones, you gates of pearl, you walls of jasper, must I never see you? O troops of angels and armies of the blood-bought, must I never wave the palm or wear the crown in your midst? Must the word that salutes me be that awful sentence, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire"? Is there no place for me, no room for me in the inheritance of the saints?

I do beseech you, never be satisfied till you can answer this question in the affirmative and say, "Yes, I have a place in Jesus' heart! I have been washed in Jesus' blood and, therefore, I shall be with Jesus where He is in His glory when the fitting time comes." Oh, I would have you who are not sure about this, be as anxious as these women were! Let it press upon your hearts! Let it even take the color from your cheek sooner than that you should have an empty and frivolous gaiety and mirth which will entice you down to the pit! Oh, make sure work for eternity! Whatever else you trifle with, seek to have an anchor that will hold you fast in the last great storm! Seek to be affianced unto Christ! Be sure that you are founded upon the Rock of Ages, where alone we can safely build for eternity!

These women were taken up with prudent anxious thoughts about their own part in the land of promise—and they were right in desiring to have a portion there when they remembered that the land had been given by covenant to their fathers. They might well wish to have a part in a thing good enough to be a covenant blessing! The land had been promised over and over again by divine authority—they might well wish to have a share in that which God's own lips had promised! It was a land to bring them into which God had killed the firstborn of Egypt and saved His people by the sprinkling of blood—they might well desire a land

which cost so great a price to bring them to it! Besides, it was a goodly land. It was the princeliest of all lands, peerless among all the territories of earth. Its products were most rich. The grapes of Eshcol—what could equal them? Its pomegranates, its olives, its rivers—the land that flowed with milk and honey—there was nothing like it in the entire world! These women might well say, "Let us have a portion there!"

And, my dear hearers, the heaven of which we have to tell you is a land so good that it was spoken of in the covenant before the world was! It has been promised to the people of God ten thousand times! Jesus Christ has shed His precious blood that He might open the gates of it and bring us in! And it is such a land that if you had but seen it, if you could but know what it is, you would pine away in stopping here for it's very dust is gold, its meanest joys are richer than the transports of earth and the poorest in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he who is the mightiest prince in the kingdoms of this world! Oh, that your mouths were set a longing after the feasts of paradise! Oh that you pined to be where Jesus is and then, surely, you would be anxious to know whether you had a portion there!

I hold these women up as an example because they believed in the unseen inheritance and they were anxious to get their portion in it.

But I must commend them yet again for *the way in which they set about the business*. I do not find that they went complaining from tent to tent that they were afraid that they had no portion. Many doubters do that—they tell their doubts and fears to others, but they get no further. But these five women went straight to Moses. He was at their head, he was their mediator—and then it is said that "Moses brought their cause before the LORD." You see, these women did not try to get what they wanted by force. They did not say, "We will take care to get our share of the land when we get there." They did not suppose that they had any merit which they might plead, and so get it, but they went straight to Moses—and Moses took their cause and laid it before the Lord. Sinner, do you want a portion in heaven? Go straight to Jesus and Jesus will take your cause and lay it before the Lord! It is a very sorry one as it stands by itself, but He has such a sweet way of so mixing Himself up with you and yourself with Him, that His cause and your cause will be one cause—and the Father will give Him good success—and give you good success, too! Oh, that someone here would breathe the prayer, if he has never prayed before, "Savior, will You see that I have a portion in the skies? Precious Savior, take my poor heart and wash it in Your precious blood, change it by your Holy Spirit and make me ready to dwell where perfect saints are! Oh, undertake my cause for me, blessed advocate, and plead it before Your Father's face!" That is the way to have the business of salvation effectually done! Take it out of your own hands and put into the hands of the prophet like unto Moses, and you will surely succeed!

Now, observe *the success of these women*. The Lord accepted their plea, for He said unto Moses, "The daughters of Zelophehad speak rightly." Yes, and when you cry to Him and when His dear Son takes your prayer to Him, God will say, "That sinner speaks rightly." Beat on your

breast and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and He will say, "That soul speaks rightly." Young woman, imitate these five sisters right now! May God the Holy Spirit bring you to imitate them by humbly offering your plea through the Mediator, Jesus Christ, and God will say, "Ah, she speaks rightly, I have heard her and I have accepted her." And then God said that these sisters should have their portion just the same as the men had—that they should have their share of land just as if they had inherited it as sons—and so will God say to every seeking sinner! Whatever may be the disability under which you labor. Whatever bar there may have seemed to be to your claim, you shall inherit among the children, you shall take your part and your lot among the chosen people of God! Christ has set your cause before His Father, and it shall be unto you, poor sinner, according to your desire—and you shall have a part among the Lord's people!

I wish I had power to press this matter more immediately home upon you. Many of us who are now present are saved. It is a great satisfaction to remember how large a proportion of my congregation has come to Christ, but ah, there are many, many here who are—well, what are they? They do not know that they have any inheritance! They cannot read their title clear to mansions in the skies and, what is worse, they are unconcerned about it! If they were troubled about it, we would have hope concerning them, but no, they go their way and, like Pliable, having got out of the Slough of Despond, they turn around and say to Christians, "You may have the brave country all to yourselves for all we care." They are so fond of present pleasure, so easily enticed by the wily whispers of the archenemy, so soon overcome by their own passions that they find it too hard to be Christians—to love Christ is a thing too difficult for them! Ah, may God meet with you and make you wiser! Poor souls, you will perish—some of you will perish while you are looking on at this world's bubbles and baubles! You will perish—you will go down to hell with this earth's joys in your mouths—but they will not sweeten those mouths when the pangs of hell get hold upon you! Your life is short. Your candle flickers in its socket. You must soon go the way of all flesh. We never meet one week after another without some death occurring between. Out of this vast number, surely it is all but impossible that we should ever all meet here again! Perhaps before this day next week, some of us will have passed the curtain, will have learned the great secret and will have entered the invisible world! Whose portion will it be? If it is yours, dear hearer, will you mount to worlds of joy, or shall—

"Devils plunge you down to hell
In infinite despair?"

God make that a matter of concern with us, first, and then may we come to Jesus and receive the sprinkling of precious blood! And thus may He make it a matter of confidence with us that we are saved through Him and shall be partakers with them that are sanctified!

II. Secondly, I am going to use the whole incident as a GROUND OF APPEAL TO CERTAIN SPECIAL CLASSES.

Does it not strike you that there is here *a special lesson for our unconverted sisters*? Here are five daughters, I suppose young women, certain-

ly unmarried women, and these five were unanimous in seeking to have a portion where God had promised it to His people. Have I any young women here who have not acted like that? I am afraid I have! Blessed be God for the many who come in among us who become solemnly impressed and give their young days to Jesus! But there are some, there may be some here, of another mind. The temptations of this wicked metropolis, the pleasures of this perilous city lead them away from the right path and prevent them from giving a fair hearing to God's Word. Well, but you are here, my sister, and may I, as a brother, put this question to you? Do you not desire a portion in the skies? Have you no wish for glory? Have you no longing for the everlasting crown? Can you sell Christ for a few hours of mirth? Will you give Him up for a giddy song or an idle companion? Those are not your friends who would lead you from the paths of righteousness! Count them not dear, but loathe them if they would entice you from Christ! But, as you will certainly die and will as certainly live forever in endless woe or in boundless bliss, do see to your souls! "Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," and all other necessary things shall be added to you. You have come fresh from the country, young woman, and leaving your mother's care it is very likely that you have begun to absent yourself from the means of grace, but I charge you not to do so! On the contrary, let this bind you to your mother's God and may you feel that whereas you may have up to now neglected God's house and profaned God's Day, yet henceforth, like the daughters of Zelophehad, you will seek to have a portion in the Promised Land!

The subject bears another way. *Has it not a voice, and a loud voice too, to the children of godly parents*? I like these young women saying that their father did not die with Korah, but that he only died the ordinary death which fell upon others because of the sin of the wilderness. And also their saying, "Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family because he has no son?" It is a good thing to see this respect to parents—this desire to keep up the honor of the family. I was thinking whether there may not be some here, some children of godly parents, who would feel it a sad thing if they should bring disgrace upon the family name? Is it so, that though your father has been for many years a Christian, he has not one to succeed him? O young man, have you no ambition to stand in his place, no wish to let his name be perpetuated in the church of God? Well, if the sons have no such ambition or if there are none, let the daughters say to one another, "Our father never disgraced his profession. He did not die in the company of them that gathered themselves together against the Lord, but he served the Lord faithfully—and we will not let his name be blotted out from Israel! We will join ourselves to the people of God and the family shall be still represented." But oh, how I desire that the brothers and sisters would come together! And what a delightful thing it would be to see the whole family! In that household there were only five girls, but they all had their heritage. Father, would you not be happy if it should be so with your children? Mother, would you not be ready to say, "Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word, for my eyes have seen Your salva-

tion," if you could see all your children brought in? And why not, my brothers and sisters, why not? We will give God no rest until it is so! We will plead with Him until they are all saved! And young people, why not? The Lord's mercy is not straitened! The God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob and your father's God, we trust, will be your God! Oh, that you would follow in the footsteps of your parents so far as they followed Christ! These daughters of Zelophehad seem to me to turn preachers—and I stand here to speak for them, and all five of them say to you—"We gained our inheritance by seeking for it through a mediator. Young women, brothers and sisters, you shall gain it, too, by seeking it through a Savior."

And does not this text also speak to another class—to *orphans*? These good girls had lost their parents, or otherwise the question would not have arisen. Father and mother had passed away and, therefore, they had to go to Moses for themselves. When the parents could not come to Moses for them, they came for themselves. Think of the skies a moment, some of you. Perhaps this morning you were in a very different place, but think of the skies a minute. No, I do not mean the meteoric stones! I do not mean the stars, nor yon bright moon—but I want you to think of your mother, who is yonder. Do you remember when she gave you the last kiss, bade you farewell and said, "Follow me, my children. Follow me to the skies"? Think of a father who is there. His voice, doubtless, helping to swell the everlasting hallelujahs! Does he not beckon you from the battlements of heaven and cry, "Children of my loins, follow me, as I followed Christ"? Some of us have an honored grandfather there, an honored grandmother there. Many of you have little infants there, young angels whom God lent you for a little time and then took them to heaven to show you the way, to lure you to go upwards too! You all have some dear friends there with whom you walked to God's house in company. They have gone, but I charge you, by the living God, to follow them! Break not your households in two! Let no solemn rifts come into the family, but, as they have gone to their rest, God grant unto you by the same road to come and rest eternally too. Jesus Christ is ready to receive sinners! He is ready to receive you! And if you trust Him, the joy and bliss which your friends now partake of shall also be yours! Daughters of godly parents, children of those who have gone before to eternal glory, I entreat you, look to Jesus! Go and present your suit to Him now. It shall surely prosper. If the question was once doubtful, it has now become "a statute of judgment." The Lord has commanded it! May God bless these counsels and exhortations to you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GENESIS 1.

Genesis 1:1. *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.* When that "beginning" was, we cannot tell. It may have been long ages before God fitted up this world for the abode of man, but it was not self-existent—it was created by God, it sprang from the will and the Word of the all wise Creator!

2. *And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep*. When God began to arrange this world in order, it was shrouded in darkness and it had been reduced to what we call, for lack of a better name, "chaos." This is just the condition of every soul of man when God begins to deal with him in His grace—it is formless and empty of all good things. "There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way."

2. *And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters*. This was the first act of God in preparing this planet to be the abode of man—and the first act of grace in the soul is for the Spirit of God to move within it! How that Spirit of God comes there, we know not. We cannot tell how He acts, even as we cannot tell how the wind blows where it wishes, but until the Spirit of God moves upon the soul, nothing is done towards its new creation in Christ Jesus!

3, 4. *And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness*. "Light be." "Light was." God had but to speak the word and the great wonder was accomplished! How there was light before there was any sun—for the sun was not created until the fourth day of the week—it is not for us to say. But God is not dependent upon His own creation. He can make light without a sun! He can spread the gospel without the aid of ministers He can convert souls without any human or angelic method, for He does as He wills in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.

5. *And God called the light, Day, and the darkness, He called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day*. It is a good thing to have the right names for things. An error is often half killed when you know the real name of it—its power lies in its being indescribable! But as soon as you can call it, "darkness," you know how to act towards it. It is an also good thing to know the names of truths and the names of other things that are right. God is very particular in the Scripture about giving people their right names. The Holy Spirit says, "Judas, not Iscariot," so that there should be no mistake about the intended person. Let us also always call persons and things by their right names—"God called the light, Day, and the darkness He called Night." "And the evening and the morning were the first day." Darkness first, and light afterwards. It is so with us spiritually—first darkness, then light. I suppose that until we get to heaven, there will be both darkness and light in us. And as to God's providential dealings, we must expect darkness as well as light. They will make up our first day and our last day, till we get where there are no days but the Ancient of Days.

6-8. *And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament and it was so. And God called the firmament heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day*. "The firmament"—an expanse of air in which floated the waters which afterwards condensed, and fell upon the earth in refreshing showers. These

waters above were divided from the waters below. Perhaps they were all one steamy conglomeration before, but now they are separated. Note those four words, "and it was so." Whatever God ordains always comes. You will find that it is true of all His promises, that whatever He has said shall be fulfilled to you, and you shall one day say of it all, "And it was so." It is equally certain concerning all His threats that what He has spoken shall certainly be fulfilled—and the ungodly will have to say, "And it was so." These words are often repeated in this chapter. They convey to us the great lesson that the Word of God is sure to be followed by the deed of God. He speaks and it is done!

9-13. *And God said, let the waters under the heaven be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land, Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself; upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day.* Having attended to the air, God further exercised His power by setting the earth in order. Observe the remarkable fact that no sooner had God made the dry land appear, than it seemed as if He could not bear the sight of it in its nakedness. What a strange place this world must have been with its plains and hills and rooks and vales without one single blade of grass, or a tree, or a shrub! So at once, before that day was over, God threw the mantle of verdure over the earth and clad its mountains and valleys with forests and plants and flowers, as if to show us that the fruitless is unbecoming in God's sight, that the man who bears no fruit unto God is unendurable to Him. There would be no beauty whatever in a Christian without any good works and with no graces. As soon as ever the earth appeared, then came the herbs, the trees and the grass. So, dear brothers and sisters, in like manner, let us bring forth fruit unto God and bring it forth abundantly, for herein is our heavenly Father glorified—that we bear much fruit.

14-19. *And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: He made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.* Whether the sun and moon are here said to be absolutely created, or whether they were only created so far as our planet was concerned by the dense vapors being cleared away so that the sun and moon and stars could be seen, is a matter of no consequence at all to us. Let us rather learn a lesson from them. These lights are to rule, but they are to rule by giving light. And, brothers and sisters, this is the true rule in the church

of God. He who gives most light is the truest ruler—and the man who aspires to leadership in the church of God, if he knows what he is doing, aspires to be the servant of all by laying himself out for the good of all, even as our Savior said to His disciples, "Whoever of you will be the chief, shall be servant of all." The sun and moon are the servants of all mankind and, therefore, do they rule by day and by night. Stoop, my brothers, if you wish to lead others! The way up is downward! To be great, you must be little. He is the greatest who is nothing at all unto himself, but all for others.

20-23. *And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that has life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moves, which the water brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.* There was no life in the sea or on the land until all was ready for it. God would not make a creature to be unhappy. There must be suitable food to feed upon and the sun and moon to cheer and comfort before a single bird shall chirp in the thicket or a solitary trout shall leap in the stream. So, after God has given men light, and blessed them in various ways, their spiritual life begins to develop to the glory of God. We have the thoughts that soar like fowl in the open firmament of heaven, and other thoughts that dive into the mysteries of God, as the fish dive in the sea. These are after development, after growths of that same power which at the first said, "Let there be light."

24, 25. *And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.* There is as much wisdom and care displayed in the creation of the tiniest creeping insect as in the creation of leviathan himself. Those who use the microscope are as much amazed at the greatness and the goodness of God as those are who use the telescope. He is as great in the little as He is in the great. After each day's work, God looks upon it—and it is well for us, every night, to review our day's work. Some men's work will not bear looking at and tomorrow becomes all the worse to them because today was not considered and its sin repented of by them. But if the errors of today are marked by us, a repetition of them may be avoided on the morrow. It is only God who can look upon any one day's work and say of it, as a whole, and in every part, that it is "good." As for us, our best things need sprinkling with the blood of Christ which we need not only on the lintels and side posts of our house, but even on the altar and the mercy seat at which we worship God!

26-28. *And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every*

creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth. God evidently meant the two persons, male and female, to complete the man, and the totality of the manhood lies in them both. The earth is completed now that man has come upon it, and man is completed when the image of God is upon him, when Christ is formed in him the hope of glory, but not till then. When we have received the power of God and have dominion over ourselves and over all earthly things in the power of God's eternal Spirit, then are we where and what God intends us to be.

29, 30. *And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creeps upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.* Now you see God's commissary. He has not made all these creatures in order to starve them, but He has supplied them with great variety and abundance of food, that their needs may be satisfied. Does God care for the cattle and will He not feed His own children? Does He provide for ravens and sparrows and will He allow you to lack anything, O you of little faith? Observe that God did not create man until He had provided for him—neither will He ever put one work of His providence or of His grace out of its proper place—but that which goes before shall be preparatory to that which follows after.

31. *And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good.* Taken in its completeness, and all put together, God saw that it was very good. We must never judge anything before it is complete.

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"Establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands."
Psalm 90:17.

SOME of us have been to the grave this afternoon and the most forcible impression upon our minds at this time is that of our mortality. We cannot, in burying others, say, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," without thinking of the time when we, too, shall be laid in the silent grave. The thought that we are, yet are not, that we are but as shadows that flit across the path of life—coming, going, scarcely come before we are gone—the thought of our mortality has led us to ask concerning our work—Is that mortal, too? Will that die like ourselves? Some of us have darling objectives, high designs, great enterprises on our hearts—are all those shadows? We are as the grass of the field—are they also grass? Will the scythe that cuts us down cut them down, too? Truly, if we thought it would be so, it would give double bitterness to the remembrance of our own mortality to think that our work was mortal as well as ourselves!

Perhaps it was that feeling which led Moses, the great prophet poet of the wilderness, to cry, "If we die, if we pass away, yet 'establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands.'" Every good man who is doing a good work has a sincere desire that his work should continue. This is not a wrong desire—it is in the highest degree right. We wish not to build with wood, hay and stubble—which we know will be consumed—and if our work is of that kind, we must not pray for its continuance. But if we believe that we are building with gold, silver and precious stones, we may pray, for the prayer is a most proper one, and the thought that suggests the prayer is a right one, "Establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands."

At the same time, let me here remark that it is the work of God which is the ground of our confidence and peace, but our own work—even that which we dare ask God to establish—can never be such a comfort and stay to us, for it is always a cause of anxiety. It is a very strange thing that unconverted men should ever look to their own works for peace and comfort, since even to Christians their own works are rather a source of anxiety than of consolation. I feel sure that every true worker for God knows that it is so. The more you do for God, the more care you have pressing upon you. And though grace enables you to cast that care upon Him whose work it really is, yet still does care naturally arise out of all

work for God to those who are truly concerned in it. Hence our works never can become the source of our truest consolation. They may become evidences to us of God's presence with us and may yield to our conscience a measure of peace, but still, the anxiety which will always spring out of good works will counterbalance any sort of comfort that can come from them! It is to God's work, not our own, that we have to look—"'Let *Your* work appear unto Your servants.' We are willing to work for You, Lord, but let us always have our eyes on Your work. We shall never serve You acceptably unless our eyes are directed towards what You have done for us rather than towards what we do for You. There is no glory in *our* work, but 'let *Your* work appear unto Your servants, and *Your* glory,' which always goes with it, 'unto their children.' Let us see Your glorious work, Your finished work—let us see it always, let us see it living, let us see it dying, and so we, Your servants, will praise You even when our hearts are anxious, believing that You will remove our anxiety—'Let Your work appear unto Your servants, and establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands.'"

I am going to try to answer three questions concerning our work for God. First, *what part of our work can we ask God to establish*? Secondly, in what way is He likely to establish it? And, thirdly, if we are praying as Moses did, *what ought to be our mode of action to correspond with such a prayer*?

I. First, then, WHAT KIND OF WORK CAN WE ASK GOD TO ESTABLISH? The ungodly must not pray, "Establish the work of our hands for us"—it would be blasphemy for them to do so! If the work is evil, God cannot establish it. Jesus Christ has been revealed to destroy all the works of the devil—and when He is destroying the works of the devil, He will destroy all the works that have been worked by men possessed by the spirit of evil. Nothing that has been worked unrighteously will be allowed to stand! Neither can we ask God to make it stand without supposing God to be such an one as ourselves, which He is not, and can never be. God will not help you in that which is wrong, ungodly one, however much you may try to interweave His holy name with your unrighteous actions!

And remember, too, that God will never establish our works if they are intended to rival the works of His Son. Some people work very hard in trying to make a righteousness of their own, but if they could achieve their purpose, they would then be independent of a Savior. Their attempted obedience to the law of God is intended to be a substitute for the perfect righteousness of Christ—and their tears and repentances are intended to be a substitute for the atoning sacrifice of Christ. But do you suppose that God will ever take the side of those who desire to rival His Son and make the work of His Son needless? That can never be! Self-righteousness is the direst of insults to the Son of God! If I conceive myself to be righteous and meritorious in God's sight, I do, as far as in me lies, cast a reflection upon the wisdom of God, for I tell Him that although He provided a Savior, one was not needed—at any rate, not for me! I also insult the blood of Jesus, for I tell Him that it was shed unnec-

essarily—at least as far as I am concerned—for I have no sin needing to be washed away! I insult the Holy Spirit, too, for I tell Him that I do not need a new birth, for I am already as good as I need to be! Self-righteousness insults the triune Jehovah and, therefore, we cannot ask God to establish it. If we were sensible, we should pray God to pull it down, every stick and stone of it! And rest assured, sinners, that if God ever does save you, He will do that as one of the first things—for every stone that our fancied nobility has ever put upon its fellow with a view to building a refuge for ourselves, God will take down! Not one stone shall be left upon another if God is ever to save us. One of the most deplorable things that could ever happen to a man would be for him to be allowed to dwell comfortably in a refuge of lies until the storm of divine judgment should sweep both himself and his refuge away forever! Dear hearer, may I ask whether your work is a self-righteous one, whether you are trying to save yourself? For if so, this prayer of Moses cannot properly be used by you, neither can God hear it with acceptance. No wicked works and no self-righteous works may we ask God to establish!

But may we ask God to establish the ordinary works and engagements of our daily life? Yes, assuredly we may! If you are a servant of God, you have learned to eat and drink to His glory and your most common actions are a part of the holy priesthood to which all believers are called. You are yourself a priest and all that you do is a part of your service for God in His holy temple, for God's temple is not this Tabernacle, nor any other building. Wherever there is a true heart, there is a temple for God—and wherever there is a renewed heart, there is a priest for God—and that is the only temple and the only priest that God wants, with the exception of the great High Priest, who stands for us before the throne of the Most High. Well then, whatever you are doing, if you are doing it thus before God, you may ask Him to prosper and establish it. Why not? When Abraham's servant went down to Padanaram to find a wife for Isaac, he did not say, "this matrimonial arrangement is secular business, so I must not pray about it." He did pray about it and God guided him and prospered his errand! And David, when he needed to know whether he should go to certain places to fight his enemies, inquired of the Lord, "Shall I go up?" And the Lord gave the answers to his petitions!

We should do well to always make little things as well as great things the objects of prayer. I am afraid that many people fail for lack of due attention to little things. It is not always the great things in which a man slips, but it is often the little things which trip him up. Great matters he naturally takes to God, being unsure of his own judgment, but little matters he decides according to what he considers his own wisdom—and his own wisdom is generally nothing but the most arrant folly! The Israelites were never so grossly deceived as when the case seemed perfectly clear to them. There were the Gibeonites with old patched shoes upon their feet, so it was evident that they must have come from a distant land. They had dry and moldy bread, so no doubt what they said was true, that they had taken it hot out of the oven when they set out on their journey and it

had become moldy from the long distance that they had carried it. There was no need for the people to call the priest and seek advice from God—the case was so clear that nobody could be deceived! Their own common sense was quite sufficient to guide them—so they thought! Had it been puzzling case, they would have asked the Lord to guide them, but being so very plain, they were deceived and made a great mistake. Take care to always consult God about those very plain things as you consider them!

Still, beloved, I would be very sorry to see this prayer limited to such matters as these. It should be used concerning them, but it must also be used to higher ends, or else it will be, to a large extent, wasted. True Christians live for God and work for God—and every one of us who claims to be a Christian is either working for God or else an impostor. I repeat my declaration that the man who calls himself a Christian and yet does nothing for Christ is an impostor! He professes to be a fruit bearing tree, yet he bears no fruit. He declares himself to be salt, yet he has no savor. He says that he is a light to the world, yet he never helps to remove its darkness by scattering his beams. But every genuine Christian is a worker for Christ, and work done for God is the kind of work which we may ask God to establish! And it is that work which will, in the highest sense, be established!

What great works men have performed and yet how little has been the length of their endurance! When the great city of Babylon was built, we can scarcely conceive how vast it was, but where is it now? Its site may be known, but its power is gone. Its kings have long since passed away and its glory has departed. Then there was that mighty city of Nineveh, with all the power which was connected with the Assyrians. Then there was the Persian Empire! And the Persian kings with great diligence built up very powerful states—yet they were not established by God and all the might of Persia melted away. The Romans also built up a vast empire. What a great metropolis they made Rome to be! As we walk amidst its massive walls, so stupendous that they look as if they must have been the work of giants, we see how the greatest works of men without God are not established! Let them build as solidly as they may, their mightiest works pass away like the child's sandcastles built on the beach that are washed away by the next tide! Nothing that man makes for man will endure! Build on, you despots, but time, a mightier king than you, will pull down all that you put up! And the very revolutions of society, as men change from one phase of thought to another, overturn each other—and that which it seemed right to establish yesterday, it seems necessary to overthrow tomorrow! It is not merely empires that are thus cast down, but systems of religion and works that have apparently been done for God have gone, too! And schools of thought that ruled human minds have passed away—and now they are not—all this teaches us that only that which is really done for God—and that which is of God—will be established by God!

This leads me to say that I think the work we may pray God to establish is, first, *the work of soul winning*, the work of bringing sinners to the Savior. And, next, *the work of building up of a church.* And then *the work*

of testifying to the truth as it is in Jesus—a work which is sadly neglected in these degenerate times. The work of soul saving—when we have earnestly labored to bring sinners to faith in Jesus and have cried to the eternal God for the quickening power of His Holy Spirit to regenerate them—we may certainly pray God that that work may be established. And then, when we have gathered Christians together and God has given us grace to put them in their places in His church—and the Holy Spirit has rested upon us so that the work under our hands has been God's work as well as ours—we may certainly pray that God would build up His own church and establish it. And when we have borne testimony to the truth of God we may and we must very earnestly pray that that truth may be spread still more widely, that it may not be forgotten by those who hear it, but may abide in their hearts—and that it may come to the front and influence men and women more than it has done up to now. Thus we may pray that our witness bearing for Jesus may be established.

I do not know what particular form of service may have fallen to the lot of my dear brothers and sisters here, but in any case, we may pray that what we have done for God may be established—only let us remember that *God will only establish work that is really and truly done for Him*. We can only pray to God, in the language of this prayer, to establish "*the work of our hands*." There must be real work and it must be two handed work—we must throw our whole strength into it. I cannot expect God to establish that work over which I have trifled. If I have served God in such a way that it is palpable that I did not think the work very important, I cannot ask Him to establish it. We have a great deal of talking about the gospel nowadays—we would have the truth of God spread everywhere if talking would do it—but it is "the work of our hands" that is needed—real service, the putting out of our strength, the using of all our vigor, wit, wisdom and the skill of the craftsman who has been trained to some special form of handiwork. When a man throws his whole soul into what he has done for the Lord, so that he can claim that the work of his hands is real work done as unto the Lord, then he may ask God to establish it! But it must be work that is truly done, for I am afraid that there is a great deal talked about that is never done. I am not quite sure about those 30 persons who were said to have been converted the other night at a certain meeting. I cannot always rely upon the information received from a certain brother who goes here and there and who is quite sure that so many were converted one night, and so many another night. I shall be glad if it is true, but I am not quite clear about it—there is a good deal of "flash in the pan" about his work. I read, in certain newspapers, of the work done by an earnest brother well known to some of you—and I tried to find some trace of it, but I could not find any sign of it a few months afterwards. I am sorry to say that I have seen many churches "revived" until there has been nothing left of them. I am very dubious of a great deal that I have heard that seems to me like unholy boasting. If the work was exactly as it was said to be, there ought to have

been a very great difference in certain towns from what there is now! My dear brother, if God has done a great work by you, don't you go and brag about it! If it is necessary for you to sometimes tell what the Lord has done in saving souls through your instrumentality, tell it very discreetly, giving God all the glory—not by blowing the trumpet and shouting, "Come and see our zeal for the Lord of hosts" which, I believe, brings a blight and a blast upon everything that is done. God the Holy Spirit is displeased if we make a boast of any work that is done by us—and He will not establish any work of that sort. The real *bona fide* "work of our hands" God will establish, but He will not establish that which we try to puff into something important by pretty paragraphs in the newspapers about what wonderful things have been performed by us! The bare truth—plain transparent facts, we may give—but anything like exaggeration should be loathed by the Christian because it is untruthful! And it should be shunned by every wise man because it leads to bitter disappointment. God will only establish work that is really and truly done for Him.

And I believe, further, that *no work is ever really established by God unless it is founded upon the downright truth of God.* No doubt there is a great deal of work which God acknowledges although all in it is not His truth. God prospered the work of Whitefield and the work of Wesley, but did that prove the truth of all that Whitefield or Wesley preached? No, but it proved that both of them had a measure of the truth of God in their preaching—and that measure of truth God blessed—but God would not establish anything that they taught in error. It may last for a while and some of it has lasted, I am afraid, much longer than is good for us, but sooner or later it will have to go. There was also Luther—he taught a great deal of the truth of God and that truth will last. But he also taught some error and the consequence is that there is a great deal today in Lutheranism which is doing much mischief! That will not last—it will have to go the way of all errors. That very point which God will destroy because it is erroneous may be that for which we contend with the greatest vigor! God will not establish any of His servants' work which is not the truth—and I am sure that every faithful servant of His is glad of that. What a mercy it is, if I do some mischief when I am trying to do my Master's work, that the good work I do will last, but the bad I do, forgiven by His infinite mercy, shall by His great wisdom be swept away before long! Error shall not always remain to do mischief—it is the truth of God that will abide. Therefore I think that we ought never to seek to do good by stating what is not true. There is a great deal of preaching of that which is not the truth of God in the hope that it will be the means of converting people, but it is of no use. God will establish the truth—but if we keep back any Scriptural doctrines, or if we cut the corners off them in order to make them more acceptable to our hearers—God will not establish our work! He is the God of truth and He will not set His seal to lies.

Hence, beloved, it is so important that *every man who works for God should always seek to work in harmony with the Spirit of truth.* We have known some whose guiding star has been "policy." One of these has said,

"Suppose I were to leave such and such a church which is, in part, erroneous—what would become of my work?" Dear brother, are you going to do a wrong thing in the hope of saving your work? Have you subscribed to that wicked maxim, "Let us do evil that good my come"? After all, what have I to do with the consequences of right actions? Is it not my business, if I have learned any truth of God, to follow it wherever it will lead me? It will not lead me into a morass, for it is God's light and it will only lead me into God's way! If heaven could only stand by a Christian telling a lie, in God's name let it fall, for the ruin of it would be a less calamity than for a true man to turn aside to falsehood! Stand upright and then shall you be as God would have you to be. But the double minded, the wavering, those that lean first this way and then that, with craft trimming their sails to this wind and then adjusting them to that, where will they go? And how can we expect the God of truth ever to establish such "policy" as that? Let our work be true work done in the truth of God and with truthful maxims to guide us, for then we may bring it before God and say, "Establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands."

Do not try to build too fast, as so many do, using untempered mortar which will not hold their buildings together. Do not try to build beyond or short of the foundation lines which Christ has laid down for you. You would not employ a bricklayer who said to you, "I can get a house up much more quickly than by ordinary methods. I don't need to use the plumb line to see whether the walls are straight or not—I do not trouble about how I put the bricks in the interior of the building. I can leave a blank here and a gap there—nobody will know it. There is no particular need why I should make the bricks fit, the one to the other—as long as I put a good facing on the front, that will do." Such a man as that may think that he has done well, but when the master comes, he says, "All this has to be cleared away before I can do anything. You have just been doing mischief and you have wasted all the day in which you ought to have worked." So, young man, if you go to a church and want to see it quickly built up and begin to take unconverted people into membership, or get up a great excitement and receive a large number of persons without any careful examination, or preach what is not sound doctrine so that big worldly people in the neighborhood come to hear you, and say, "See how fast he is building"— when the Master comes, He will point out what mischief you have been doing and He will send a better man to do the work! And that better man's chief trouble will be to get rid of what this fast builder has put up! Let none of us build like that, but may God give us the grace to build what He can establish, for it is not everything that He can establish consistently with His own character of truth and uprightness.

II. I must not devote more time to that point, but must notice, secondly, and briefly, THE MANNER IN WHICH GOD MAY ANSWER THE PRAYER, "Establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands."

Possibly, *for the establishment of our work, it may be necessary for us to die*. Many a man is, perhaps unconsciously, hindering his own work. And if the work is to be established, it needs somebody else to come and do it. I may again use the very homely simile of a bricklayer. If he were to say to his master, "Let me finish the house that I have built," the answer would be, "I do not need you any longer, you have done your part of the work—other workmen must finish the building." So, sometimes, one good man is like the bricklayer and another good man roofs in what he has built, or does all the work in the interior of the house. There is a time for all of us to die for the good of our own work and, often, the removal of an eminent Christian is not the loss to the church of Christ that we think it must be. Perhaps you have seen a great oak tree which has covered quite a large area with its widely spreading branches—and when it has been cut down, you have all regretted it—it seemed as if there would be a huge gap. But there were a dozen little oaks that never would have come to anything because they could not get sunshine or rain while they were overshadowed by that great oak! And when that was cut down, all those others began to grow, so that, instead of one tree, you had a dozen. And the removal of one eminent Christian has often been the means of letting sunlight in to somebody who was obscured before, but who now, in the providence of God, is made strong and useful. So it may be beneficial for some men to die in order that their own work may be established. If it is so with us, we may well be content to go to Heaven so that our prayers may be answered!

But, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, there are some very sweet thoughts connected with working for God. *When a soul is saved by our means, our work is established*, for Satan himself cannot undo that work! Death may take that believer away, but that will be the completion of the work. Now the wheat is in the heavenly garner and the precious grain is laid up where no mildew can injure it. When the work done by good men and women is the means of bringing sinners to Christ, it is sure work. That is gold taken out of the mine which never can rust. Soul saving work is lasting work and there is this further comfort—that every soul that is truly converted by God's grace propagates itself. Let one sinner be brought to Jesus and he will bring another sinner. Light one candle and you may light 50 candles from it. One person may be converted to God through your kind, faithful words and earnest believing prayers—and that one person may bring another, and that one another, and that one another, and that one another, and so on in an endless chain of blessing to God's glory!

Remember too, that *if we work for God as God wishes us to do, it is really God's work that we are doing*. He who works truthfully, according to the principles laid down in the Scriptures, has God working in him, with him and by him—and all that is God's work will endure—you may rest assured of that! What he has done shall not be undone. Divine designs shall not be frustrated so that we may be sure that the work of our hands, in so far as it is God's work, will be established. Besides, God is alive to take care of the work that we do for Him. We die, but He does

not. We leave the work in His hands—we could not leave it in better hands! He could have done the work without us if He had pleased, but although He has been pleased to use us, for a while, He can carry on the work without us when He takes us home. If you have sought to teach the truth of God for Christ, who is the truth, to bring souls to Christ and to build up a church for Christ, God will establish your work. It is true that there are many enemies to the truth—devils and men of devilish spirit who would, if they could, tear down every stone that you have built up—but God shall make the wrath of even these enemies to praise Him and they shall become, perhaps unconsciously to themselves, the means of establishing your work!

Meanwhile the wheels of providence, [See Sermon #3114, Volume 54—GOD'S PROVIDENCE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] which are full of eyes, are grinding on in their majestic course on behalf of the work of God in which you are engaged! And all those eyes are looking onward towards the prosperity of that great cause which is so dear to your heart! Do not have any fear of failure, beloved—if you have really worked for God, you have worked for a cause that cannot know defeat! It may not win tomorrow, or the next day, but God can wait. Age comes upon us, but nothing shall ever make Him feeble. And through the course of ages, God can wait. I always feel, with regard to the causes in which we are engaged, when people tell us that we are in the minority, "Very well, we can be content to be in the minority at present, for the majority will be with us one day. We cannot doubt that when God is with us! Yes, and if we are alone with God, God makes majority enough for all true hearts. But even counting human heads, the truth shall yet have the majority! God can wait—He knows how to convince gainsayers and bring them round to His side. Our little plans come to an end in a few years—we cannot afford to bring them out unless they do—but God can let His capital lie idle for thousands of years if it is necessary. He is so rich that it does not impoverish Him and He will get His interest by and by!

God can wait and *we must learn to wait, too.* That work which produces no visible results at present is none the less a true work and an accepted work. If you teach the truth and die—and that truth appears to be forgotten, you have not lived in vain, for that truth will spring up again in God's good time! They burnt Jerome of Prague. They took John Huss and when they fastened him to the fatal stake, he said, "You may burn the goose, today, but there shall come a swan that you cannot burn"—and that prophecy was fulfilled in Luther, whose crest was a swan. One good man dies and another comes. If there were not brave men of truth to go down sapping and mining, there would not be other men to come afterwards to be acclaimed victors. In any great movement that succeeds, it is not the last man who deserves the credit—it is the men who went before at whom, perhaps, everybody howled. To be able to heed the truth when everybody tries to hiss you down and not to care for their opposition, but to feel, "I have God's truth and if all the devils in hell were against me,

God is with me and I am in the majority against them all," that is the spirit to have! And when we have that spirit, we may pray, "Establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands," and it will be done!

It is now some hundreds of years ago that certain believers in Christ were burnt to death upon the very spot on which this Tabernacle now stands. Nearly everybody agreed that they ought to be burnt to death, for they were called Anabaptists, though their belief was as nearly as possible the same as ours. Catholics and Protestants alike said, "Burn them, by all means, for this pestilent sect of Baptists is always testifying against everybody else!" And burnt they were at the Butts at Newington. Suppose they had said, out of the midst of the fire, "There will one day stand, on this very spot, a great house of prayer wherein about six thousand Baptists shall meet at one time to hear the gospel preached for which we are being burnt to death"? Men would have laughed them to scorn! But it has come true and if I were to say that the last trace of infant sprinkling will be swept from off the earth and that the last relic of Romanism, Episcopalianism, Mohammedanism, Buddhism and heathenism will be swept away and only be remembered by men to be loathed, I would no doubt be laughed at and disbelieved! But I would be speaking only the truth of God. All errors will die in due time. They may live for a while and they may seem to conquer, but God will assuredly pierce them to the heart with His two edged sword! His despised truth must come to the front for as surely as God lives, so must His truth live, for it is part of Himself! Be on God's side, I pray you, for that is the winning side! Be on God's side, old men, and also young men, I charge you, as you shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ—follow the truth. Away with everything but the simple truth revealed in the Scriptures! Put everything else aside and God will establish your work in the ages yet to come. Who knows how long those ages may be? Christ may not come tomorrow—He may wait a while but He will come one day. We are to live expecting Him to return. Yet perhaps He may tarry longer than we think—true work for Him will last until the trumpet of the resurrection shall sound! If the work is of God, it will certainly endure.

I have no time to speak on our third point, WHAT WE OUGHT TO DO IF THIS PRAYER OF MOSES IS OUR PRAYER, but I will say just this. If we want God to establish our work, we must take care not to pull it down ourselves by inconsistent living. We must not imagine that we can establish it by any wrong methods. We must leave God to establish it in His own way—and God often establishes His truth by that which seems likely to throw it down. If we want God to establish our work, we must pray much about it and we must do it as His work and do it for His glory and do it according to the rules which I have tried to lay down. If I leave only this one thought with you, that the Christian is to follow the Lamb wherever He goes and to be true to the light which God has given us in this sacred book, I shall feel that this evening has been well spent.

The Lord grant that all of us may be looking to His work for salvation and then be doing His work with both our hands and all our heart and praying God to establish it.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 142.

[See Sermon #2282, Volume 38—DAVID'S PRAYER IN THE CAVE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

Verse 1. *I cried unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication.* Silent prayers are often true prayers, but there are times when, in extremity of suffering, it is very helpful to give expression to the soul's agony. I know some friends who can never pray to their own comfort except they can hear their own voices, and I believe that it is a good thing for the most of us to retire to some private place where we cannot be heard by men and where we can therefore freely use our voices in prayer. Very often the use of the voice helps to keep the thoughts from wandering and also gives intensity to the desires. You notice that David particularly mentions here that he cried unto the LORD with his voice. No doubt many of his prayers ascended to God from his heart without the medium of his voice, but here the cry with his voice went with the desires of his heart.

2. *I poured out my complaint before Him.* That is a beautiful expression, "I poured out my complaint"—just as you turn a pitcher upside down and let all the contents run out! "I poured out my complaint." We are generally ready enough to do that, only we usually go to some friend, or to some enemy and pour out our complaint into his ear. But what is the good of doing that? David took a far wiser course! "I poured out my complaint before *Him*."

2. *I showed before Him my trouble*. Uncovered it and set it all out in order before Him. God could see it, yet David knew that it was his place and his privilege to spread it all out before Him.

3. *When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then You knew my path*. Many of the Lord's saints know the meaning of that sentence, "My spirit was overwhelmed within me." They are like a vessel that has sunk in the sea and is completely covered by the waves. David was in such a plight as that—he did not know his own whereabouts, but here was the mercy—"Then You knew my path." It is much better that God should know our path than that we should know it ourselves, for we may know it and be driven to despair by our knowledge. But God's knowledge of it moves Him to uphold us in it, or to deliver us out of it.

3, 4. *In the way wherein I walked have they privately laid a snare for me. I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me*. "They were afraid to link themselves with me, lest, when I went down like a drowning man, they should be dragged down with me."

4. *Refuge failed me.* "I could not run away—there was no place where I could find shelter."

4. *No man cared for my soul*. "They were all hard, cold, ungrateful, treacherous."

5. *I cried unto You, O LORD*. What a mercy that David was driven to do that! If there had been any earthly refuge, he would have fled to it. If there had been some human being at his right hand to help him, probably he would have trusted him. If any man had cared for his soul, perhaps he would have trusted in that person. But now that every earthly door was shut, he was obliged to turn to his God.

5. *I said, You are my refuge.* "I can flee to You."

5. *And my portion in the land of the living*. With both hands he lays hold of God and cries, "You are my refuge and my portion"—two glorious "mys"! Well did Luther say that the very pith of the gospel lies in the little words, and it is the same with the Psalms.

6, 7. *Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I. Bring my soul out of prison*. This is a suitable prayer for those who have troubled consciences, for those who are shut up in Doubting Castle and cannot get out without divine assistance. "Bring my soul out of prison."

7. *That I may praise Your name.* As soon as you are set at liberty, you ought at once to let your glad heart magnify the God who has broken your bonds and brought you out of prison!

7. *The righteous shall compass me about.* This is a beautiful idea. It seems to imply that they would be so astonished to find him at liberty that they would all come round him to hear his story! They would be so glad to see the mourner rejoicing that they would all begin to inquire what God had done for his soul.

7. *For you shall deal bountifully with me*. In the 13th Psalm, David said, "I will sing unto the Lord because He has dealt bountifully with me." But here he looks into the future and sings, "You *shall* deal bountifully with me."

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SHOES FOR PILGRIMS AND WARRIORS
NO. 3143

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 6, 1909,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace."
Ephesians 6:15.

THE Christian was evidently intended to be in motion, for here are shoes for his feet. His head is provided with a helmet, for he is to be thoughtful. His heart is covered with a breastplate, for he is to be a man of feeling. His whole nature is protected by a shield, for he is called to endurance and caution. And that he is to be active is certain, for a sword is provided for his hand to use and sandals with which his feet are to be shod. To suppose that a Christian is to be motionless as a post and inanimate as a stone, or merely pensive as a weeping willow and passive as a reed shaken by the wind, is altogether a mistake! God works in us and His grace is the great motive power which secures our salvation, but He does not so work in us as to chloroform us into unconscious submission, or engineer us into mechanical motion—He orchestrates all our activities by working in us "to will and to do of His good pleasure." Grace imparts healthy life and life rejoices in activity! The Lord never intended His people to be automatons worked by clockwork, or cold and dead statues—He meant them to have life, to have it abundantly—and in the power of that life to be full of energy! It is true He makes us lie down in green pastures, but equally certain is it that He leads us onward beside the still waters! A true believer is an active person—he has feet and uses them.

Now, he who marches meets with stones, or if as a warrior he dashes into the thick of the conflict he is assailed with weapons and, therefore, he needs to be suitably shod to meet his perils. The active and energetic Christian meets with temptations which do not happen to others. Idle persons can scarcely be said to be in danger—they are a stage beyond that and are already overcome! Satan scarcely needs to tempt them—they rather tempt him and are a fermenting mass in which sin exceedingly multiplies—a decaying body around which the vultures of vice are sure to gather. But earnest laborious believers are sure to be assailed, even as fruit bearing trees are certain to be visited by the birds. Satan cannot stand a man who earnestly serves God—he does damage to the archenemy's dominions and, therefore, he must be incessantly assailed. The prince of darkness will try, if he can, to injure the good man's character, to break his communion with God, to spoil the simplicity of his faith, to make him proud of what he is doing, or to make him despair of success. In some way or other he will, if possible, bruise the worker's heel or trip him up, or lame him altogether. Because of all these dangers, infinite mercy has provided gospel shoes for the believer's feet—shoes of

the best kind—such as only those warriors wear who serve the Lord of hosts!

We shall at this time first *examine the shoes* and then *try them on*.

I. Our first duty is to EXAMINE THE SHOES which are provided for us by our captain. And in doing so we are delighted to find that *they come from a blessed Maker*, for the feet of the believer are to be shod with a divine preparation. Many preparations and inventions are used for protecting feet, but this is a preparation in which infinite skill has been displayed and the same wisdom put forth as in the gospel, which is the masterpiece of God! Every portion of the gospel is from God and all the influence which makes it a gospel of peace is His—and we are therefore thankful to find that we are to wear "the preparation of the gospel of peace." It would not be necessary that he who is helmeted with divine salvation should be shod with a mere human production! Having begun in the Spirit, it would be strange to be made perfect in the flesh. We would not be like the image of the monarch's dream whose head was of fine gold and whose feet were part of iron and part of clay. We rejoice that all the pieces of armor which compose our panoply come forth from the celestial armorer whose productions are without a flaw!

We are glad to find that *the shoes are made of excellent material*, for they are composed of "the preparation of the gospel of peace"—and what better material can there be than the gospel—the gospel of peace and that peace which grows out of the gospel? This is what is meant. We believe in a gospel which was formed in the purpose of God from all eternity, designed with infinite wisdom, worked out at an enormous expense, costing nothing less than the blood of Jesus, brought home by infinite power, even by the might of the Holy Spirit! It is a gospel full of blessings, any one of which would outweigh a world in price—a gospel as free as it is full, a gospel everlasting and immutable, a gospel of which we can never think too much, whose praises we can never exaggerate! It is from this choice gospel that its choicest essence is taken, namely, its peace. And from this peace those sandals are prepared with which a man may tread on the lion and the adder, yes, and on the fierce burning coals of malice, slander and persecution! What better shoes can our souls require?

What matchless material for girding the pilgrim's feet is that which is here mentioned namely the peace which comes from the gospel, the preparation of heart and life which springs of a full knowledge, reception and experience of the gospel in our souls! What does it mean? It means, first, that *a sense of perfect peace with God* is the grandest thing in the entire world with which to travel through life. Let a man know that his sins are forgiven him for Christ's name's sake, that he is reconciled to God by the death of His Son and that between him and God there is no ground of difference—and what a joyful pilgrim he becomes! When we know that as the Lord looks on us, His glance is full of infinite, undivided affection, that He sees us in Jesus Christ as cleansed from every speck of sin and as, "accepted in the Beloved," and that by virtue of a complete atonement we are forever reconciled to God, then do we march through life without fear, booted for all the exigencies of the way, yes, ready to plunge through fire and water, thorn and thistle, bush and briar without

fear! A man at peace with God dreads neither the ills of life nor the terrors of death! Poverty, sickness, persecution and pain have lost their sting when sin is pardoned! What is there that a man needs to fear when he knows that in no affliction will there be any trace of the judicial anger of God, but all will come from a Father's hand and work his lasting good! Goliath had armor of brass upon his legs, but he is better armed who wears a full assurance of peace with God through the gospel! He shall tread down his enemies and crush them as grapes in the wine press! His shoes shall be iron and brass and, shod with them he shall stand upon the high places of the earth and his feet shall not slip. Achilles received a deadly wound in the heel, but no arrow can pierce the heel of the man whose foot is sandaled with reconciliation by atoning blood! Many a warrior has fainted on the march and dropped from the ranks exhausted, but no weariness of the way can happen to the man who is upheld by the eternal God, for his strength shall be renewed daily.

The preparation of the gospel of peace here mentioned must be understood to comprehend more than the legal peace of justification by faith. If we would enjoy the fullest comfort of the well shod pilgrim, we must have the exceeding peace which springs from intimate, undisturbed communion with God. We should pray not only to feel that we have been brought out of our natural enmity into peace with God, so as to be no more culprits but children, but also to dwell in the full joy of our new relationship. It is a sweet thing for a child of God to feel that he is so acting that his heavenly Father has no reason for walking contrary to him. You know right well that as a child of God, you will not be condemned and cast away as an alien—but you also know that as a child, you may greatly displease your Father and render it necessary for Him to frown upon you, and visit you with stripes—and this you should, with the utmost diligence and prayerfulness, labor to prevent. There are times when the Lord of pilgrims hides His face from them in sore displeasure, and then it is very hard traveling. Life is "a great and terrible wilderness" when the Lord's presence is withdrawn. The more a man loves the Lord, the more does he suffer when there is a temporary suspension of happy communion between his soul and heaven—he cannot be happy again till he knows that he is fully restored to the paternal favor. O child of God, you will very soon have your feet torn with the briars of the way if you do not abide in fellowship with God! When Adam had lost his oneness with God, he found out that he was naked, and so will you if you lose your communion with Jesus. Where before you dashed onward as with a charmed life, treading the world and all its cares beneath your feet, you will find yourself pierced with many sorrows, bleeding with acute griefs, scratched, torn, lacerated with trials, losses, crosses and endless annoyances. If we continue in the love of Jesus, pleasing Him in all things, jealously watching and carefully observing His will, our mind will be kept by the peace of God which passes all understanding—and our road to heaven will be a pleasant one! It may indeed be very rough in itself and in the judgment of others, but it will be so smoothed to us by the peace which reigns within that we shall glory in infirmity, exult in suffering and

triumph in distress, knowing that the Lord is with us and no harm can come to us. Thus you see that the peace which comes of justification—and the fuller peace which arises from enjoying the love of God are a grand preparation for our life's journey—shoes for the feet unrivaled in excellence!

It is also a grand sandal for a pilgrim's feet when the gospel of peace has fully conformed his mind to the Lord's will. Some children of God are not at peace with God because they do not fully acquiesce in the divine purposes. To them the pilgrim path must be a painful one, for nothing can please them—their self-will creates swarms of vexations for them. But to hearts which have crucified self and yielded all to the will of God, the thorniest paths are pleasant. He who can say concerning all things, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight," is shod for all ways and weathers, and may march on undismayed. Fully conformed to the divine will, saints are invulnerable and invincible, "none shall be weary nor stumble among them, neither shall the laces of their shoes be broken"—

"They hold by nothing here below.
Appoint their journey, and they go
Through joy or grief they march the same,
Triumphant still in Jesus' name."

Surely it is when the heart is completely at one with God that the true beauty of the Christian character is seen! Then it is that the heavenly bridegroom cries out, "How beautiful are your feet with shoes, O prince's daughter!" Then, too, the church in her tribulation becomes bright and glorious, like her Lord, of whom we read, "His feet are like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." Shod with perfect delight in the will of the Lord, we are able to surmount all the difficulties and trials of the way, for it becomes sweet to suffer when we see that it is the will of God. Resignation is good, but perfect acquiescence is better and happy—thrice happy is the man who feels it! No silver sandals were ever so precious, no covering of golden mail adorned with precious stones were so glorious to look upon as a mind molded to the divine will, perfectly in tune with the mind of the Lord Most High!

The preparation of the gospel of peace, you thus see, is, in many aspects, the fittest help for our journey to the Promised Land. And he who has his feet shod with it need not fear the flinty ways, the craggy rocks, or the thorny passes.

But the gospel of peace has another side to it, for it not only brings us peace with God, but it inspires us with *peace towards ourselves*. Civil war is the worst of wars and for a man to be at discord with himself is the worst of strife. The worst peril of Christian pilgrimage is that which arises from the pilgrim's own self—and if he is ill at ease within himself, his course cannot be a happy one. The prayer of the evening hymn is very suggestive—

"That with the world, myself and Thee,
I, ever I sleep, at peace may be."

It is a most necessary matter to have peace at home. It is a cruel case for a man when his own heart condemns him. To whom shall he look for a defense when his own conscience indicts him and all his faculties turn

king's evidence against him? It is to be feared that many believers habitually do that which they would not like to be questioned upon by the rule of the Word of God—they have to close their eyes to many passages of Scripture, or else they would be uneasy in their consciences. Brothers and sisters, this makes wretched traveling! It is like walking through a wood with bare feet. If you cannot satisfy your own heart that you are right, you are in a sad case, indeed, and the sooner matters are altered the better. But if a man can say before the living God, "I know that what I am about to do is right and whatever comes of it, I have a pure motive and the Lord's sanction to sustain me in it," then he proceeds to action with a nimble tread. Such a pilgrim is girt for the roughest of ways and will hold on his way joyfully to the end. Rest of conscience shoes us right well, but a question as to the rightness of our procedure makes us barefooted.

Come what may, if we order our ways with reverent regard to the Lord's commands, we shall be able to confront the future with serenity, for we shall not have to accuse ourselves of bringing ourselves into trouble by sin, or losing our joys by indulging in forbidden things. When the believer falls into any trouble through having been zealous for God, then may he spread his complaint before God with the full expectation that He will bring him out of all his difficulties, for is it not written, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord…none of his steps shall slide"? Oh, to walk in such a way that your conscience is void of offense both towards God and towards man—then integrity and uprightness will preserve you and your goings will be established. "He will keep the feet of His saints." "He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone."

While traveling through the mazes of life, another form of the preparation of the gospel of peace will be of essential service to us, namely, *peace with our fellow men*. The gospel of peace leads us into the closest bonds of amity with our fellow believers, although, alas, it is not always possible to prevent offenses arising, even with the best of them! If we cannot make all our brothers and sisters amiable, we are at least to be at peace on our side—and if we succeed in this, no great disagreement can arise, for it always needs two to make a quarrel. It is well to go to bed every night feeling, "I have no difference in my soul with any of the members of Christ's body. I wish well to everyone and love them all in my heart." This would enable us to travel in right royal style over fields which now are often stony with controversy and thorny with prejudice. Theological conflicts and ecclesiastical squabbles would utterly disappear if we were shod with the true spirit of the gospel of peace. An unwillingness to think harshly of any Christian is a sandal most easy to the feet, protecting it from many a thorn. Wear it in the church, wear it in all holy service, wear it in all fellowship with Christians and you will find your way among the brethren greatly smoothed! You will win their love and esteem before long, and avoid a world of jealousy and opposition which would otherwise have impeded your course.

It is well to travel girt with this shoe of *peace with all mankind*. "If it is possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men." It is barely possible, but aim at it—and if you do not perfectly succeed, try again. Unconverted men will not love your religion, for they are carnal. That you cannot help, but you must love them, carnal as they are, and by degrees you may win them to love both you and your Lord. If they will not live peaceably with you, yet give them your love and live peaceably with them. Be not easily provoked. Bear and forbear, forgive and love on, return good for evil, seek to benefit even the most unthankful and you will travel to heaven in the most pleasant possible manner. Hatred, envy and persecution may come, but a loving spirit materially blunts their edge and oftentimes inherits the promise, "When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." If you have to feel, "Now, I am going this part of the journey with the view of avenging a wrong," you will not journey pleasantly or safely! But if from the depth of your soul you can say, "When Christ made peace with God for me, He made peace between me and my bitterest foe," you will march on like a hero! Travel through the world as a sincere philanthropist, with your feet shod with love to all born of woman and your course will be happy and honorable. God grant us that loving spirit which comes of free grace and is the work of the Holy Spirit, for that is a mystic sandal which gives wings to the feet and lightens a weary road.

Having thus described these gospel shoes, I should like to say that the feet of our Lord and Master were sandaled in this manner. He was the King of pilgrims and to Him, the way was even rougher than it can be to us. But these were the shoes He wore and, having worn them, He counsels us to put on the same. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you," He said. Always while He dwelt in this world He was in fellowship with God. He could truly say, "I came down from heaven not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. He who sent Me is with Me. I am not alone because the Father is with Me." He always sought the good of His chosen—"having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." And as for His enemies, He had only prayers and tears for them. He was at peace with all above, around and within Him. That peacefulness of His, that wonderful serenity, was one of the marvelous points in His character. You never find Him worried, disturbed, flustered. No, that is *our* infirmity because we take our shoes off and are taken by surprise—but His feet were always shod—He dwelt in perfect peace and, therefore, He was the grandest pilgrim and the noblest worker. We cannot need to be better shod than our Lord was! Let us sandal our hearts with His peace and we shall be royally prepared for our journey!

I may add that these shoes are such as will last our entire journey through. We feel most comfortable in our old shoes, for they fit the foot so well, but they will at last wear out. These shoes of my text are old, yet always new and are like those which Israel wore in the wilderness, of which it is said, "Your shoe is not waxen old upon your foot." The everlasting gospel yields us everlasting peace! The good news from heaven never grows stale, neither will the peace which it brings ever become like the Gibeonites' "old shoes and patched." The man who wears the prepa-

ration of the gospel of peace was comforted by it when he was young and it still cheers him in his later days—it made him a good traveler when he first set out and it will protect his last footsteps when he crosses the river Jordan and climbs the celestial hills!

Friends, are you all thus booted for your life journey? See you well to it.

II. We come now to our second business, LET US TRY ON THESE SHOES.

Here our joy is great to find that *they fit perfectly* and need no tugging and straining to draw them on. By a miracle more strange than magic, the preparation of the gospel of peace suits every foot, whether it is that of a babe in grace, or a strong man in Christ Jesus. No man can travel well, much less engage in battle successfully unless his dress is comfortable, especially that part of it which relates to the feet. And here we have the grand advantage that no foot was ever uneasy when once it had put on this shoe! Mephibosheths who have been lame in both feet even from birth have found this shoe works miracles and causes them to leap as harts upon the mountains! The gospel of peace helps all our infirmities, heals all the wounds of our old sins and suits itself to all our tender places. Whatever the weakness may be, the gospel provides for it! Whatever the distress, its peace relieves it. Other shoes have their pinching places, but he who wears the preparation of the gospel of peace shall know no straitness of spirit, for the gospel gives rest to our minds. Real gospel really believed, means real peace! That which disturbs us is something alien to the spirit of the gospel, but the Spirit of Christ is the spirit of peace. Who would not wear such a shoe?

The preparation of the gospel of peace is a wonderful shoe for *giving its wearer a firm foothold*. Surely it was of this shoe that Habakkuk sang when he said, "The Lord God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk upon my high places." When persons are on slippery rocks, or dangerous eminences, where a fall would be fatal, it is well to be so shod that the feet get grip and hold. Nothing aids a man to stand fast in the Lord like the peace of the gospel. Many professors are very soon thrown over—they are attacked with doctrinal error and they readily yield. They are assailed by temptation and their feet go out from under them. But the man who has perfect peace with God and who relies upon the Most High shall never be moved, for the Lord upholds him. His shoes have driven themselves into the eternal truths of God and hold like anchors! Tell him the atonement is not true, preach up to him the bloodless slang of modern thought and he ridicules the ineffectual attempt because he knows whom he has believed and feels a heavenly peace within flowing from the substitutionary sacrifice. Tell him that the doctrines of grace are a mistake that salvation is all of free will and man's merit, and he says, "No, I know better. I know the doctrines of sovereign grace to be true by experience, I know I am God's chosen, I know that I am called, I know that I am justified, for I know that I have peace with God as the result of all these." You cannot move him an inch! His creed is interwoven with his personal consciousness

and there is no arguing him out of it! In these days of skepticism, when no man seems to have any resting place, it is well to be so shod that you can and do stand on the truth and cannot be blown about like thistle-down in the breeze.

The shoe of our text is equally famous for its *suitability for marching* in the ways of daily duty. Soldiers have little time for contemplating the comfort of their shoes, or their fitness for mere standing, for they have daily marching to perform. We, too, have our marching, and as far as some of us are concerned, they are no mere parades, but heavy marching involving stern toil and protracted effort. A soul at perfect peace with God is in a fit state for the severest movements. A sense of pardoned sin and reconciliation with God fits us for anything and everything. When the burden of sin is gone, all other burdens are light. Since we are no longer on the road to hell, the roughest places of our pilgrimage do not distress us. In every sphere, a heart at perfect peace with God is the soundest preparation for progress and the surest support under trials. Try on these shoes, my brothers and sisters, and see if they do not enable you to run without weariness and walk without fainting. All earth cannot find their like—they are unrivaled—they make men like the angels to whom duty is delight!

These gospel shoes are also *an effectual preservative* from all the ordinary roughness of the road of life, although to most of us it is far from smooth. He who expects to find a grassy walk all the way to heaven, well mown and rolled, or looks for a highway leveled by a steamroller, will be sorrowfully mistaken. The way is rugged, like the goat tracks of Engedi, and oftentimes so narrow and so far on high that the eagle's eye cannot discern it! The blood of former pilgrims stains the way to glory, yet from all perils to our feet, the preparation of the gospel of peace will guard us! From fears within and fighting without, gospel peace will surely deliver us. Perhaps we are more vexed with little trials than with great ones—certainly we bear them with far less equanimity—but a peaceful heart protects alike from tiny thorns and terrible rocks. Everyday vexations as well as extraordinary tribulations we shall bear cheerfully when the peace of God keeps our heart and mind!

Beloved, this shoe is also *good for climbing*. Do you ever practice the holy art of spiritual climbing, God's blessed Spirit leading the way? Do you ever climb mount Tabor to be transfigured with your Master? Have you watched with Him one hour and seen His conflict and His victory? Have you ever looked from Pisgah's glorious heights upon the goodly land and Lebanon, anticipating the glory to be revealed? Has your spirit ever been away there alone in mysterious communing with God upon the Hermons? I trust you know what climbing work means and that you have enjoyed rapt ecstatic fellowship with Jesus Christ. But of this I am sure, you can never mount on high if your feet are not shod with the peace of God! Unshod with these sacred sandals, there is no climbing! Only those who delight themselves in the Lord God shall ascend the hill of the Lord and stand in His Holy Place!

The heart prepared by peace with God is shod suitably for *running* as well as for climbing. There are periods when all our energies must be put

forth and we must rush forward at the heroic pace, for, at certain passages in life's campaign, things must be carried by storm and every faculty must dash forward at its swiftest speed. We cannot at all times keep up the swiftness, which, nevertheless, is occasionally required of us, but the man for a push and a dash is he whose soul abides in peace. Troubled in heart, our feet are blistered, our knees are weak and our movements are painfully slow. But the joy of the Lord is our strength and in the power of it we become like Asahel, fleet of foot as a young roe. Try on these shoes, my limping brothers and sisters! What do you say?

Lastly, this shoe is *good for fighting*, and that I gather from Paul having put it among the armor. In the old style, fighting meant hand to hand and foot to foot, and then it was necessary for the feet to be well protected and, indeed, so well covered over as to be useful in assault, for the warriors kicked with their feet as well as struck with their hands—and many a foe was placed *hors de combat* with a heavy kick! Christians are expected to fight with their feet in the battle against sin and Satan! Indeed, they must fight with all their powers and faculties! That grand promise has been given to us, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." What a tread we will give him when we once have the opportunity! We shall need to have our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace to break that old dragon's head and grind his snares to powder! And God helping us, we shall do it! Our covenant head has trampled on the old serpent and so shall all His members.

Let this suffice concerning these shoes, but a serious question suggests itself to me. Are there not some of you who have to travel to eternity and yet have no shoes for the journey? How can the unconverted man hope to reach heaven when he has no shoes on his feet? How will he bear the troubles of life, the temptations of the flesh and the trials of death? I pray you, unconverted ones, look at yourselves and at the way—and see how impossible it is for you to accomplish the journey unless you go to Jesus and obtain from Him the grace which will make you pilgrims to glory! Go, I pray you, and find peace in Him—and then your life journey shall be happy and safe, and the end eternal joy—for your feet will be shod with "the preparation of the gospel of peace."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EPHESIANS 6:10-24.

Verse 10. *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.* Everything depends upon that. Whether you are called upon to work, or to wait, or to watch, or to suffer, you have need to be strong. If you are not strong, the very armor that you wear will be a burden to you! It is of the utmost importance that Christians should be as strong in grace as they can possibly be. And the power that is to be in them is to be the power of God—"the power of His might." What a wonderful power that is! The power of flesh is weakness and the power of man is fading, but the power of God is almighty and unchangeable! And if we can be girt

about with this power, there is scarcely any limit to what we may successfully attempt.

"Finally"—as if this were a matter of the highest importance, to be considered first and last—"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." You know how strong Paul was—he was a veritable giant for Christ and he here calls upon his brethren to be as he was. He did not want to be brother to dwarfs, so he appealed to his brethren to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

11. *Put on the whole armor of God.* The armor of God will not serve you unless you, yourself, are strong. It needs a strong man to carry girdle, breastplate, shoes, shield, helmet and sword. Let me impress upon you the fact that we must first of all get strong within and *after that*, "put on the whole armor of God," that armor which God has provided for the good soldiers of Jesus Christ—that armor which distinguishes men as belonging to the army of God. Do not merely put on a part of it, but put on the whole of it! Do not simply look at the armor and clean it up so as to keep it bright, but put it on, wear it—it is meant for you to use in the great battle for the right against the wrong! "Put on the whole armor of God."

11. *That you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.* He will attack you sometimes by force and sometimes by fraud. By might or by sleight he will seek to overcome you and no unarmed man can stand against him. Never go out without all your armor on, for you can never tell where you may meet the devil. He is not omnipresent, but nobody can tell where he is not, for he and his troops of devils appear to be found everywhere on this earth.

12. *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood.* Our great fight is not against our fellow men. As Christians, we go not forth armed with sword and shield to fight against "flesh and blood."

12. *But against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* Our battle is against evil wherever it is to be found, against evil in every shape and form. Evil is as much in the world today as it was in Paul's time and we must fight against it everywhere. We are not to shut our eyes to it, or try to patch up a compromise with it. Christians are bound to fight against evil principalities, evil powers, the evil rulers of the darkness of this world—and wicked spirits in high places.

13. *Therefore take unto you the whole armor of God.* What stress the apostle lays upon this point! He repeats the command he had just given and again emphasizes the fact that it is "the whole armor of God" that is to be worn. There are some professing Christians who only in part obey the injunction given here—but it is no use to wear a part of the Christian armor and to leave the rest of the soul unarmed. A little leak will sink a ship and the absence of one piece of the armor of God may cost a man his soul! "Therefore take unto you the whole armor of God."

13. *That you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.* That is what we have to do—to keep our place and our standing as Christians right to the end. To be apparently pure and holy for a time is no use at all. Transient professors will find everlasting ruin,

"but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." We are in God's army for life—we can never quit this warfare till God shall call us home!

14. *Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.* Let this girdle of the everlasting truth of God brace you up. Let it tighten all the rest of your armor.

14. *And having on the breastplate of righteousness.* Let your heart be guarded by the knowledge that you are right with God—that you love that which is holy and true. Put on the righteousness of Christ, Himself, as the best possible protection for your heart.

15. *And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.* Rough roads grow smooth when these blessed gospel sandals are on your feet. A little stone in the shoe will make the pilgrim's progress a very wearisome and painful one, so try to keep out all the stones—everything about which you have any scruple, or that you think may be wrong—and walk in the safe and narrow way set forth in the gospel of peace.

16. *Above all.* Over all, covering all from head to foot.

16. *Taking the shield of faith.* [See Sermon #416, Volume 7—SHIELD OF FAITH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] For you need this shield to protect both your armor and yourself.

16. *Therewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.* Not only the fiery darts of the wicked one, but those, also, of wicked men and wicked women who may throw at you afar, darts that are all ablaze which would burn as well as pierce you if you were not well guarded against them. Nothing can quench these fiery darts but the shield of faith!

17. *And take the helmet of salvation.* You used to wear the helmet of pride with its fine nodding plumes, but that has been taken off of you long ago. Now put on "the helmet of salvation." This will effectually defend your head and no sword will be able to cleave through it to injure you. Your brain and everything that is connected with your mental powers will be right when you know that you are saved—and when the power of God's salvation is working within you!

17. *And the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.* [See Sermon #2201, Volume 37—THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] There is no sword like that! It pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Nothing can resist the Word of God if it is only wielded aright. There is one more weapon in the heavenly armory.

18. *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.* When you cannot use your sword, and even when you can hardly grasp your shield, you can pray. That weapon of "all prayer" is of the handiest kind because it can be turned in any and every direction. "Praying always with all prayer"—groaning prayers, weeping prayers, prayers that are made up of single words, prayers that have not a word in them, prayers for others, prayers of confession, prayers of thanksgiving—"praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."

18. *And watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints*. But will prayer for other people help us? Yes, very much! You will sometimes find that when you cannot pray for yourself, it is a good plan to pray for somebody else. Think of some child of God and pray for him or her—and then the fire of supplication will soon burn up in your heart! The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends and He will do the same for you. I have heard many of our members say that when they have felt bound in prayer, they have pleaded for their Pastor and afterwards they have been able to pray for themselves. I advise more of you to try that plan—it will do me good and then if it also does you good, there will be a double advantage in it! Paul was of the same mind as I am, for he added.

19, 20. *And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds*. "An ambassador in bonds!" Such a thing was never heard of in earthly courts! We never think of chaining an ambassador, but this is how men treated this great messenger from the court of heaven!

20-22. *That therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. But that you also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that you might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts*. It is well for Christian people to know how it fares with their spiritual guides. Paul wished the Ephesian saints to know in what state of heart he found himself—that they might the more intelligently pray for him.

23, 24. *Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.* I am sure that we can heartily repeat that benediction. May the Lord send much of His grace to all His people in every part of the earth who love Him in sincerity! Amen.

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"THE TRUE SAYINGS OF GOD"
NO. 3144

A SERMON
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"These are the true sayings of God."
Revelation 19:9.

BEFORE I use our text in a larger sense, it is due to our reverence for the Word of God to expound this short sentence in its immediate connection, for the angel here declared that certain things which had been spoken in John's hearing were "the true sayings of God." You will observe that he bade the apostle "write" what he had heard. It was so weighty that John was not to trust it simply to his memory. It was so necessary that it should be remembered that he had to record it so that it might be handed down to future generations. "Write," said the angel, and then, as if to give John reasons for writing—reasons why these truths of God should be permanently recorded—he added, "These are the true sayings of God."

What were those true sayings? I shall not dwell long upon them, but just hastily allude to them. The first which appears in this chapter is the great fact that God will judge and condemn the harlot church. There are two churches in the world today. The one is the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ composed of believers in Him who worship God in spirit and in truth, whose creed is the Word of God and whose power for life and service is the indwelling Spirit of God. There is another church—you know what a shameful name is applied to her in this chapter—and you also know that she deserves to be called by that name for she has, indeed, corrupted the earth with her fornication. In the old Jewish time, idolatry was called spiritual harlotry—and there are millions of idolaters daily bowing down before images, rags and bones that ought long ago to have been buried in the earth. The Church of Rome seems to have gathered up all the relics of the idolatries of other ages and then to have capped them by saying that a substance which is only bread before the "priest" consecrates it, becomes God afterwards and then the idolater eats his god—a monstrous piece of blasphemy and superstition unworthy of Dahomey itself! That is the harlot church which God will surely judge. And when He does, terrible will be that judgment! Among the tremendous things of the last day will be the total overthrow and utter destruction of this "mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." Come you out from her, O you people, lest you be partakers of her plagues, for terrible will her plagues be in the day when the Lord shall avenge upon

her the blood of all His saints and martyrs whom she has slain. This, then, is one of "the true sayings of God."

The next true saying is concerning the glorious and universal reign of the great God. For John "heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigns." There has been a long war between God and idols of various names. Among the ancient idols were Baal and Ashtaroth, and Dagon—but all had to bow down before Jehovah. Then Jupiter, and Saturn, and Venus and Mars were worshiped as deities by the heathen. And now many gods and lords still dominate a large part of the human intellect. But they are all doomed to fall and the one invisible Creator of heaven and earth, almighty and eternal, will yet reign throughout the whole universe without a rival! And then shall be heard again that great shout that John heard during the wondrous revelation in the Isle of Patmos. "Alleluia: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns." Let us never imagine that God's throne is in peril! Let us never fancy that the truth of God can be defeated. Truth is God's daughter and He covers her with His great shield and fights for her with His invincible omnipotence! Do not tremble for the ark of God—do not despair, or even despond—the Lord will win the victory over all the powers of evil! This, also, is one of "the true sayings of God."

The next true saying was this, that Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God—so called because of the atoning sacrifice which He presented on Calvary—will have a full reward for all His sufferings—"For the marriage of the Lamb [See Sermon #2096, Volume 35—"THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] is come, and His wife has made herself ready...Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper [See Sermon #2428, Volume 41—THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Jesus Christ came into this world to find His beloved ones. And He found them in bondage—and having taken upon Himself their nature, He became their next of kin—and then, according to the ancient law, He redeemed them and bought them unto Himself—and He has espoused unto Himself all those that trust in Him. All who believe in Him, in whatever visible church they may be, make up the one Church of Jesus Christ which He has redeemed from among men with His precious blood. And in the latter days He will have that Church to be His reward. At present, Christ has but a poor reward for all His sufferings. Comparatively few reverence Him. His people are a feeble and scattered folk, but there are days coming in which the Lord Jesus Christ shall have all whom He bought with His blood. He shall have for Himself all whom He came to save. He shall not be disappointed—"He shall not fail, nor be discouraged." The LORD shall abundantly reward Him for all His agonies. "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." This also is one of "the true sayings of God."

This true saying also declares that in the latter days, when Christ comes again to this earth, He will find His Church here. He will bring with Him a part of that Church and He will find here part of that Church

which shall be His bride forever and forever. A description of the purity which is her glory is given in the verse which precedes our text—"And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." So that the Church of Christ will be arrayed as brides should be in the garments of light and purity. She will also be chastely arrayed—not like the harlot church, in purple and scarlet—but "in fine linen clean and white." Christ's Church shall be a pure Church, a simple Church, a humble Church and yes, for all that, a beautiful Church in the eyes of Jesus Christ! She shall be a perfect Church and her beauty shall be her righteousness. And where shall she obtain that righteousness? It is said that it shall be *given* to her. It will not be any righteousness which she has manufactured, for each of her members has the same desire as Paul had when he wrote, "That I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." The Church of God, then, when Christ receives her as His bride, will be dressed in the imputed righteousness which comes to her by faith! It is the righteousness which Jesus Christ spent His life to work out, the righteousness which never had a stain upon it, for Jesus Christ is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Oh, blessed be God for this glorious fact that Jesus Christ will have a Church of this kind forever! This also is one of "the true sayings of God."

The practical point for us to remember is this—let us endeavor to get as far as we can from the flashy church described in the 18th chapter. If you read that chapter through, you cannot mistake the church to which it refers, for the portrait is a photograph! Get as far as you can away from that mystery of iniquity! Shun Sacramentarianism as you would shun the plague! Abhor the priesthood as you would the archfiend himself! Turn away from all idolatry and worship God alone. Keep to the Bible and forsake everything that is of man's invention. Cleave to the simple teaching of God's word in doctrine, in practice, in the ordinances and in everything. Cling, in fact, to the pure Church of Jesus Christ. If you ask me where you can find that Church, I may tell you that you can find part of it here and parts of it scattered all over the land, and over a great part of the world. Believers in Christ are known to the Lord, for He knows them that are His. They are not as others are, for they have received an inner spiritual light and life. They no longer care for the world, nor for the world's religion. They seek to walk where Jesus Christ marked the way with His own pierced feet—"These are they who follow the Lamb wherever He goes." This is the Church that loves the righteousness of Christ; the Church that preaches up Christ, her great husband and Lord; the Church that magnifies His atoning sacrifice; the Church that believes in His merits—not in human merits—and that trusts in His death and not in anything that men can do to save themselves! Cling to that Church, beloved! Be numbered with it, give no sleep to your eyes, no slumber to your eyelids till you know that you are among those people to

whom is granted the privilege of wearing the righteousness of Christ as "fine linen, clean and white." The Lord grant that in that dividing day, not one member of this assembly may be driven away with the beast and the false prophet, but may we all be found with the bride, the true, chosen, chaste, pure Church of Jesus Christ that has endeavored to follow Him through evil report and good report, never bowing at the feet of kings, never accepting their proffered gifts, but remaining true to God and Christ all her days!

Having spoken thus upon the context of this passage, I desire now to address you, for a short time, upon these words as they refer to the entire canon of Scripture. I may take this blessed book, this whole inspired Bible, and say of its contents, "These are the true sayings of God." I want to make two remarks. The first is *that some of these sayings have already been proven to be true.* And the second is that *the rest of them we are fully assured are true.*

I. First, then, SOME OF THE GREAT SAYINGS IN THIS BOOK WE HAVE PROVEN TO BE TRUE. There is nothing like tasting, and handling, and trying, and proving for ourselves what we find in the Scriptures!

Among other things, this book says that *sin is an evil and a bitter thing.* Some of us have proven that to be true, for sin became, when we were awakened by God's Spirit, our plague, our torment, our curse—and to this hour, though God has forgiven the sins of as many of us as have believed in Jesus Christ, we never sin without suffering injury as the result of it. I ask any child of God here whether he ever was a real gainer by sin. Was sin ever anything to you, beloved, but a loss—an evil through and through? Have you not smarted for it many and many a time? And do you not say, "Of all the evil things that ever came from hell, there is none that can match sin"? Yes, we have proven that this saying of God is true.

But more pleasant to talk of is another true saying of God which tells us that *the blood of Jesus Christ speaks peace to the conscience.* This book tells us that the blood of Jesus speaks better things than that of Abel. It tells us that, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." I put the question to those who have been justified by faith—those who have tested the power of the precious blood of Christ—has it not given you peace with God? My witness is that I never knew what peace of conscience meant until I learned what the Savior's blood had done for me. There is no peace like the peace that comes from trusting in Jesus! It is "the peace of God, which passes all understanding," which keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. No, more—the precious blood of Jesus, when it is applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit, not only gives peace, but it gives a divine exhilaration and sacred joy, as the word says, "We also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." I appeal to your experience—is it not so? Have you not proven that saying of God to be a true saying? Oh, yes! There are scores and hundreds, and

even thousands here who can repeat this saying and add, "Verily, we know it to be true in our own souls!"

Further, God has told us in His word that *there is a cleansing power in faith, and hope, and love, and all the other Christian graces*. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." "Every man that has this hope in him purifies himself." I put it to you who have faith and hope—have you not always found that in proportion as you have these graces in active exercise, you can conquer sin? Perhaps you have some besetting sin. If so, have you not always been able to tread it under your feet when you have stood at the foot of the cross? When you have been full of love to Jesus, have you not also been most victorious over your inward corruptions, and most steadfast in resisting outward temptations? I know it is so! And there are some of us in whom the grace of God has worked such great wonders—changing us from what we once were, turning us inside out, making us such new creatures—that if we were to meet our old selves tomorrow we would not know ourselves! When men tell us that the gospel is not the power of God unto salvation, we ask them how it is that, every day in the week we hear of drunkards reclaimed, the unchaste made pure, thieves made honest and persons of detestable temper made gentle and amiable? And how it is that we so often hear of the conversion of a husband and father—and that the wife and children at home bear witness that the conversion is no sham but has made the cottage to be no longer a little hell, but more like a heaven upon earth? We say that the doctrine which can make such changes in men cannot be an untrue doctrine!

When I have been troubled with skepticism, I have had to cure myself in this way. I have stood and looked up to the starry vault of heaven and I have said, "Well, one thing I am clear about and cannot doubt, namely, that there is a God. All these wondrous worlds did not grow—somebody made them. And there is another thing about which I am clear—and that is that I love this God, whoever He is, and that I believe Him to be a pure and holy being! And I want to be the same as He is and whatever side He is on, I am on His side! I feel an honor and reverence for Him and desire to follow Him in that which is good and that which is true." Then I say to myself, "Did I always feel like that?" And I answer, "No, I did not. Now that which makes me place myself side by side with God for that which is good and true—that which makes me love God cannot be a lie—it must be true! And as it was the gospel of Jesus Christ that worked that change in my soul, that gospel is true!" And so I get back again on firm rocky ground for my own soul to rest upon. And what I have said about myself is the witness of all who know the Lord. Their faith in God has had a sanctifying influence upon them and so they know, in their own experience, that this saying of God is indeed true!

Another of "the true sayings of God" is this. He has said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." We have done as He bade us and so *we have proved the efficacy of prayer*. It is all very well to sneer at answers to prayer, as

some have done, and to propose various tests which none could accept unless they were idiots—but the question cannot be disposed of in that way. There are honest people about by the thousands who swear that God does hear their prayers. Not hear prayer? If any man were to say to me, "You have no eyes, you have no head, you have no arms, you have no legs," I would say to him, "I don't know how I can convince you that I have all these parts of the human body if you look at me, and then repeat your assertion, but I am absolutely certain that I have all these things. And if anyone says to me, "God has not heard your prayers," I answer, "Why, He hears them every day! I receive answers to prayer so constantly that I cannot doubt the fact any more than I can doubt my own existence." And I am not a solitary one in this matter. I am less than the least of all God's servants—and there are many men who are mighty in prayer, men who have their will of God, who go to Him in secret and ask what they will—and it is given to them. I could mention their names, but I will not. But even we who are among the feeblest of the Lord's people can tell of many answers to prayer that we have received. Many persons write to ask me to pray for certain special cases. I do not know why they do so, for my prayers can have no more effect than their own. And I often receive letters containing grateful thanks for answers that have been given to prayers that I have thus put up for others—and all these people are not fools! Some of them are such intelligent persons that they are regarded as leaders in their various circles! And others of them have, at any rate, managed to lead honest, sober, consistent Christian lives. And they believe that if they can join their prayers with those of another brother in Christ, the Lord will grant their requests—and He does so constantly! They are not deceived by their own fancies or imaginations. Some people say, "They are mere coincidences which you call answers to prayer." Well, call them coincidences if you like, but to us they are no such thing whatever they may be to you! And while we pray and the answer comes—whether by a coincidence or not, it will not matter much to us—as long as we do really receive the answer and are made to rejoice in our souls, and to bless God for hearing our supplications! We have again and again proved that there is a God that hears prayer—and the promise to hear and answer prayer is among "the true sayings of God."

Once again, we know that it is according to the teaching of God's word that *faith will sustain His people in the time of trouble and trial*. This truth we have, ourselves, proven and we have seen it illustrated in other Christians. That same sustaining power is promised to us in the hour of death. "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you." David said, "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me." Now, if there is ever a time when a man is honest, one would think it is when he lies face to face with death! People cannot usually play the hypocrite then, though there have been some daring enough to do even that, but, for the most part, men are startled out of mere fancies when they come to the reality of departure out of this world. How fares it with Christians when they are about to die? Why, beloved, we are

not speaking about dreams, but of solid facts that we daily verify in our visitations of our flock when we say that they die joyfully! One of our dear sisters who was known to some of you, has just been called home. Through a long period of acute pain which rendered her condition unusually distressing, her joy and peace were almost too seraphic to be talked about! When I met some of her friends in the house, they said to me, "Well, sir, we have derived more spiritual benefit in sitting here talking with our friend than we have got from any sort of religious exercise." Words have fallen from that humble woman's lips that would read like poetry—joyous words between the gasps for breath! And wonderful anticipations of the glory land have been given to her in the midst of much physical weakness. And when we speak thus of one of our members, we may say the same of hundreds of them, for it is the usual experience with them on their deathbeds. I wish more of you could see them die and learn the way in which a Christian can expire. I always think, when I come away from the deathbed of a child of God, that I have added to my previous stack of facts proving the faithfulness of my God! I would believe the Bible without a single fact to back it up, but there is a vast quantity of external as well as internal evidences of the truth of the Scriptures. I would believe my God if He never gave me anything to see with my eyes or to hear with my ears. His own word should be enough for me, but these blessed sounds and scenes, these cheering sights and holy triumphs make it not merely a matter of faith to believe the gospel, but also a matter of common sense! It seems impossible to doubt when you see the evident power there is about true godliness and the majestic might that dwells in faith to strengthen the weak against the last grim foe. Yes, we have proven many of these things to be "the true sayings of God."

Before I leave this point, I want to urge all believers always to treat the Bible as if it were all true. Do not let any of it seem to be a romance to you, but regard it all as real and true. I wish people were more business-like in dealing with the Bible and that they would use more common sense with regard to it. We sometimes fail to use it as if we really believed it. Some persons appear to imagine that the excellence of their prayer consists in its length—but if they had more real belief in prayer, it would probably not be so long. Whenever I go to a bank with a check, I pass it to the clerk at the counter, take up the cash he gives me and go about my business. That is how I like to pray. I take to the Lord one of His promises and I say to Him, "Lord, I believe Your promise and I believe that You will fulfill it to me." And then I go my way knowing that I have the answer to my petition, or that it will come in due time. To kneel down for a certain specified period and pour out a long string of selected sentences would seem to me a mere *performance*—and I would get nothing by it. "He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Do not let your praying be a mere ecclesiastical or religious engagement! Go to God as your Father and your friend, fully convinced that your prayer will be answered. Thousands of prayers are never answered because those who present them do

not expect that they will be answered. If a man prays to God and does not believe that God will answer him, He will not answer him. We must, without wavering, believe that God will hear us—and then He must hear us. Note that I say "must." But "must" is for the King! Yes, but He has bound Himself by His own word—"What things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them and you shall have them." These are Christ's own words, not mine! And their meaning lies upon the very surface. Let the Christian pray in faith and then he will find that God will never run back from His word, but will keep His promise to all His believing people!

II. My second point was to be that THERE ARE SOME THINGS WHICH WE CANNOT PROVE JUST YET, BUT THEY ARE TRUE, FOR ALL THAT.

Now let me tell you what will come true one of these days. *Jesus Christ will come back to this earth.* That same Jesus who went up from the top of Mount Olivet, will so come in like manner as He was seen to go up into heaven. He will come with a mighty blast of the archangel's trumpet and in amazing pomp and splendor, attended by myriads of angels and vast hosts of the redeemed! But He will surely come! It may not be today. It may not be for many an age. But in such an hour as men think not, the Son of Man will come! When He does come, remember that if you are alive, you will have to stand before His judgment seat. But if you die before that time, your body shall rise again and your soul shall return to it—and there in your flesh shall you see the Son of God! That very Savior whom tonight I preach to you, who will save you if you believe in Him, will then come to sit upon His throne. And if you have lived and died without believing in Him, He will come to judge you and to pronounce upon you that dreadful sentence, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Christ will come and you will all rise and either be accepted or condemned by Him! "These are the true sayings of God."

Further, *there will be a heaven for all those who are found believing in Jesus.* Christ will take them there to be with Him where He is, that they may behold His glory. They shall enter into most blessed fellowship with Him in all His joys and glories—and that, world without end. If you do not believe in Jesus, you will miss all that—and where He is you will never come! The door will be shut against you and the outer darkness where there shall be weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth will be your portion forever, for this is another true saving of God, that *there is a hell for all who do not believe in Jesus.* As surely as there was a place of bliss for Lazarus, so surely was there a place of woe for Dives. As certainly as there is a heavenly fold for the sheep of Christ, so is there a hell for the goats. "These are the true sayings of God." Do not despise them! Do not doubt them! Some of you who are unconverted may be within a few minutes of death. I was struck, the other Monday night, when I was coming to the prayer meeting here, by the appearance of a poor man, one of our church members, who was sitting by the fire in the room behind looking very sickly. It was bitterly cold, but I soon saw that death was

making him still colder. I felt that in a short time he would die, however much care we might take of him.

We took him home in a cab and in a few hours he was gone. He was an old disciple so he had entered into his rest, but I thought, "It is strange that there should so often be deaths in this Tabernacle." Every now and then, while I am preaching the word here, there comes to me a message, "There is a person dying here." Besides that, death makes havoc continually among our thousands of members—sometimes three or four die in one week. And out of this vast congregation, I do not know how many will die this week. Probably we shall not all of us see next Sabbath, but certainly we shall soon depart out of this world. We shall fly away, and where, where, where shall we go? I do not want to seem to be fanatical, but I will solemnly put this question to everyone here—as you do not believe that you will die like a dog, and as you do believe that you will live in another state—are you prepared for it? And as most of you, at any rate, believe that faith in Jesus is the only preparation for the future state—have you believed in Him? Have you sought God by prayer? Is Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior?

If you are obliged to say, "No"—I cannot hold your hand, (there are too many for me to do that), nor can I take you by the buttonhole and detain you for a while, but I would gladly detain you as that ancient mariner detained the wedding guest, and say to you, "Are you wise to live in danger, every day, of death and judgment and yet to remain unprepared? Ought it not to be the first business of your life, by faith and prayer, to make your calling and election sure?" If you are wise men and wise women, surely a word will be enough for you. But if you are not wise, may God make you so! May He lead you, this very hour, to confess your sins and seek His mercy! And may every one of us be found in Christ in that great day! Then shall we rejoice forever in "the true sayings of God." The Lord grant it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:89-104.

Verse 89. *Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.* It is not a changeable or vanishing thing—"Your word is settled." Settled forever, settled "forever in heaven." As God changes not, so the word which He has spoken to His servants changes not. If the foundations of the faith could be removed, what would the righteous do? What would any of us do? But, with an eternally fixed Word of God, we have something solid to build upon, a foundation on which we may confidently rest our everlasting hopes.

90. *Your faithfulness is unto all generations.* God, who kept His promise to Abraham, keeps it also to us though we are far down the ages. And He will keep it to our children and our children's children as long as the world endures, and then forever and ever! We need not be afraid to leave

the generations to come in His hands. "Your faithfulness is unto all generations."

90, 91. *You have established the earth, and it abides. They continue this day according to Your ordinances: for all are Your servants.* This material world whose laws appear to be so fixed, abides only because God has established it. But a day will come in which He will roll these things up like a worn out clothing and He that sits upon the throne of God shall make all things new. But at present we have, in the fixity of the laws of nature, a type of the fixity of the promises and purposes of God.

92. *Unless Your law had been my delights, I should then have perished in my affliction.* Notice the love of God's servant to God's word. "Unless Your law had been my delights." The word is in the plural, for the Psalmist not only took a delight in it, but all his delights were there! It was the sea of happiness wherein he bathed his entire soul. "Unless it had been so," he says, "I should then have perished in my affliction." One of the best preservatives for the heart in times of trouble is an intense delight in the Word of God. Oh, to get away from this noisy world, from the turmoil of life and its endless discussions and controversies—and to sit down and quietly listen to what that word has to say to us! This is the best way to recuperate drooping and fainting spirits.

93. *I will never forget Your precepts: for with them You have quickened me.* Nothing makes a man remember the word so well as the fact that it has quickened him. If you owe your spiritual life and the support of it to the Word of God, you will not forget that word! If you feel that every time you come into contact with it, it inspires you with fresh life, you will be anxious to be often diligently reading it!

94. *I am Yours.* That is a grand thing for anyone to be able to say! What a heaven of bliss lies slumbering in these three words, "I am Yours."

94. *Save me.* That is a good argument. "'I am Yours by redemption, so do not lose me. 'I am Yours by a new creation, so let not the enemy steal me away from You. I am Your servant, so exercise a master's rights over me and protect me from all my foes. 'I am Yours, save me.'"

94. *For I have sought Your precepts.* Notice how the psalmist here twice singles out the precepts rather than the promises—even hypocrites may love the promises, but only sincere believers love the precepts. The true servant of God loves the burdens which his Lord and Master lays upon him and he only wishes that he had more strength to bear still more of them.

95. *The wicked have waited for me to destroy me.* "They have lain in ambush, they have waited to catch me tripping, to ruin my character if possible, so what shall I do? Plot against them? No, watch them night and day? No. 'The wicked have waited for me to destroy me.'"

96. *But I will consider Your testimonies.* There is something that seems to me calmly defiant about the psalmist's resolve. He does not say, "The wicked are waiting to destroy me, but I will fight them." No, but he says, "I shall read my Bible and I shall follow its directions. I shall act in obedience to my God—and in that way I shall baffle them." To be obedient to

God is the surest way to be victorious over wicked men! Keep God's word and God will guard your head in the day of danger.

96. *I have seen an end of all perfection: but Your commandment.* Ah, there I find perfection—"'Your commandment.'"

96. *Is exceedingly broad.* It is so broad that there is no limit to it! One of the early fathers used to say, "I delight in the infinity of Scripture," and well he might, for there is no limit to it. Even one single text might suffice for a man's meditation for a whole year! If it did not, it would be because of the scantiness of the man's meditative power—not because of the exhaustion of the meaning of the verse.

97. *O how love I Your law!* The psalmist breaks out into a transport of delight. He does not say how much he loved God's law for the simple reason that he could not tell us that. But he says, "O how love I Your law!"

97. *It is my meditation all the day.* That is the best proof of the Psalmist's love of God's law, for love shows itself by its constant familiarity with its chosen object. "'It is my meditation all the day.' Every day, wherever I may be, I turn my daily experience into instructive meditation upon Your word." One of the best commentaries on God's written book is God's book of providence when it is explained to us by His Holy Spirit.

98. *You, through Your commandments, have made me wiser than my enemies: for they are ever with me.* David knew how well God's word had instructed him, so first he declared that he was wiser than his enemies—and next, that he was wiser than his former instructors.

99. *I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Your testimonies are my meditation.* The man who rightly meditates upon this wondrous book is, after all, the truly wise man. His wisdom is that of the heart, received by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and it has a power of understanding in it that will make him wiser than those who are merely book learned or man taught.

100. *I understand more than the ancients because I keep Your precepts.* First his enemies, then his teachers—and now his elders, the ancients—he could excel them all and he gave the reason for it! "Because I keep Your precepts." Take this book away and give the man all the human learning that he could ever acquire, and how little he would know, after all! But let him study the book—and even in the absence of other books, (though that need not be the case with him), such a man will still be wise—wise for eternity!

101. *I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep Your Word.* The Bible is a very sanctifying book. If we keep its precepts, it holds us back from many things into which we might otherwise have run. "I have refrained my feet from every evil way." Notice the universality of the obedience of a true saint. He does not say, "I will avoid all sin except a certain one for which I have a great liking." Oh, no! "I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep Your word."

102. *I have not departed from Your judgments: for You have taught me.* Those who are taught of God are always well taught. They never unlearn

what they have learned at the feet of Jesus. Those who backslide and apostatize were never truly taught of the Spirit of God.

103. *How sweet are Your words unto my taste!* Have you a spiritual taste, dear hearer? It is one thing to hear the word. It is another thing to *taste* it. Hearing the word is often blessed, but tasting it is a more inward and spiritual thing—it is the enjoyment of the truth in the innermost parts of our being! Oh, that we were all as fond of the word as were the old mystics who chewed the cud of meditation till they were fattened upon the word of the Lord and their souls grew strong in the divine love! I am sure of this—the more you know of God's word, the more you will love it! It is ignorance that misses the sweetness of it.

103. *Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!* There is an indescribable sweetness in it. It is sweet to my heart and when I utter it, how sweet it is to my mouth! I heard one observe, the other day, that he noted a great difference between the preachers of his youth and many of those of the present day. He said, "The old men used to enjoy the word so much while they were preaching it—they preached it with their eyes beaming with delight in it! You could see that if there was no savor in it for other people, there was a divine Savor about it for the preachers themselves." This is the mark of the man who is taught of God—that the word is sweet to his mouth when he preaches it to others as well as sweet to his taste when he meditates upon it himself!

104. *Through Your precepts I get understanding.* The practical parts of God's word not only appeal to our understanding but they give us understanding. That is a marvelous thing, but it is true. Sometimes when you are arguing with a man who is dull of comprehension, you are apt to say, "Well, I can give you arguments, but I cannot give you an understanding with which to appreciate them." But this word can give us understanding—"Through Your precepts I get understanding."

104. *Therefore I hate every false way.* The best test of a true spiritual understanding is an intense and vigorous hatred of everything that is false. The lover of the truth of God is a follower of the truth of God! He is not a man of craft and guile. He keeps to the straight line and in the long run it shall be proved that he is the man who is, indeed, taught of God.

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PAUL IN THE TEMPEST
NO. 3145

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 20, 1909,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; and the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship. And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away. But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete, and incurred this disaster and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul, you must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God has given you all them that sail with you. Therefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me."
Acts 27:18-25.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon, upon parts of this passage, are as follows—Sermons #1070, Volume 18—WRECKED, BUT NOT RECKLESS; #2952, Volume 51—THE CHURCH—THE WORLD'S HOPE and #1355, Volume 23—A CHEERY WORD IN TROUBLOUS TIMES—
Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

HERE we see a believer full of comfort cheering others. The words of good cheer now before us are from a man, but inasmuch as he does but repeat what the Lord had spoken to him, they are none the less precious. And they may be all the more profitable if they move us, by their example, to speak words of cheer to others.

The believer is sure to come to the front. He may be hidden away in the crowd and his condition and circumstances may put him in the rear rank for a time, but his light will by some means rise out of obscurity. Paul is nothing but a prisoner all the time the ship sails safely. He is courteously entreated, yet he holds rank among others who are being carried to Rome for trial. But the storm comes on and the ship is driven before the tempest—and he who was only a prisoner becomes practically the chief man in the ship! The owner, the captain, the centurion—these are very small figures in the picture. You scarcely notice them in the group huddled together in the laboring boat. Paul is the center of the whole company, the observed of all. He is as much the master of the ship as Caesar was when, in the tempest, he encouraged the mariners with the words, "Fear not, you carry Caesar and all his fortunes." Paul is greater than Caesar, for he says less of himself and more of the eternal God. He is evidently reverenced and esteemed even by those who hold him in chains.

Paul on board that vessel was strikingly like the Lord Jesus when He came into the ship upon the Galilean lake. There are many parallels be-

tween every true believer and his Lord. Albeit that He is great and everything about Him is colossal, we, if we follow Jesus, are like He—and in this world we are as He was—we are miniatures of His life size portrait, shadows of His glorious substance! When Paul, on board the ship, sees the fears of those about him and he lovingly cries, "Be of good cheer," his voice has a consoling ring borrowed from his Master's. If you, dear friend, are thoroughly and strongly a believer, you will find a place in which you shall illustrate to others the character of your Lord. If I might so speak, on board that ship Paul was prophet, priest and king. In our text he spoke prophetically, for he declared to them their perfect safety. He acted like a priest in his prayers for them all and I had almost added that in his breaking of bread, he was dimly like Melchisedec—blessing men and refreshing them with bread and wine. As for the kingly office, was not Paul truly royal? No mortal brow was ever more worthy of a crown! Amid that crowded ship he was more imperial than Caesar—and all on board acknowledged it. They felt constrained to obey him, for he stood superlatively above them all—unassuming, modest, gentle, self-denying, sympathetic, yet evidently a superior being. If we had more faith, we would sink in our own esteem, but we would greatly rise in our influence upon others, for we, too, would dwell among men as prophets, priests and kings! Are not the saints the twice born of a higher lineage and a nobler race—the excellent of the earth in whom is the delight of holy men?

Let us think for a while of the apostle's character as set forth in his cheery speech and view him under three aspects. First, let us see in him *the avowed believer*. Secondly, let us consider him as *the bold prophet*. Thirdly, as *the sympathetic comforter*. May we, by God's good Spirit, be made to bear each of these characters!

I. First, as we read our text, the apostle will be seen as THE AVOWED BELIEVER. Hear him as he says, "*I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me*."

He commences his statement of his faith by saying that *he believed God*. We cannot have a better basis of faith than that! We must settle in our minds that there is a God, that the Word of God must certainly be true, absolutely infallible, and beyond all question. "I believe God"—if a man can say no more than this, it means, in the very mildest sense of it, he is on the way towards faith. But he who can say, "I believe God," in such a sense as the apostle intended has reached to an eminent height of faith and has obtained the elements of spiritual strength.

"I believe God." Sometimes it quite staggers me that it should be difficult for us to believe God. Dear friend, do you not sympathize with me in my wonder? If our hearts and minds were as they should be, faith in God would be a matter of course! And even now, imperfect as we are, it ought to need a crushing argument to persuade us to entertain the slightest doubt of God. It is most of all surprising that God's children should ever doubt Him—especially those who have been so highly favored as some of us have been. Let preacher and hearer be amazed that we should ever dare to say that we find faith in God to be difficult. It is a grievous imputation upon God when we talk about faith as difficult!

If we were to say of a neighbor, "I find it hard to believe him," I do not know what worse we could say of him. If a child were to say of his father, "You know my father—he is in high repute but I find it quite a struggle to believe him." What rumors would get abroad! What whispers! "That man's own child confesses that he finds it hard to believe him!" Will not this bring forth from us the blush of shame and the tear of repentance, to think that we would ever have spoken thus of God, our Father? Is there any proof of our fall more conclusive than this? Is there any token of the natural depravity of our heart more glaring than that we should be so out of order as to doubt the living God? Why do we not trust Him altogether and implicitly? How is it that when we get a great promise, we begin to say, "And is this true?" When we come into deep trouble, how is it that we mistrust His goodness? How is it that we do not rest in God in all things great or small? He that is true to His covenant and to His oath will be true in the very jots and tittles of His promises! He that is true to Christ will be true to every member of Christ's body. He cannot lie! It is impossible that He should deny Himself—ought it not to be impossible for us to suspect Him? The apostle is worthy to be called "the master of the sentences" in this brave utterance, "I believe God." Take this one line to heart, beloved, and repeat it for yourself full many a time, "I believe God." Whatever else you question, always believe God!

Paul's firm faith was grounded upon revelation, for he says, "I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." He believed, then, *that God had told him something*. He says of a certain, "it," that it was told him. An angel had told him, but we need not envy him the channel of communication, since the written Word of God is a more sure word of testimony than anything else can be! Even the word which came on the holy mount in the transfiguration, when Peter and James and John saw Christ in His glory, though it was a true and pure and bright word, yet is it spoken of by Peter as second to the Scriptures! He says, "We have a more sure word of prophecy"—more sure, even, than speech heard by the ear! Nothing is so sure as the revelation of the inspired book! The man who quibbles at the inspiration of the Word of God has given up the very foundation of faith! You and I, kind friend, at any rate, are able to say that we believe that God has told us something, for we accept the Bible as His Word to us—even to us! We are not of those who say of a certain chapter, "That is for the Jews," for in Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Gentile, but all the promises are yes and amen in Christ Jesus to the glory of God *by us*. We are the true Israel who worship God in the spirit and have no confidence in the flesh—and the promises are sure to all the Seed. We believe in inspiration and revelation—and we ground our faith thereon, even as Paul did. "I believe that it was told me," is our unmistakable avowal.

Observe carefully that Paul's faith, grounded upon God and the fact of a revelation, went on to *a conviction of the absolute certainty of that revelation—"it shall be even as it was told me."* "It shall be." You can apply this to everything that God has told you. Whatever promise He has made. Whatever declaration He has set forth in His holy word, *it* shall be even

as *it* was told you! Just as when the press comes down upon the paper, the type leaves its own impression in each line and letter, so shall the eternal purpose and promise of God leave its impression in your life and mine, fulfilling in actual fact all that the Lord God has promised! We shall try the word and we shall prove it true. We shall expect the promise to be faithful and we shall find it so. "It shall be *as it was told me*." There shall be no corrections at the end of the chapter, no emendations and obliterations. What God has written, He has written, and it must be even so. Augustine wrote confessions and retractions at the close of his life—but not so Augustine's God! At the last day, when the roll of history shall be complete and, "finis," shall be put to it, it will tally with the forecasts of God's Word in every respect! Has He said and shall He not do it? Has He spoken and shall it not come to pass? Heaven and earth shall pass away, but God's Word shall never pass away! Here is the joy of the believer—he can say, "I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me."

The faith of Paul was most blessedly comprehensive. I want you all to note that fact, for God had told him that He had given him all them that sailed with him—and Paul believed it for their comfort. It is a great thing for faith to make a sweep as wide as God's Word. I have known some to whom God has said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, *and your house*." But they have only gone as far as, "you shall be saved," and according to their faith it has been to them! As yet, they have not believed the other three words, "and your house." And when their children grow up and grieve their hearts by their ill manners, what is the cause of it but the parents' unbelief? If we have not prayed believingly for our children, is it any marvel that they are not saved?

It often comes to pass that by clipping a promise, we shear off a blessing which we might have had if our faith had accepted the sacred word in its entirety. Oh, for a comprehensive faith as to all that is in the gracious covenant! Have you looked long enough at the promise to see all that is in it? What sheaves of blessing are tied up in a single promise, though it may only consist of a dozen words! I like to make up my troubles into bundles. Do you ever do that? If a man has nine, ten, twelve, 14 parcels to carry, they may be all little ones, but what a worry they are to him! Here are some in this pocket, and some in that—and they are more than he can manage, for they drop about everywhere! If he is a wise man, he finds a bag and puts the separate items together. True, they are no lighter, but they are much easier to carry! Bind your troubles into one burden and then roll it upon the Lord! With your mercies, do just the opposite—cut the string and open the package—they will be no more, but they will give you more joy as you count them and examine them one by one. Take care that your faith grasps the whole mass of blessing stored away in the promise—and mind that you believe that it shall be even as God has told you.

Further, note that Paul believed this when, to outward appearances, "all hope that they should be saved was taken away." *Paul's faith hoped against hope*. When hope mourns, "I cannot find rest for the sole of my feet," faith cries, "Use your wings." When there seems nothing for faith to rest on but the bare Word of God, then faith is glad, for now she can

commune with her Creator without being entangled by outward means and artifacts! Did not the Lord hang the world upon nothing but His Word? And cannot we hang our souls there, too? It is grand to stand like the arch of heaven, unpillared and yet unmoved, resting only upon the invisible God! Did I say, *only*? Is not that resting upon everything that is worth trusting since God is all in all?

Before we leave this point we ought to notice that while Paul thus believed God, that it would be as it was told him, *he very plainly and boldly expressed this faith*. He did not conceal his confidence, but he proclaimed it even before those who did not share his belief. No matter whether they could sympathize with him or not, he spoke out boldly. He did not cast pearls before swine by needlessly parading his faith, but as it was necessary to speak of it for the comfort of others, he did not hesitate for a single moment, but confessed, in the hearing of soldiers and sailors, "I believe God."

Nowadays, people are so dreadfully modest that they are afraid to glorify God. God save us from such cowardice! Infidelity brawls in every street—shall faith be dumb? If you believe, there is at this time a grave necessity that you should declare your faith, for unbelief is rampant. Look at the high class reviews, look at popular literature—these things reek with unbelief of the worst kind! Alas that it should ever come to this—that men who call themselves Christians should lend their pens to suggest and spread infidel principles and even enter into pulpits to insinuate mistrust of the truths of God which they were ordained to preach! Honesty seems to have fled from the earth and men have lost all conscience. Let us who believe in God speak out at once, though men will call us narrow minded, destitute of culture, incapable of enlarged views and other pretty things! What does it matter what they say? All that they say or insinuate should only make us the more vehemently declare, "I believe God." Why it has become a rare thing to meet a man who believes *anything* now, for the reputed wise man of the period is he who says, "I do not believe in anything in particular. I hold certain views, but I am quite prepared to change them, for there is a great deal to be said on the other side." This is not after the manner of Christ, nor according to the ways of the faithful in the olden time, who held fast the form of sound words and were ready to die for the truths of God which had taken possession of their souls. It is time now, if ever in the world's history, for those who are believers to speak with all confidence. Fear nothing! Can there be anything to fear in believing God? Can there be any shame in avowing an implicit faith in the God of truth? For my own part, I had rather be ridiculed for bigotry than be applauded for "advanced and liberal views." I would sooner be despised with the orthodox than reign with "the intellectual."

II. We have thus gone over Paul's words as an avowed believer. And now we may turn to look at him AS A BOLD PROPHET.

Far be it from any one of us to set ourselves up as prophets, for as such we are not called. Yet every truly instructed Christian is in some sense a prophet and may prophesy according to the proportion of faith, if

he will follow the true method. *Paul was not rash in his prophecies. He confined himself to revelation.* He said, "It shall be." But what shall be? "It shall be as it was told me." You may always go that length—and you will be to many men a wonderful personage. If you go only as far as that, they will marvel that you dare say, "It shall be even as it was told me." We speak positively where they can only guess and dream. We cannot see behind that veil which hides the future, but we know what is to come as to some matters, for God has told us and we can, therefore, prophesy that it shall be according to His declaration. Learn from Paul not to be a presumptuous dreamer, but a prudent speaker.

On what he foretold he staked the honor of God, for he said, "It shall be as it was told me." But why? Because "I believe God." If God is not worthy of belief, then it may not be as it was told me—but His Word must be fulfilled and His promise kept since He is a faithful God. Never recklessly compromise the honor of God by any rash assertion of your own! But you may always challenge the veracity of God as to His own promises or threats and be quite sure that He will vindicate both Himself and His servant by making it to be as He told you.

The apostle uttered this prophecy of his before all that were in the ship. Most of them were unbelievers, but he boldly said to them, "It shall be even as God has told me." Some of them were his superiors in station—officers of the Roman army—but he told them, "It shall be even as it was told me." It is sometimes hard to confess Christ in polite society, in the presence of those who are considered to be superior persons, but let not any believer in Him yield to fear. Say with David—

"I'll speak Your Word, though kings should hear,
Nor yield to sinful shame."

Paul made his avowal of faith in the presence of very rough men—selfish sailors, cruel soldiers and criminal prisoners, but what of that? An avowal of faith in God might be made before all the fiends of hell and you could not say a better thing before the angels of heaven! In no place and in no company can the testimony of faith in the living God and His Son, Jesus Christ, be out of place. Therefore fear not to make it. My friend, make the world conscious of your solemn conviction that God is to be believed. Protest and so act as a true Protestant! Confess Christ and so be His disciple, indeed! Speak that which He has told you in His Word like a prophet in the name of the Lord, and fear no man! Let the fear of God forbid all other fear.

Paul so truly, so practically believed God that *the power of his faith told on all that were around him*. If they did not themselves believe, yet that calm face amid the storm, that practical action in bidding them take bread and eat, that commonsense proceeding in cutting away the boat that the sailors might remain to manage the ship—all this made them see that he was not a man who merely *talked of* faith, but one to whom believing was part and parcel of his life, the fountain of the common sense which fitted him to be a leader! He acted like a man who believed in God in a businesslike way. Faith was real in him and, therefore, practical. Many Christians appear to hold their religion as a pious fiction—regarding the promises of God as pretty things for sentimentalism to play

with—and His providence as a poetical idea. We must get out of that evil fashion and make God to be the greatest factor in our daily calculations—the chief force and fact of our lives! We must, each one, boldly act on the conviction that "it shall be even as He has told me."

Paul was all this while in trouble, for he was in the ship with those whom he comforted, suffering the same discomforts and yet he said, "I believe God." It is all very fine for one who has a good income, enjoys good health and is in excellent spirits to sit down by the side of some poor half-starved woman who is full of disease and near to death, and say, "My good woman, you should have faith in God." Do you hear that landsman teaching sailors how to go to sea? That is true faith which believes God when it is *in* the sinking ship, in the same peril and trouble with others and yet unmoved where they are filled with alarm! How I wish that each of you may be able to believe this!

May God make you to be so far a prophet that you may be prophetic on several points! In the first place, always declaring that God will hear believing prayer and, next, that a wrong thing cannot have the divine blessing resting upon it. Be prophet enough to say these two things and act upon them as downright matters of fact. You can also foretell that if the gospel is faithfully and simply preached, with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, it will win souls. You may prophesy that and never fail! And you may prophesy, also, that if the biggest sinner in the world will come to Christ, he shall be forgiven! That if the vilest heart will yield itself to the Savior, it shall be renewed! That if the most rebellious and obstinate man that ever lived is touched by the finger of God and is led to repentance and faith, he is capable of becoming one of the brightest of the sons of God! No one shall ever shame you by proving that you spoke falsely if you speak for God in this fashion! Speak out, then, and banish guilty silence.

III. The apostle may be viewed in a third character, as A SYMPATHETIC COMFORTER.

They were all in trouble, for they were all in danger of drowning. The ship was going to pieces, death stared them in the face, dismay was written on every countenance, but Paul says to them, "Sirs, be of good cheer." Doubtless, his cheerful tones and manly voice helped to banish their fears and to prevent a panic. Beloved Christian friend, should it not be our effort, wherever we are, to make troubled ones happy? Next to loving God, the first duty of a Christian is to spread peace on earth and goodwill to men. Whenever we meet with a person in trouble—I do not mean only spiritual trouble—we should administer relief. Even when we meet with a child who has lost a penny, or has broken a jug, we should take pleasure in soothing its grief. His mother will scold him, so buy him another jug, if you can, and try and cheer his little heart. What a mass of happiness you can buy for a few pence, if you will spend them on poor children.

Where money is not needed, you may give sympathy and consolation, and these will be much valued. Do not reply that you are unable to act as a comforter. Learn the art. If you cannot *speak* well, there is a better way

than speech. A little child once said to her mother, "Mother, I stopped by with widow Brown, for she said that I comforted her so." "Well, I daresay you did, my dear," the mother replied. "But, Mother, I do not see that I am of any use to her, for I cannot tell her anything—but I put my cheek against hers and when she cries, I cry too—and she says that it comforts her." Exactly so! This little child shall lead us. Herein is wisdom. "Weep with them that weep." You cannot more effectually console them. Comfort others with the comfort with which you yourself are comforted of God, for Paul said, "Be of good cheer. I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me." He had been comforted of the Lord and with this consolation he could cheer others. The Lord grant us grace to be looking out for those who are in any sort of affliction, that we may cheer their hearts. But let us be doubly watchful over those in spiritual distress. Let no one in our neighborhood ever complain, "No man cares for my soul." Comfort God's people and labor at the same time to win sinners to Jesus—and the love of your heart shall bring untold blessings into your own bosom! Happiness is contagious and the cheerfulness of your piety will be so attractive that the careless and indifferent will be allured to the ways of piety. Do not run about with ill news, but make your communications joyous by mixing up the glad tidings of salvation with your cheerful daily talk! So shall you imitate your Lord and His apostle by saying "Be of good cheer."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 90; ACTS 27:1-26.

Psalm 90 is entitled "A Prayer of Moses, the man of God," and it furnishes a suitable prayer for every man of God. Any men of God who have had experience as deep, trying and varied as that of Moses will be the better able to enter into the spirit of the Psalm.

Psalm 90:1. *Lord You have been our dwelling place in all generations.* [See Sermon #46, Volume 1—THE GLORIOUS HABITATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "This world in which we live is no home for our immortal spirits. You give us habitations for our bodies, but there are no dwelling places for our spirits that are of a nobler order. We dwell in You, O Lord; You are our home. Beneath Your wide wings we find blessed shelter and in communion with You our hearts are kept in perfect peace. Lord, You are the home of Your people in all generations—not only in the generations that are past, when Noah, and Abraham and Moses, and David, and all Your ancient servants found a refuge in You, but even to this day You are still our strong castle and our high tower, our refuge and place of defense, our dwelling place even in this generation."

2. *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.* When compared with God, those hoary hills are but as infants of a day, and the whole round world itself is but as a newborn child. "From everlasting" has He existed—when all created things slept in His infinite mind like unborn forests sleep in an acorn cup and so on forever, "to ev-

erlasting"—when all created things shall have dissolved, when back to nothing this fair world shall have gone—God shall still be the same. He is a rock that cannot be removed. There is no *terra firma* upon this earth, but while all things are whirling around us, we find a firm dwelling place beyond the stars in the ever living and immutable Jehovah. No man's home is safe unless it is built on something more stable than this poor trembling earth, but he who rests on God and lives in God has the best of all habitations wherein to dwell in safety forever.

3. *You turn man to destruction; and say, Return, you children of men.* Man is mortal, conspicuously so. As we walk about our streets, how we miss our old companions, one by one! They have returned to the bosom of mother earth from where they first sprang. The inhabitants of this world seem to pass in procession before our eyes—those who were here a few minutes ago are gone and another rank has come, and another, and another and they will soon all be gone—and we shall be gone too. He, then, who hopes to find a home among the sons of men will miss it, but he who makes the eternal God his habitation shall still be at home in the Lord even when wife, and child, and brother, and friend all sleep in the silence of the sepulcher.

4. *For a thousand years in Your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.* Our measurements of time are nothing to God. There is nothing past and nothing future with Him—all things are present in the eternal NOW of God. What a wonderful truth this is of the eternal existence of God—and what boundless comfort it brings to the man who feels that this God is his God, his Father, his friend and his all in all!

5, 6. *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.* Such is the best estate of man—a field bedecked with daisies, marigolds and other frail flowers, but the mower's scythe is near—you may hear him sharpening it! And soon along the field, all the sons of men shall fall—and you who have found your hope, your heaven, your confidence here—how poor will you be in the end thereof! But O you who have sent all your heart's desires upwards to your God, you who are living in the future, living in the infinite, how secure are you, for no rust shall fret your gold, no moth consume your garments! You are blessed indeed.

7. *For we are consumed by Your anger and by Your wrath are we troubled.* Yes, if the Lord lets even a little of His wrath out for a while against His servants, how greatly do we suffer! Blessed be His name, it never is real anger against His own chosen people. He does but hide His love under the form of wrath, just as a father never really hates his child, and even though he is angry with him for his faults, and chastises him, yet there is more love than wrath in every blow of the rod. Still, it is a sad thing to lose the sense of God's love in the heart—it consumes us and troubles us. We could bear sickness, we could bear slander or persecution, or almost anything but the absence of the light of God's countenance! That is the worst of trials to His children.

8-10. *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.* A long life or a short life, what a little difference it makes when the last hour comes! The patriarch as well as the child descends to the grave and all, as they sleep in their separate graves, seem only to have lived for a little moment and then to have passed away.

11. *Who knows the power of Your anger? Even according to Your fear, so is Your wrath.* God grant that none of us may ever know experimentally the power of His anger! But may we know it, as a matter of faith, so as to tremble concerning it, and so as to flee to Christ to be delivered from it! But what must it really be to feel the power of God's anger? I implore you never to believe any teaching that seems to make God's anger less terrible than you thought it to be. It is not possible to exaggerate here—the power of God's anger is immeasurable, and that is why the power of Christ's atonement is infinite!

12. *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.* That is the great matter, after all, to get the heart applied to wisdom, to learn what is the right way and to walk in it in the practical actions of daily life. It is of little use for us to learn to number our days if it merely enables us to sit down in self-confidence and carnal security! But if our hearts are applied to true wisdom, the Lord's teaching has been effectual.

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.* [See Sermons #513, Volume 9—THE YOUNG MAN'S PRAYER and #2987, Volume 52—THE "BEAU IDEAL" OF LIFE—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Dear young people, here is a suitable prayer for you to present to God—"O satisfy us early with Your mercy." Believe me, there is no joy for a lad like that of loving the Lord Jesus Christ while he is yet young! And O you maidens—there is no fairer jewel that you can ever wear than that of love to Jesus Christ—

"It will save us from a thousand snares
To mind religion young!
Grace will preserve our following years,
And make our virtues strong."

And each one of us may pray this prayer. "Lord, now give us Your mercy! If we are unsaved, let us not remain so! If we have lost the comfort of Your presence for a while, restore it to us now! Leave us not long in darkness, but satisfy us early with Your mercy!"

15. *Make us glad according to the days wherein You have afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.* [See Sermon #1701, Volume 29—GLADNESS FOR SADNESS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] It is right, then, to pray for joy. Indeed, joy is so conspicuous a blessing to a Christian—it is so closely connected with the healthfulness of all his virtues that he should seek after it until he finds it!

16. *Let Your work appear unto Your servants, and Your glory unto their children.* "Lord, let us see Your work here! Oh, for Your name's sake, take Your right hand and work mightily in our midst! Withdraw not the working of the Holy Spirit from us, Your people! Let Your work of conversion, Your work of edification, Your work of the conquest of the world appear unto Your servants!"

17. *And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands.* "Let not what we do for You fall to the ground like a badly built wall! Let not our work be consumed in the great testing fire, 'but establish the work of our hands!'"

Acts 27:1-3. *And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band. And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us. And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.* Even a Roman centurion could see that Paul was no ordinary prisoner and that it was quite safe to allow him privileges which others might have abused.

4-12. *And when we had launched from there, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia. And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein. And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarcely were come over against Cnidus, the wind not allowing us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone and, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called the Fair Havens; near was the city of Lasea. Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them and said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives. Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more that those things which were spoken by Paul. And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart there also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete and lies toward the south west and north west.* It was quite natural that the centurion should think that the master and the owner of the ship knew more about seafaring matters than Paul did, but the sequel proved that the apostle knew more than they did, for he had access to information that was hidden from them.

13. *And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete.* That was not the only voyage that commenced favorably and ended disastrously.

14. *But not long after that arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive.* Apparently that was the only thing they could do. And, at times we may find that it will be well to follow their example.

When we have done our best and can make no headway, we had better commit our vessel to the care of God and "let her drive" wherever He wills.

16-19. *And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat: which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, struck sail, and so were driven. And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; and the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.* They used all the means in their power and evidently Paul and his companions took their full share of the work that had to be done— "we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship."

20-22. *And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away. But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete, and incurred this disaster and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.* Paul might well remind the officers of the wise advice he gave them in Crete, but he did not rest content with that, but went on to cheer them as far as he dared, though he again warned them that they would lose their ship. To prove that he was not speaking without due authority, he added—

23-20. *For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God has given you all them that sail with you. Therefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.* The next Chapter tells us that the "certain island was Melita, or Malta, as it is now called. In that respect, as in all others, Paul's prophecy was literally fulfilled, for the ship was lost, but all on board were saved.

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THE POWER OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE
NO. 3146

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"Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, It is the Lord." John 21:7.

I AM going to speak, on this occasion, to my brothers and sisters who are workers for Christ. When our Lord met His apostles by the lake and provided for them that memorable meal, He did not think it out of place to say to Peter, "Feed My lambs; feed My sheep." These practical exhortations were regarded by Him as quite in keeping with holy fellowship and so, though we are coming to the communion table at the close of this service, I feel that I am only right in speaking upon practical matters to you, my fellow laborers and fellow soldiers in the work and warfare of Christ. And I pray that God will, through me, speak to all here who love our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

You know that we read in the gospels according to Luke and John, of two miraculous catch of fishes. [See Sermon #443, Volume 8—THE TWO DRAUGHTS OF FISHES—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The one that is recorded in this chapter from which our text is taken was, in several respects, similar to that which was worked at an earlier period of our Lord's history.

Before He called His apostles, He worked the miracle of giving them a great haul of fish after they had toiled all the night and had taken nothing. And then, after He had died upon the cross and risen from the grave, He repeated the miracle in almost identical fashion. I think there was a great lesson which our Savior intended His disciples to learn from that repetition. The miracle was a picture—and He wanted them to look upon it and catch the idea it was meant to convey—and as they had probably not all caught it the first time, He held the picture up before them again, that they might have another opportunity of learning the lesson which He had intended it to teach them.

You notice that in both instances they had toiled—they had toiled all the night—but they had toiled in vain. The night was the best season for fishing, as it still is. They had toiled in the place where they had often caught fish before, for they were experienced fishermen, apt at their craft. Yet after using all the means that had been successful at other times, they were unsuccessful, for they had taken nothing. They had toiled perseveringly, too, for it was not only *at* night that they had toiled, but *all* the night. From the time when they pushed forth from the shore, in the moonlight, until the morning star warned them of the dawning of the new day, they had toiled. Yet they had taken nothing.

This teaches us that we may work for Christ and try to win souls for Him—and do that work at the best time, in the best way and even persevere in doing it—and yet be unsuccessful. We must be unsuccessful if, like the disciples, we are laboring without the Master's presence. In both instances, the turning point was when the Master came. On the first occasion, He borrowed Peter's boat and preached a sermon from it to the crowd upon the shore. And then He said to Peter, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught." In the second case, He bade the disciples, "cast the net on the right side of the ship." But in both instances it *was the appearance of Jesus that filled the net* and filled it so miraculously that the despairing toilers of the night realized that someone who was more than man had spoken to them—and they fell down to worship Him as divine. So whenever Jesus comes to His workers, however unsuccessful they may have been, they are sure to succeed when He is there! Yes, and to succeed beyond their own expectations—just as the disciples were surprised that by the same hands which all night had taken nothing, 153 great fishes should be taken—and out of the same nets which were empty all the night, (save here and there a piece of tangled weed to mock their hopes), there should come so many great fishes upon which they and others might be feasted to their full! The apostles could not do anything without their Lord and neither can we—so the main point for us to remember is that we need Jesus Christ to come into our midst—and this point I shall try to drive home with all my might, praying God the Holy Spirit to stir up the hearts of His people so that they may have a great longing to be useful in the winning of souls and realize that this can only be achieved by those who enjoy true fellowship with Christ!

I. I want, first, to show THE DISSIMILARITY AND THE SIMILARITY OF OUR POSITION TO THAT OF THE APOSTLES UPON THIS OCCASION.

First, *there was a dissimilarity in which the advantage is altogether on our side*. The apostle Peter and his brethren had been fishing unsuccessfully, but they had not been commanded to fish. They may or may not have been right in fishing at that time, but at any rate, they were doing it on their own account. Peter said, "I am going fishing." It was his own work, done entirely in accordance with his own will—Christ had not bidden him go fishing. But in our case, brothers and sisters in Christ, we have our Lord's commission, "Go you into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." We have received this divine commission, so that when we preach the gospel, we are not fishing as amateurs or self-sent volunteers, but as those who are sent by the Most High to do His bidding. When He commissions anyone, there is a sort of implied guarantee that He will give him success. At any rate, He will not send His servant upon a fool's errand, but by some means or other, He who gives the authority will be sure to give the power that is needed to go with it. "Wisdom is justified of *all* her children." You, dear brothers and sisters, in trying to serve God, each of you in your proper sphere, have done what you were sent to do, for Jesus has said to you as He said to His disciples, "As My Father has sent Me, even so send I you." Remember that passage almost at the end of the revelation, "Let him that hears, say, Come." Hav-

ing heard the gospel, you have tried to say, "Come," to the people and you have not gone beyond your commission in doing so, for you were commanded to do it! Every believer is a priest—under the Christian dispensation there is no other priesthood save that of our Lord Jesus Christ and that which is common to every believer in Him. So when you, having believed on Him, have gone to speak of Him to others, you have only exercised that royal priesthood which is rightly yours, for He "has made us kings and priests unto God." So, first, the apostles went fishing without having any commission to fish and, therefore, they were unsuccessful. But we have an advantage over them because in the *gospel* fishery, every true child of God who casts the net is commissioned by his Master to do so!

The disciples also had not their Master with them. All the night when they were casting the net and drawing it in, and finding nothing in it, they were by themselves. But that is not the case with us. As a church we can say that we have had the Master's presence with us these many years. Oftentimes in our assemblies we have been as sure of His presence as we can ever be sure of anything! Our hearts have been rejoiced, purified and sanctified by gazing upon Him by faith. There have been prayer meetings in which I hope all of us have felt bowed down and humbled like Peter was when the Master was in his boat. And there have been times of solemn rejoicing over converted sinners in which the Lord Jesus has been manifestly in our midst! His promise, "Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world," has been most graciously fulfilled in our experience and we, therefore, bless the Savior that we have not to wait for Him to come to us, for He has long been with us and has never left us! These many years the simple preaching of Jesus Christ and Him crucified has filled this house of prayer as it is tonight. People know that there is nothing to be heard here but the old, old story "of the crucified Savior, yet let the weather be as rigorous as it may, still will the crowds come to hear the word of the Lord—and in this we do rejoice and evermore will rejoice! In this respect, also, we have the advantage over the fishermen on the Sea of Galilee.

And so we have in another point—because the Master was not with them, they caught nothing—but it cannot be said of us that we have taken nothing. I do not know that it would be right for us to try to compute how many souls have professed to have found the Savior during the years in which we have worked together, but I believe, brothers, we may say this to the glory of God and to the honor of the simple gospel that we have preached—the number who have joined this church, alone, can only be spoken of by thousands. And if we were to speak of tens of thousands, yes, and many tens of thousands who here and elsewhere have found the Savior under the word preached by us, we would not exaggerate in the least. We put the crown upon the head of our Master, but what joy we feel that it has been so! Suppose that He had left us? Vain would it have been for us to preach the word, even with earnestness, for earnestness, alone, will not convert souls. There must be the presence of Je-

sus to bless men—and it has been with us, year after year, even unto this day, glory be to His holy name! [The years referred to number approximately 20.]

In these points, then, our case is dissimilar to that of the apostles when they were toiling all the night and had taken nothing.

But we are precisely like the apostles in certain other points, the first of which is that we would have taken nothing if the Master had not helped us. No child would have come from the Sunday school to say, "I love the Savior and wish to confess my faith in Him and to unite with the church here." No young woman would have come out of that large and blessed Bible class if the Lord had not put the right words into the lips of the sister who speaks for Him there. No young man would have been converted in our senior classes if the Spirit of God had not gone with the conductors. And from this pulpit no word of life would have been spoken if it had not been first given to us by God and then sent home to the hearts of our hearers by the Holy Spirit. We would have "taken nothing" without our Lord!

And even now, brothers and sisters, our success is wonderfully like the nonsuccess of the apostles, for we have scarcely taken anything in comparison with what still needs to be taken! Even when we speak of tens of thousands converted, what are they in comparison with the millions all around us in this vast city? When God gives us an increase of a hundred or a 120 in a month, we are glad and thankful, but large as those numbers are, what are they compared with the perishing myriads of London alone? Why should we not have 3,000 converts in a day as on the day of Pentecost? Why is it that our churches are not multiplied till they cover this city in every part? Why does not the old church of Christ, (for such we are), the old catholic and apostolic church of Christ, come more to the front instead of lingering in the background? It is because we have not yet the fullness of the Master's power as we must have it—and desire to have it to the praise of His glory! Christ's presence, if He would but come among us in the fullness of His strength, would do so much more for us than anything that we have ever seen—that we would be as much astounded by the increase as the apostles were by the two great catch of fishes! Christ had but to will it and the fish came swimming in shoals to the net—and He has but to will it and souls will be converted by millions to Himself and His gospel! He had but to give His disciples the directions to where to cast the net and the same net that had been empty would become full. And He has but to teach His ministers how to preach, and touch their lips with a burning coal off the altar to fire them with a Pentecostal enthusiasm—and they would speak in a way in which as yet they have never spoken and with a power they have never yet experienced! Such days are promised and they will surely come. We are not straitened in God. We are straitened in ourselves. If we have not those glorious days of ingathering, it is because some sin of ours still keeps the Master's glory from us. Oh, let us turn to Him and may He graciously turn to us!—

"Let our mutual love be fervent,

Make us prevalent in prayers!
Let each one esteemed Your servant
Shun the world's bewitching snares,
Lord, revive us,
All our help must come from You!"

II. Now, secondly, I have to speak upon THE MEANS WHICH WE ARE TO USE SO AS TO GAIN OUR MASTER'S PRESENCE. I have tried to show you that all our success must come from Him and all that He gives us must be ascribed to Him. So how can we secure His presence? We have it in a measure—how can we have it more fully?

Well, let us always remember that *He comes just where He wills to come*. There is absolute sovereignty about the work of Christ in the kingdom of His grace. As the wind blows where it wishes, so does the Spirit of God work wherever He pleases. I do not think that we can always account for the great success of one preacher and the non-success of another by anything that we can see. We have to fall back upon the sovereignty of God and say, "God wills it and, therefore, it is." He will have us know that sovereignty is His divine prerogative. He has the key of David—He opens and no man shuts. He shuts and no man opens. If He wills it, the rain shall descend steadily to make fat the fields. But if He wills it, He can restrain the dew of heaven until the most fertile church shall become barren as the mountains of Gilboa! He exercises His power not according to *our* will, but according to His own will—we must never forget that.

At the same time, what course should we take in order to secure His presence? I reply, first, that *we had better go on with our work for Him*. If we want Christ to bless us and we are doing work for Him, we had better keep on steadily doing it. These disciples of His had been fishing all night. Perhaps if they had not fished at night Christ would not have given them fish in the daytime. He does not often come to bless idlers—He acts sovereignly, as I have said, but He generally gives His blessing to those churches that do the most for Him. I have always found that an earnest gospel ministry and a prayerfully united church will have God's blessing when others will not have it. Go on, Sunday school teachers, go on, tract distributors! Go on, evangelists—go on, all of you who are laboring for Christ—keep, each one, to his own service and even if it has been night with you and you have taken nothing, still keep on at your toil! Probably the best way to bring the Master to you is to labor for Him with all your might.

Sometimes, however, *it will be necessary for us to wash or mend our nets*. In the miracle recorded by Luke, we find that the fishermen, after toiling all night, were washing their nets—and either on that occasion, or on a similar one, some of them were mending their nets. Every church needs to do that and every church member, every Christian worker needs to do that. The preacher will do well to adopt another style—to study more diligently and to make himself more proficient in the knowledge of the word. Sunday school teachers must more carefully study the lessons for their classes and go to their scholars better prepared for their work.

Your nets will often need washing and mending if you are to be fishers of men—and all of you will be more likely to get the Master's blessing if you pay more attention to the means you are using for doing good in His service! Christ does not want slovenly work, nor is He likely to bless those who think that any kind of service will do for Him. I have heard of a preacher who thought that whatever came first into his head was good enough for his people. On one occasion, he informed one of his officers, at the end of his sermon, that he had never thought of it before he entered the pulpit. And the good elder replied, "I thought so while listening to you. I thought that if you had considered it beforehand, you would never have said what you did." We all need to wash and mend our nets—I mean that we all need to do Christ's work in the best possible way—and that is the way in which we are most likely to be privileged with His presence.

On that first occasion, the fishermen had been listening to Christ's words, for they had, at His request, turned their boat into a pulpit in which He sat down and taught the people who stood on the shore. Was there any connection between that incident and the great haul of fish? I think there was and that if they had not granted Christ's request, and listened to His sermon, He would not have blessed them with that multitude of fish. At all events, I know that a worker will always be all the better for waiting a while and sitting as a learner at Christ's feet—reading the word for Himself, or listening to the truth as it is preached by some God sent minister. The message may strike a keynote in your heart which shall so influence your whole life that, henceforth, you shall be in a different condition and more likely to be blessed of the Most High.

Do you ask, "What is there that will bring Christ to a church and keep Him there?" I reply, in a word, *prayer*. There is no force in nature that is equal to the power of prayer! The law of gravitation holds the planets in their orbits and links the sun to all the spheres that circle round him, but prayer has before now made gravitation, itself, cease to exert its energy! "Sun, stand you still upon Gibeon," said Joshua—who had first spoken to the Lord about the matter—"and you, moon, in the valley of Ajalon"—and sun and moon stood still! We speak that which, to many nowadays, only causes ridicule, but to our minds it seems ridiculous to doubt that God listens to the voice of men. When men are made in the image of God—twice made and so made His children—surely their believing prayers shall move the heart of their heavenly Father! You remember what Christ said to His disciples, in His Sermon on the Mount? "If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" Of course He will listen to the voices of those whom He so dearly loves! You know, beloved, that there is power in prayer. When believers meet together and unitedly cry, "Lord, revive Your work. Put more power into the ministry. Make the hearts of Your people to be more full of love and zeal. Save the ungodly. Awaken the unconcerned!"—It will be done. It is not with us merely a matter of hope that earnest prayer will bring blessing to the church and to the world—it is a matter

of fact it must be so! The laws of nature may be suspended, but laws that appertain to God's own character for truth and faithfulness cannot be suspended. He would not be God if He did not answer prayer! His own promises bind Him to do so. O you that doubt Him, try Him! If any of you question the power of prayer, see what has already been done by it. As for you who are the servants of the living God and who have access to His mercy seat, you have but to ask and to receive—you have but to seek and to find—you have but to knock and the door shall be opened to you! Brothers and sisters in Christ, join one another in praying Christ to come into our midst! Do pray for a blessing, pray mightily for it—and rest not day nor night till that blessing comes!

We must, however, add to prayer *the waiting for that blessing that we seek*. After Christ had ascended to heaven, His disciples went to an upper room and waited there till the Holy Spirit was given to them on the day of Pentecost. They did not sit there thinking that perhaps the promised blessing might come, or might not come, but there they waited till they heard the "sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind" and the "cloven tongues, like as of fire, sat upon each of them." So let us come together in our assemblies *expecting the blessing* which the Lord has promised, for the blessing will certainly come if we believingly expect it. "Open your mouth wide," says God, "and I will fill it!" Oh, for the capacity to believe God, for assuredly God will never dishonor our faith!

And then, to our expectation, we must add *the opening of our own hearts to receive the blessing*. We want the Savior to bless us and He says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me." He is ready to bless you, beloved—are you ready to be blessed by Him? O you that love Him, fling wide the doors of your heart and ask Him to come in! He has bought you with His heart's blood—will you not give Him your heart's best love? He is Himself your beloved, your husband, your all in all, so treat Him not as a stranger. Let Him not stand and knock any longer, but open wide the door and bid Him come in! Is it your will, dear brothers and sisters, to receive Him? Do you really want Him? Do you long for more of Him? You will have to be very prayerful and very careful if He does come to you, for He is a jealous lover—and when He dwells in the heart, He looks with severe eyes upon anything contrary to His will that is done by His own dear ones—just as a king will tolerate in a stranger what he would not endure from a courtier. I am afraid we sometimes pray for sanctification and do not really wish for it—and I am also afraid that we sometimes ask for a great blessing and do not really wish for it. Do you believe that Christ can come to us and bless us? Are you living as if you expected Him to come to you? If so, when He comes you will be overawed by the majesty of His presence—and you will say with John, "It is the Lord." As we hear of blessing in the Sunday school, we shall say, "It is the Lord." As we hear of the work of grace in the Bible classes, we shall say, "It is the Lord." And at every church meeting, as we hear the stories of those who have been brought to believe

in Jesus, we shall say, "It is the Lord," for no one else could have worked so blessed a work in our midst!

I wish I knew how to put this subject before you so that every believing heart would be affected by it to the highest possible degree—but I do not—and therefore, as we are coming to the communion table, I will try to use the sacred feast to stir up you who are serving Christ to pray for more of His presence. You have here before you the memorials of His love to you. He gave His body to be broken for you, His heart to be pierced for you. Has Christ done all this for you and will you not do much for Him? You are saved, your sins are covered, you are His dear child—then will you not spend and be spent for Him? If the Master were to come and stand here tonight instead of me—and show you His pierced hands and feet and then were to call you, His own people, up, one by one and put such questions as these to you, (I will give you the questions directly)—I wonder how you would feel? You would come up these stairs dazzled with His beauty and overwhelmed with His love as He gazed upon you! And then He would say to each one of you, "My blood bought one, what are you doing for Me? Are you feeding My sheep? Are you feeding My lambs?" I think I see you blush and hear you reply, "My dear Master, I have been with some of Your lambs this afternoon." "But did you really feed them?" "I spent a happy hour with them." "Well but did you feed them?" "I endeavored to do so, good Master, but I am ashamed to say that I did not feed them as I should have done." "But did you feed them as My lambs, and as I would have fed them? Did you love them? Did you speak affectionately to them? Did you tell them about Me? Did you try to bring them to Me? Did you pray over them? Did you send them away feeling that their teacher longed that they should all know the Savior?"

Well, the Master is not here in bodily presence and I will not put such questions to you, but I would like you to put them to yourselves and to think that you hear the Master putting them to you, even as of old He said, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" I think I hear Him call up some brother and say to Him, "You who are redeemed by My precious blood, what have you done for Me?" I think I see you blush as He says to you again, "What have you done for Me?" At last you say, "I am a member of the church." "But what have you done for Me?" "I sometimes put something into the offering box." "But what have you done for Me?" He shows His hands, lays bare His side and says, "I suffered this for you—what have you done for Me?" I fear that there are some members of this church who would not like to be put to such a test as that! And for my own part, I would desire to say to the Master, "Give me a few more years in which to serve You better and give me more grace that I may be more diligent in the service that You have allotted to me." And I pray you, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, if you feel that you must present the same prayer, make this your solemn resolution that, by His Spirit's help, you will lay yourselves out—body, soul and spirit—for His dear sake.

But, alas, there are some of you who do not love Him at all! Some of you to whom the Christ of God is quite a stranger. Oh, that your hearts were changed! For remember that He will soon come in His glory and all

His holy angels with Him! And you who will not now kiss the silver scepter of mercy that He holds out to you in the preaching of the gospel, must then feel the weight of that iron rod of justice with which He will break the ungodly and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessels! Be wise, therefore, and trust the Savior now! The Lord grant that you may do so and then, having trusted Him for yourself, may you serve Him with all your heart and soul as long as you live on this earth—and then go to join that great multitude which no man can number of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues who stand before the throne of God and before the Lamb—forever ascribing their salvation to His grace!

Have you ever heard the story of the poor man, in deep distress of mind, who one night dreamed a dream? He found himself outside the gates of heaven and he sat down and wept, for he longed to enter. Presently he heard sweet music and saw a company of people approaching with palm branches in their hands. He asked who they were and one of them said that they were the noble army of martyrs coming to take their thrones. Then he wept much and said, "I cannot enter with you." While he sat mourning, he heard the trumpet sound, again, and another company came along singing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." He said to them, "Who are you?" They replied, "We are the goodly fellowship of the prophets and apostles." And he wept again, for he said, "I cannot enter with you." Presently another company came, chanting the praises of the grace of God. And he said, "Who are you?" They answered, "We are the preachers of the word, and the deacons and elders of the church." Again he said, "I cannot enter with you." He sat down and wept till, by and by, he saw a larger company coming, marching like an exceedingly great army, and singing sweetly as they came. In the very front rank was the woman that was a sinner, with her rich voice leading the song. And near her was the thief who, at the last, had prayed, "Lord, remember me." They came along right jubilantly and he asked them, "Who are you?" And they answered, "We are the company of great sinners, saved by great mercy." At once he said, "I can go in with you!"

And, brothers and sisters, that is the company to which you and I belong! And when we enter heaven, they will welcome us just as heartily as they did the martyrs, the prophets and the apostles! Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners—and when sinners repent, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, and joy in the heart of God, Himself, because they have sought His pardoning mercy! If any of you are not saved, it is not because there is any lack of mercy in the heart of God! If you perish, it is not for want of an open door set before you! So come in while you may!

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.* May every one

of you, my fellow disciples, realize that Jesus is showing Himself to you! He is only to be seen in His own light. He must show Himself to us, or else we shall never 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.* He had told them to go into Galilee and gave them the promise, "There shall you see Me." So now they were by the Galilean lake. They were keeping their appointment with Christ and as He always keeps His appointment with His people, He was there to meet them as He had promised.

3. *Simon Peter said unto them, I am going fishing. They said unto him, We will go with you.* Their Master had told them to wait, but they could not wait. Surely when they were in Galilee by His command, they might have trusted Him to supply their needs, but their faith was slack, so Peter said, "I am going fishing," and the others were much of the same mind—waiting had become weary work, as it often does with our faint hearts—so they said, "We will go with you."

3. *They went forth, and entered immediately into a ship; and that night they caught nothing.* As is generally the case with us in our will-work and will-worship. When we are not guided of God, but go entirely according to our own mind and will it will be thus with us, also. Men attempt some business speculation without asking guidance of God and they make a miserable failure of it, so that it might be written of them as of the disciples, "That night they caught nothing."

4. *But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.* They were thinking of fishing, so they saw boats, nets and the sea. If they had been thinking of Jesus, they would have looked for Him—and when He came, they would have known Him.

5. *Then Jesus said unto them, Children, have you any meat?* "Have you anything to eat?"

5. *They answered Him, No.* But that was not His fault.

6. *And He said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and you shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it in for the multitude of fishes.* He testified His presence by crowning their exertions with His blessing. And soon they had a great catch of great fishes—a great contrast to their night of fruitless toil.

7, 8. *Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked), and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in the little ship, (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fishes.* We often come very slowly to Christ because we will drag that net with fishes. We have such a deal of care, anxiety, and trouble when we need not have any at all—and so we come slowly, "dragging the net with fishes."

9. *As soon, then, as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.* Why did they want to go fishing on their own account? Christ had all that they needed ready for them—

there was the fire and there were the fish cooking on it, ready for their breakfast. It was the Lord Jesus Christ's business to provide for them and He did so.

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 and three and for all there were so many, yet the net was not broken.* And there lay those 153 big fishes on the beach. Christ had no need of them but perhaps He condescended to use some of them for that morning meal, as He said to Peter, "Bring of the fish which you have now caught."

12. *Jesus said unto them, Come and dine.* [See Sermon #2072, Volume 35—BREAKFAST WITH JESUS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Or, "Come and break your fast after your long night's toil." How they must have opened their eyes to see the fish ready cooked for them to eat!

12. *And none of the disciples dared ask Him, Who are You? knowing that it was the Lord.* "It was the Lord"—"the Lord" who had asked them if they had any food, "the Lord" who had filled the net which had previously been empty, "the Lord" who had given them His own fish from His own fire that they might have breakfast with Him! O good Master, if we have been toiling all week and have caught nothing, call us now to come and eat of that which You have, Yourself, prepared!

13-15. *Jesus then came and took bread, and gave them some, and fish likewise. 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, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, Do you love Me more than these?* "More than this lot of fish, these boats, these nets? You gave them all up for Me once, but now you have taken to them again—do you really love Me better than your fishing and your fish?"

15. *He said unto Him, Yes, Lord; You know that I love You. He said unto him, Feed My lambs.* [See Sermon #1684, Volume 28—"FEED MY LAMBS"—A SUNDAY SCHOOL SERMON—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "Do not go after fish any more, but attend to My business—'feed My lambs.' The proof of your greater love to Me than to all worldly things will be found in your doing of the work which I have committed to your charge."

16. *He said to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, Do you love Me?* [See Sermons #117, Volume 3—DO YOU LOVE ME? And #1281, Volume 22—"DO YOU LOVE ME?"—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *He said unto Him, Yes, Lord; You know that I love You. He said unto him, Feed My sheep.* "Quit the sea. I am giving you no more business there—come now and be a pastor to My blood bought sheep."

17. *He said unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, Do you love Me? 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.* [See Sermon #2669, Volume 46—COMFORT FROM CHRIST'S OMNISCIENCE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

Thrice he had denied his Lord, so thrice he must be questioned concerning his love to the Lord whom he said he did not even know. And then for the third time he was recommissioned by his Lord.

17-19. *Jesus said unto him, Feed My sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto you, When you were young, you gird yourself, and walked where you willed: 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. And When He had spoken this, He said unto him, Follow Me*. Peter's death was to glorify God, so he might well be content, painful though it was to be.

20, 21. *Then Peter, turning about, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved* [See Sermon #1539, Volume 26—"THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *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*? Our Lord never answered such a foolish, inquisitive question as this! And therefore—

22. *Jesus said unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me*. That is how Christ would answer any similar questions that we might put to Him. We need not concern ourselves so much about what is to happen to others until we have made our own calling and election sure. "What is that to you? You follow Me."

23. *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 only one of many instances in which Christ's words have been twisted and made to mean something quite different from what He intended.

24, 25. *This is the disciple who 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.*

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GOD'S GLORY IN THE BUILDING UP OF ZION
NO. 3147

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 3, 1909.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

When the LORD shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory."
Psalm 102:16.

THE Lord Himself must "build up Zion," or it will never be built up. He first planned it. He is the architect of His own Church. He dug the foundations, i.e., has supplied the great cornerstone. He, by His own power, creates each living stone, polishes it and fits it into its place. He cements the whole structure and as He first sketched the plan, so will He complete it in every iota to the praise and the glory of His wisdom, His grace and His love. It shall be said of Zion, when all her walls are built and all her palaces completed—and when all her happy inhabitants have their mouths filled with song as they walk in white—"The Lord has built it, from the foundation even to the top stone." I remember seeing, close by the side of the Alps, a house which had upon its front, words to this effect, "This house was built entirely by the skill, wealth and industry of its inhabitants." It struck me as not being a very modest thing to put in front of one's house for after all, the structure was not very marvelous. But when we look at the glorious architecture of the Church of God, it is no mean part of its luster that it may fittingly bear such an inscription as this, "This house was built entirely by the wisdom, the munificence and the power of the infinite Jehovah."

I. But while the text reminds us of this truth which I hope we never can forget, it also brings to our minds three or four other truths of God. And the first point of our discourse shall be ZION BUILT UP.

I suppose we shall all consider that one essential to the building up of Zion would be *practical conversion*. It is of small avail for a man to say he is building up a church where the power of the Holy Spirit is not seen in calling sinners out of darkness into marvelous light. There may be periods in which conversions are few, but if instead of their being exceptional, this should come to be the rule in one's ministry, there would be grave cause to suspect that God was not working within the minister—certainly not in the sense of building up the church. We find not infrequently, in Holy Scripture, that the fathers of households are called, "builders," and that the term, "the building of a house," is constantly used in respect to the birth and training up of a family. Now, in the great Christian family, our converts are the newborn children and a family is not built up for God except with these sons and daughters who are like stones polished after the similitude of a palace. We little know the blessing which young converts bring to us. They quicken the pulse of old

Christians, they strengthen and confirm the faith of those who have long been walking in the truth and they do, as it were, infuse new blood into the fellowship of the saints. They come to us as God's message from on high. They are tokens for good and whereas we might have thought, perhaps, that the triumphs of the cross were confined to the heroic age when the Spirit of God was poured out in Pentecostal measure, yet as we see our sons and daughters converted and the great miracle of regeneration still being performed, we take heart and are of good courage to go on in the work of the Lord! Conversions we must have, for there is no building up of Zion without them!

And then *a public confession of faith* must follow conversion. Though the invisible Church of God is built up by conversions, the outward church is only built up as men and women associate together in the holy society which we call "the church." It is the duty of every Christian—no, it is the instinct of his spiritual life—to avow the faith which he has received! And avowing it, he finds himself associated with others who have made the same profession and he assists them in holy labor. When he is strong, he ministers of his strength to the weak. And when he is, himself, weak, he borrows strength from those who, just then, may happen to be strong in the faith. Where were our Christian institutions if church fellowship were broken up? Plainly, if it is right for one Christian to remain out of church fellowship, it is right for all! And then, if there were no churches, there would be no institutions—and where would the gospel, itself, be? I would not lay too much stress on the Church of God, but I venture to ask you, is it not written that she is "the pillar and ground of the truth?" If, then, I withhold my confession of faith and my personal communion with the visible church, I to that extent weaken the pillar and ground of the faith. We need confessions of faith as well as conversions.

By a church being thus formed in order to its being built up, something more is needed. *We cannot build without union.* A house is not a load of bricks; neither is the church a mere conglomeration of human beings. A house must have its doors, its windows, its foundations, its rafters and its ceiling. So a church must be organized—it must have its distinct offices and officers, it must have its departments of labor—and proper men must be found, according to Christ's own appointment, to preside over those departments.

Our Savior was raised up on high to receive gifts *for* men and to give gifts *to* men. And those gifts are first, apostles, then pastors and teachers, and evangelists, and so on, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Some of the old Roman walls are compacted with such excellent cement that it would be almost impossible to separate one stone from another. In fact, the whole mass has become consolidated like a solid rock—so embedded in cement that you cannot distinguish one stone from another. Happy the church thus built up, where each cares not only for his own prosperity, but for the prosperity of all—where if there is any

joy in one member, all the members rejoice, and if there is sorrow in any one part of the body, all the rest of the body is in sorrow, too, "remembering them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body." And yet, what are some churches but semi-religious clubs, mere conventions of people gathered together? They have not in them that holy soul which is the essence of unity! There is no life to keep them in entirety. Why, the body would soon become disjointed and a mass of rottenness if the soul were not in it—and if the Spirit of Christ is absent, the whole fabric of the outward church begins to fall to pieces—for where there is no life, there can be no true union!

More than this, to build up a church, there needs to be *edification and instruction in the faith*. It is, I think, a matter for deep regret that this is not an age in which Christian people desire to be edified. It is an age in which they like to have their ears tickled and delight to have a multiplicity of anecdotes and of exciting metaphors—but they care little to be well instructed in the sound and solid doctrines of the grace of God. In the old Puritan times, sermons must have been tiresome to the thoughtless, but nowadays I think they are more tiresome to the thoughtful! The Christian of those days wanted to know a great deal of the things of God. And provided that the preacher could open up some mystery to him, or explain some point of Christian practice to make him holier and wiser, he was well satisfied, though the man might be no orator and might lead him into no fields of novel speculation. Christians, then, did not need a new faith but, having received the old faith, they wished to be well rooted and grounded in it and, therefore, they sought daily for illumination as well as for quickening! They desired not only to have the emotions excited, but also to have the intellect richly stored with divine truth—and there must be much of this in every church if it is to be built up! There need certainly be no neglect of an appeal to the passions and no forgetfulness of what is popular and exciting—but with this we must have the solid bread corn of the kingdom of God, without which God's children will faint in the weary way of this wilderness!

It does not strike me, however, that I have yet given a full picture of the building up of a church, for a church such as I have described would not answer the end for which Christ ordained it. Christ ordained His Church to be *His great aggressive method* in combating with sin and with the world that lies in the wicked one. It is to be a light, not to itself, as a candle in a dark lantern, but a light unto that which is outside. Albeit we are not saved by works, yet the ultimate result of salvation must always be work. The *cause* of salvation lies in grace, but the *effect* of salvation appears in working. As sure as ever the grace of God fills a soul, that soul desires to see others brought in. That respectable church, that wealthy church which is quite satisfied to have no debt upon its own building, content if its minister is as sparsely remunerated as possible—without enthusiasm, without zeal, always harping on the string of prudence, conservatism and orthodoxy, having no care whatever to be aggressive—such a church needs to be built on other foundations, to get

rid of its wood, hay and stubble, and to be built on gold, silver and precious stones, or otherwise it will not honor Christ!

It strikes me that it is necessary for the edification of every Christian that he should have something to do. We learn to be soldiers by being drilled. No, the veteran is taught to fight by fighting! I think most ministers know that one of the best methods of learning to preach is to preach—and the best way of learning Christianity is to be a Christian practically. Said one, "If you would do good, *be* good." And I have sometimes thought if we would be good, we must *do* good—not to make us so, but as the best discipline to keep us in good health and good training! Do not let us hope that we ourselves can be devoted to God except by Christian service! And let us not hope that the church can ever be so devoted except by casting about in the world to do for Christ whatever came to its hands.

But I must go yet a step further. After a church has become all that I have been describing, the next thing it ought to do should be to *think of the formation of other churches*. The building up of an empire must often be by colonization. Her majesty's dominions, upon which we proudly say that, "the sun never sets," have been greatly enlarged by the sons and daughters of Britain who have gone to other lands. And the true process of increasing the Church of Christ must be by her forming colonies. Who dares to deny that in the building of many places of worship in England and elsewhere, the devil has had as much to do as Christ has had? I mean in our denomination, if not in any other. A great number of chapels have been as the result of schism, bad spirit, bickering, jealousy and I know not what—quarreling and contending, perhaps, about some points of truth which, if important, could not be as important as the spirit of love and of unity! Many and many a time a house has been dedicated to God when the first thought that led to it—and the last act that finished it—were simply a thought and an act of pride, or envy, or pure sectarian bigotry and nothing more! Now, I do not think, although He has no doubt overruled it for good, that this is legitimate. But for a number of Christian people associated together in a church and finding that the church has grown strong enough to be able to afford to lose them—for these to swarm off and form another church and give of their substance to build another house—seems to me to be a legitimate and proper method in which Zion may be built up in these, our realms.

II. THE BUILDING UP OF ZION IS, ACCORDING TO THE TEXT, CONNECTED WITH JEHOVAH'S BEING GLORIFIED.

"When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory." Ah, brothers and sisters! It would need a seraph to tell of all the glory which has come to God through the building up of His Church. Heaven rang with acclamations when the angels first learned that God designed to have a church on the earth. When they perceived, by the glimmering light of the first promise, that there was to be a Seed of the woman as well as a seed of the serpent, they began to hymn Jehovah's praise and, when Christ was given and so the foundation of the church was actually laid, the glory of creation was eclipsed and even the splendor of providence might almost have been forgotten in the more transcendent glory

of grace. God had done marvelously before, but never did He seem as divine as when He gave His dear Son and when, in the holy life and dying pangs of the Son of His love, the foundation of the church was laid! So, too, God is glorified in every single part of the building of His Church. There is not a stone quarried from the dark pit of nature, or polished by the tools of grace, or put into its position without fresh honor to God and new glory to His name. He cannot *be* more glorious, but He appears more richly glorious in the building up of His Church. And what will be the glory when the top stone is brought out—when the last elect one shall be cemented to the visible whole? What shall be the undying melody, the unceasing song of ages as to principalities and powers shall be made known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God?

Sometimes, however, a suspicion has arisen in the minds of God's people that God was not glorified in His Church. And the text almost seems to hint, not that God is not glorified, but at any rate, that He is not so much glorified in the church at one time as at another, for it says, "*When* the Lord shall build up Zion," as if He were not always building up Zion, at least not to the same extent. We know from painful experience that there are lulls—seasons when a dead calm comes over the church—and then, to the minds of many, God's glory is not revealed. In consequence thereof, the inhabitants of Zion hang their harps upon the willows and go a-mourning. And yet, had we more faith, and put sense more in the background, we might sing to our Well-Beloved a song touching His vineyard, even when the wild boar out of the forest is wasting her and her hedges are being broken down. The wave recedes, but the tide advances! The day may seem to be dark but every hour is bringing on the noon. God advances not by little steps. We must not judge Him by inches who is not even to be measured by leagues, nor by handfuls when the mountains are too small for His hands—and He took up the isles as a very little thing. Our belief is that the whole way through, God is building up His Church, and that He does appear in His glory.

Perhaps one or two thoughts may make this clearer to us. God often appears in glory to me as one of His builders and I will tell you in what respect. When I have been sitting to see inquirers, I have sometimes found that God has blessed to the conversion of souls some of my poorest sermons—those which I thought I could weep over—which seemed more than ordinarily weak and lacking in all the elements likely to make them blessed, except that they were sincerely spoken. When I have seen that the work was done though the workman, naturally weak, was on that occasion more than usually depressed with infirmity, I have only been able to lift up my hands and say, "Now, Lord, You appear in Your glory, since You do build up Zion and convert sinners by the most unlikely means—and Your truth, apparently when most feebly spoken, works the mightiest results. This is to make Your name glorious, indeed!"

Another thing has sometimes made one see God in His glory. Persons have been brought up and educated under sermons that are as hostile to spiritual life as the plague is to natural life! They have, from their youth up, seen religion in all its gaudy show of symbolism and yet one hearing

of the simple gospel has been sufficient for their conversion. Perhaps the mere reading of a single text has untwisted the knots of 40 years—and the despotism of the priesthood over the mind has fallen at the touch of a single passage of God's word! The case of Luther is one instance of this and in all such cases God appears in His glory. If you will look at each conversion, and especially at the sudden conversion of those who for long years have been inured to the very reverse of the gospel of Christ, you will see God appearing in His glory!

Think, too, of the agencies which are abroad hostile to the Church of God. The Jews were glad to see the walls of Jerusalem rise because they remembered Geshem, Tobiah, Sanballat and all the rest that laughed and jeered at them. Up went the walls though these enemies laughed—and the foxes did not break down the walls though Tobiah so ventured to prophesy. In this age, too, the church is not without her adversaries and they are of a very dangerous sort. They are not always outspoken adversaries. Some of them teach us how to doubt—not because they doubt, they say, but because it is so healthy a thing for our minds to be rid of the bondage of old fashioned dogmas! They are not themselves unsound, but still, if a brother should happen to be so, they will defend him, thereby providing a defense for themselves when they should more fully need it. If they would only state what they believe, or what they do not believe, it would be easy to deal with these foes—but inasmuch as the whole thing is too shadowy and too vague, we feel as if we were under the plague of flies which were in Egypt when we have to deal with these minute adversaries!

But let us reflect that notwithstanding all this, God is still building up His Church. Looking back over the last ten or 20 years, am I too sanguine if I say that the age is, after all, better than it was? I do not mean that the *world* is better, but I do mean that as a whole, there is more evangelical preaching and earnest pleading with God now than there were ten years ago. I am not given to complimenting, but I do feel that we have made an advance and that the Christian Church is more awake than it was. I grant you that the foes are more vociferous. So let them be! I suppose the nearer the moon gets to its full, the more the dogs bark, and the nearer the harvest is to getting ripe, the more numerous is the horde of birds that come to feed upon the grain. This must be expected—and God appears in His glory the more His enemies surround His Church!

Putting all these things together—poor instruments, poor materials and numerous foes—let us say that when God builds up Zion under such circumstances as these, He truly appears in His glory!

What a splendid thing was that—may we see it repeated in our own day—when the twelve apostles first attacked Roman idolatry! The prestige of ages made the idolatry of Rome venerable. It had an imperial Caesar and all his legions at its back—and every favorable omen to defend it. Yet those twelve men, with no patronage but the patronage of the King of kings, with no learning except that which they had learned at the feet of Jesus, with weapons as simple as David's sling and stone, went forth to the fight—and you know how the grisly head of the monstrous idolatry

was, by and by, in the hands of the Christian champion as he returned rejoicing from the fray. So shall it be yet again, and then amidst the acclamation of myriads of witnesses, shall God appear in His glory!

III. With great brevity, let us now observe THE HOPE EXCITED. If God is glorified by the building up of Zion, then most certainly Zion will be built! If He is glorified by the conversion of sinners and by the banding together of converted men and women, then it seems but natural to hope, yes, *with certainty we may conclude* that the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform it!

Let me suppose that you had been created as a solitary creature and that it had been made known to you, by the mouth of God, Himself, that it would be to God's glory to create unnumbered worlds—would you be unreasonable in looking for the first day in which the heavens and the earth should be created? You would soon come to an absolute certainty, putting faith in the prophecy that since God would be glorified in creating, He would create! And supposing when you saw the world created, you knew, from God's own mouth, that it would be to His glory for Him to take the reins of human affairs and manage everything according to the counsel of His own will—you would feel persuaded that He would do it. Well, you are clearly informed here that it is for God's glory to build up His Church! Then draw the inference—draw it boldly, no, draw it confidently, and say—"If it is for God's glory, then it must and shall be done."

I like the spirit in which Luther used to say that when he could get God into his quarrels, he felt safe. When it was Luther alone he did not know which way it would go, but when he felt that his God would be compromised and dishonored if such a thing were not done, and would be glorified if it were done, then he felt safe enough. So, dear friends, in the great crusade of truth, is not God with us beyond a doubt? The ship of the church carries Christ and all His fortunes, so how can she be wrecked? The honor of the church is intertwined with the honor and glory of Christ—if she shall pass away, if she is deserted, then where is her captain, her head, her husband? But as His honor must be safe, so shall hers be! Zion shall be lifted up, that God may appear in His glory!

IV. Our whole subject SUGGESTS AN INQUIRY.

Have I any part or lot in this work which is to bring glory to God? I may have to do with it in two ways, as a built one, and as a builder. I can have nothing to do with it in the latter capacity unless I have first had to do with it in the former. God will be glorified in the building up of Zion—*shall I minister to His glory by being part of the Zion that is to be built up*? I remember to have heard one who half solaced himself in the prospect of his eternal ruin. He was a hardened sinner, but he was trying to draw some sort of comfort from the thought that if he were lost forever, he should glorify Christ. I was startled! Horror seized me when he put it in that light. A truth of God in some sense, I could not bear to see it so handled by him as to clothe it in the vestments of a lie. I was obliged to quote the other text, "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies." You do not find God ever speaking of deriving glory from the death of him that dies! You do not find that it administers

anything of gratification to the eternal mind that a soul should perish. There is a glory to His justice, doubtless—an awful splendor wrapped about the executioner's axe—but it is a glory of which God says but little and of which my text says nothing at all! The true glory of God is like the glory of the king who will not glory in the numbers executed upon the hill of death, but who glories in his subjects who are happy and blessed. God glories not in the soul whom there is a dire necessity to cast away, but in the soul whom almighty grace has chosen, redeemed and saved!

I should think, friend, if your reason is in a right state, that you will have some wish to glorify the God that made you. "The ox knows his owner and the donkey his master's crib"—do you not know? Will you not consider? If you build a house, you expect some comfort from it. If you sow a field, you expect to gather some grain from it. And shall God, who has made you, who has put breath into your nostrils and who feeds you every day—shall He, then, have no honor out of you, no glory at your hands? Shall you be a valueless waif and a stray drifting along on the tides of time, with none to care for you because you have lost your compass and live not for the true objective of human life? May I ask you to put this question to yourselves?

The inquiry whether you have anything to do or not with glorifying God in the building up of His Church may be very serviceable to you. If you find that you have no interest at all in the matter, may not that thought be blessed of God to make you start? Oh, that men would start! They sleep when everlasting wrath is impending! Oh, that they would feel the shock and avert the stroke! A startling preacher is needed by a slumbering age. Be startling preachers to yourselves just now. O men and women, there are some of you—it were hopeless to expect it were not so—in whom God will have no glory from your being built into His Church, for you are like the stones of the valley, which are not built up, but lie there useless, to be broken at last by the hammer when the breaker shall come forth to the work of destruction! Would you glorify God, sinner? Have you never heard the question asked of Christ by the Jews, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" And this was Christ's answer, "This is the work of God, (the chief work of all) that you believe on Him whom He has sent." If you would glorify God, humble yourself, bow the knee and kiss the Son and receive salvation from the Lord Jesus Christ! And then, being built upon this foundation, you shall glorify God!

The inquiry shapes itself afresh. *Have you anything to do with glorifying God in respect of being, yourself, a builder of Zion*? It is a shame that these lips should have to say it, but we must speak the sad truth that there are some who profess to be built, but who are not building—some who say that they are servants, but are not serving. Some who profess to be in the vineyard, but are not working. Some who say they are soldiers, but are not fighting! My brothers and sisters, I count it to be one of the most precious parts of my spiritual heritage that I am permitted to serve Christ. And let me say that if my Lord Jesus gave me nothing else on earth but the privilege of serving Him, I would bless Him for it to all eternity! It is no mean honor to be a servant of the King of kings! There is

such pleasure in honoring Christ and in winning souls that I can scarcely believe that any of you have ever tasted it if you are not hungering after more of it! Did you ever win a soul to Christ? Did you ever get a grip of the hand of spiritual gratitude? Did you ever see the tear starting from the eye when the convert said, "Bless you! I shall remember you in heaven, for you have brought me to Christ"? Oh, my dear friend, you will not be satisfied merely with this, for this is a kind of food that makes men hungry! Oh, that you had a rich banquet of it and yet wanted still more!

The Church of Christ shall and must be built! Even if you and I sit still, it will be built. This a glorious truth of God though it is often perverted to a mischievous end—the church will be built, even without us, but oh, we shall miss the satisfaction of helping in its building! Yes, it will grow. Every stone will be put in its place and the pinnacle will soar to its predestinated elevation—but every stone, from foundation to pinnacle, will seem to say to you, "You had nothing to do with this! You had no hand in this!" When Cyrus took one of his guests round his garden, the guest admired it greatly and said he had much pleasure in it. "Ah," said Cyrus, "but you have not so much pleasure in this garden as I have, for I planted every tree in it myself." One reason why Christ has so much pleasure in His Church is because He did so much for it. And one reason why some saints will have a greater fullness of heaven than others to rejoice in will be because they did more for heaven than others did. By God's grace, they were enabled to bring more souls there—and as they look upon the church they may, without self-reliance or self-conceit, ascribing it all to grace, remember what they were enabled to do as instruments in the hands of the Lord towards its building up. "When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALMS 123, 124, 125.

Psalm 123:1. *Unto You lift I up my eyes, O You that dwell in the heavens.* Our eyes are far too apt to look below, or to look within, or to look around. But it is wisdom on our part to look up. There is always something blessed to see upward, especially when we look up to Him who dwells in the highest heavens—our Father, our Savior, our Comforter. There is little down here that is worth looking at, but there is everything for our comfort when we look up.

2. *Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hands of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that He has mercy upon us.* [See Sermon #2654, Volume45—WAKEFUL AND WATCHFUL EYES—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This is what we are looking for—the mercy of the Lord our God. It comes from His great heart, through His almighty hands. A wave of His hand is sufficient to drive away all our troubles. When He opens His hand, He supplies the needs of every living thing, so mighty and so bountiful is He. Let us, therefore, keep our eyes upon our Lord's hands "until that He has mercy upon us."

3. *Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us.* The longing soul does not wait in utter silence without expressing its desires. I have heard of some who have said that their will was so fully conformed to God's will that they had left off praying to Him! Surely that was a Satanic delusion, for the will of Christ was perfectly conformed to that of His Father, yet *for that very reason* He abounded in prayer! We must be in an evil case if we leave off praying. The psalmist says that he and those who were like minded with him waited until the Lord had mercy upon them, and then he began a sort of litany, "Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us." He uses the same words twice as if to express the greatness of his need, the clearness of his perception of what he needed the earnestness of his desire and his expectation that his need would be supplied. In this verse and the previous one, we have the petition, "Have mercy upon us," presented no less than three times, for mercy is the greatest need of the best man who ever lived!

3. *For we are exceedingly filled with contempt.* That is a sharp cutting thing, most trying to the soul that has to endure it, and many have been greatly depressed in spirit by the contempt that has been poured upon them. But, Lord, Your mercy is a cure for man's need of mercy. Your thoughtfulness of us will take off the edge from man's contempt of us.

4. *Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud.* It does not seem to be a desirable thing to be at ease, for it was such people who were the scorners of the psalmist and his godly companions. Job also said, "He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease." In the stagnant air of a life of ease, all kinds of mischiefs breed—and especially that fever of pride which leads ungodly men to have contempt for God's people.

Psalm 124:1-3. *If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say; if it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then they had swallowed us up quick.* That is, alive.

3. *When their wrath was kindled against us.* If it had not been God who had engaged to take care of His people, they would all have perished—and that God must be Jehovah. I wish that our translators had not been carried away by the superstition of the Jews and that they had used the word, "Jehovah," where it is employed in the original—then this verse and the previous one would have read, "If it had not been Jehovah who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then they had swallowed us up alive," as some beasts, birds and fishes swallow their prey and as some men would do with us if they could, that is, swallow us up alive, making a short and speedy end of us, not waiting to tear us in pieces, but swallowing us whole and alive!

4, 5. *Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: then the proud waters had gone over our soul.* The figure is varied. We are first likened to the lamb that is liable to be swallowed by the lion, and next we are compared to one who is in danger of being carried away by a devouring flood which shows no pity to any, but sweeps everything before it down to destruction.

6. *Blessed be the LORD, who has not given us as a prey to their teeth.* Neither to Satan and his lieges, nor to wicked men, has God delivered us. We are not to be their prey, for God claims us as His own!

7. *Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken and we have escaped.* [See Sermon #1696, Volume 28—THE BIRD ESCAPED FROM THE SNARE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] What a joyous song that is for the escaped soul to sing! Whenever a Christian has fallen into difficulties through not walking uprightly, when he has gone astray from the right path and has been caught in the fowler's net—and is in such trouble that he does not know what to do—then God comes and cuts the net, perhaps, with the sharp knife of affliction and the imprisoned soul again finds freedom from worldly associations and happy liberty in the service of God. I do not know a sweeter song than this that he and others of God's rescued birds can sing as they mount up into the clear light of God's countenance, "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken and we have escaped."

8. *Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.* This is a good lesson for us to learn from the past experience of the Lord's people. God and God alone did deliver His servants in the past and herein is our confidence for the present and the future—our help is in the name—the revealed and manifested character—of Jehovah, the Creator of heaven and earth!

Psalm 125:1. *They that trust in the LORD shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever.* [See Sermon #1450, Volume 24—THE IMMOVABILITY OF THE BELIEVER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] What comfort there is in this verse to all who trust in the Lord! We never expect to see anyone tear up Mount Zion by the roots. The Romans have been there and plowed Mount Zion as a field, but they could not remove it—it is there still and the natural features are the same as they were in the days of Abraham and David. Mount Zion "cannot be removed but abides forever." Men have swept away much that was built on it, but Mount Zion is still there, nor shall any human power ever be able to remove it. And, glory be to God, neither men nor devils shall ever be able to remove us if we trust in the Lord, for we "shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever."

2. *As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about His people from henceforth even forever.* [See Sermon #161, Volume 3—THE SECURITY OF THE CHURCH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] At Jerusalem there is first the deep valley around the hill. And then afterwards a range of encircling mountains, but the munitions of stupendous rock are nothing compared with those eternal ramparts which protect the people of God.

3. *For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands into iniquity.* "The rod of the wicked" may fall upon the lot of the righteous, but it shall not "rest" there! The godly may be oppressed for a season, but that season shall not be too long for them to endure. God will not allow His servants to be tried

above what they are able to bear, lest their faith should fail and, in order to escape from their oppressors, they should "put forth their hands unto iniquity."

4. *Do good, O LORD, unto those that are good, and to them that are upright in their hearts.* The psalmist prays to Jehovah to do good to those whom He has made good, for there are none who are naturally good. And there is a special goodness which He bestows upon those whom He has made good by the effectual working of His good Spirit. When they no longer lean this way or that way, but stand upright in their integrity, then shall they know this special goodness of the Lord.

5. *As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways.* Ways of policy, of lies, of self-seeking, of presumptuous sin, of backsliding.

5. *The LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.* If they will work iniquity, they shall go with those that work iniquity! Each one shall go to his own company. If we have loved the people of God on earth and have walked in God's ways here, we may confidently expect to be gathered with His elect above. But if we have turned aside to crooked ways, what can we expect but that where the workers of iniquity go, we, too, shall go there? "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, Jehovah shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity."

5. *But peace shall be upon Israel.* What a blessed benediction that is—peace! It is the one thing that we need above everything else. We are sometimes glad to know more, but we often tire even of knowing and would rather sit down as children who are satisfied with what they have been told by others who do know. We wish to be very useful in the world—and, blessed be God, we can never rest unless we are useful. But there are times of weariness when the best blessing for us—the blessing which shall most help to fit us for future service—is perfect peace, that peace of which our Savior said to His disciples, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you."

Are all of you who are trusting in Christ in the enjoyment of that peace at this moment? If not, you are not living up to your privileges as believers.

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CHRIST'S AMBASSADORS
NO. 3148

A SERMON
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"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God."
2 Corinthians 5:20.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon, on verses 18 to 21, are as follows—
Sermons #1123, Volume 19—
GOD BESEECHING SINNERS BY HIS MINISTERS
and #1910, Volume 32—THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL—
Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

SO, then, there is war between man and God. It seems preposterous that man should be in arms against his God, but it is all too sadly true. Shall the gnat contend with the flame? Shall an insect fight against an angel? Even this would not be as absurd as for man, who is utterly insignificant, to make war with God who is infinite! Man, who is but as the sojourner of an hour, to enter into the lists against the dread, eternal and Almighty God? Accursed was that hour in which our first mother put forth her hand to take the forbidden fruit! From that moment war began between man and his Maker and from the Garden of Eden right on until now man has been an enemy of God! And although God has constantly returned good for evil, and is still the God of love and condescension, yet has man continued to fight against Him—there still is war between heaven and earth. Otherwise, there would be no need for ambassadors between God and men. This would be proof enough that a state of war prevails. But, alas, in our own hearts we bear, each one of us, sad proofs of the enmity of man and God. And we see, besides, in our fellow men, ten thousand sorrowful instances which prove that they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God and are not the friends of the great friend of man.

Our text tells us that the ministers of Christ, the apostles and all others who are sent of God to preach the gospel, are "ambassadors for Christ." In speaking upon that matter, we must make some references to ourselves and I especially shall have to ask the earnest prayers of the congregation for myself. I feel that I may well do so, for if apostles said, "Brethren, pray for us," how much more may we, who are not worthy to be numbered among the least of our Master's servants, urge the same plea!

In our text, I think I see, first, *a great mercy implied.* Secondly, *a great office mentioned.* And, thirdly, *a great duty involved.*

I. First, here is A GREAT MERCY IMPLIED—"We are ambassadors for Christ."

Well, then, it is clear that *there is some hope of peace.* When an ambassador comes upon the stage of action, it is evident that war is not to be waged to the bitter end. But observe that the ambassador is not an ambassador from man to God, but an ambassador from God to man! "We are ambassadors"—not for *you*, but "for Christ."

I learn from this, then, that *the peace proposed is one quite unsought by man.* Man revolted against his Maker and was determined to continue in revolt. He was evil and would have remained evil if God had not interposed. Men go astray from God by nature, but they only return to God through grace. Further, and yet further, and yet further, still, will they go away from God! Deeper and yet deeper will they plunge into the abyss of sin! It is easy for humanity to descend into Avernus, but for it to retrace its steps, "this is the work, and this is the difficulty." And until God, Himself, comes in, man is as unwilling as he is unable and as unable as he is unwilling to make peace with his God! We might have thought, if we had not known the dread nature of sin, that the first thing Adam and Eve would have done, after they had transgressed their Maker's law, would have been to cast themselves down at His feet and say, "We have taken of the fruit of the tree of which You have said that we must not eat." But instead of doing so, they ran away to try to hide themselves from His eyes—and when His voice was heard in the Garden and they were obliged to face Him—instead of frankly confessing their sin, the evil juice of that forbidden fruit had so poisoned their nature that they both began to make excuses! The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." And the woman would not bear the blame, herself, but cast it upon the serpent. There was clear evidence there that man, though he had become a rebel against his God, would not turn unto his God, confess that he had done wrong and beg for mercy. Never did a prodigal say, "I will arise and go to my Father," until the grace of God had put that resolve into the prodigal's heart! The centripetal force, the force which makes us seek the center, is not in us—ours is centrifugal force which drives us further and yet further away from the great center of all light, truth, peace and purity. When God draws us, we shall run after Him—but until He does so—we shall still remain afar off from Him. So the sending of an ambassador from God shows clearly that it is not man who seeks peace.

But then, on the other hand, it shows that *God Himself is desirous of peace,* yet not because it can make any difference to Him whether man is His enemy or not. It may make some difference to the candle if the moth flies into it. The moth will certainly be destroyed by the candle, yet the candle will still shine on, though its light may be in some measure diminished. But what difference can poor creatures such as we are make to God? The blasphemer curses God, yet the sun is just as bright as ever,

the dewdrops of the morning are quite as sparkling as ever, the rivers still run on to the sea and the ocean remains the same as before! And as for God, Himself, His glory continues undiminished and His holiness is untarnished. And though all men could be leagued together in one great conspiracy and should say concerning Jehovah and Christ, His anointed, "Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us," what will come of their evil confederacy? "He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." His glory will be just as great even if they determine to be damned! If they will go down to hell, His justice will be honored, for they richly deserve their doom. There is no reason, except in God's grace, why He should send man an embassy of peace! Generally in war, it is the less who sends to the greater to entreat for peace. It is seldom that the victorious, while still they bear their banners on high, suddenly pause amid the battle and send an embassy to say to the vanquished, "Let there be peace between us." The conquerors usually wait till the beaten ones know that they are beaten and sue for terms—and they count it gracious on their part to be willing, in the full expectation of yet further victories, to pause awhile to discuss terms of peace. When the commander-in-chief has half won the campaign and sees with absolute certainty that he could utterly destroy his enemy, he does not hurry to put back his sword into its scabbard! But God does—just as though He had been defeated, or as though He was the weaker of the two combatants, or as though it would be to His best interest, He stops in the midst of the battle and sends an ambassador of peace to man! And we, His servants, are sent forth as "ambassadors for Christ" because God desires to be at peace with men!

Why is this? Certainly not because He fears man, or because He cannot do without man; or because He cannot crush Him as an adversary—but simply *because He is very tender, and full of pity and compassion*. "As I live, says the Lord God," (and that is His own oath), "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." He is a God who is terrible in His justice, but, "He delights in mercy." To bless men and make them happy is His continual joy—judgment is "His strange work." It is, as it were, His left handed work—not that which He delights to do. Even when justice compels Him to smite and to slay, He says but little about it and He usually does away with the very instruments that He has used for this purpose. Great armies and great nations have been raised up to be the scourges of God, but they have not been heard of afterwards, as though God were so loathe to smite that when He does so, He burns the rod directly—He has done with it, not caring to have it any longer in His sight! But when He comes to men in mercy, God is, as we say, "all there." He puts forth His omnipotence in His works of love. He brings out His omniscience; He employs all His attributes when He comes to bless men. Oh, yes! God delights in grace and mercy, but He loves not wrath! And it is for that reason—because He is a

God full of tenderness, compassion and pity—that He sends an embassy to men and makes His servants to be "ambassadors for Christ."

And then, mark you, this also shows us that, *as God desires peace, peace is possible*. Sin has made a very great breach between God and man. God has been insulted to His face and that not merely once, nor twice, but thousands and millions of times! The sin of men would, if it could, become a deicide and kill God, Himself! And this, indeed, it did when it slew the Son of God on Calvary! Every sinner is guilty of high treason against the majesty of heaven, for he does, as far as he can, snatch from God's hand the scepter of sovereignty and plucks from His brow the crown of universal dominion! Sin is not a thing at which God can wink. We sometimes hear persons talk as though God could forgive sin without Christ's atonement and without exacting any penalty for it—but that cannot be. Everyone who rules over men, though it is but over a petty nation or a small parish, knows that if the law has no penalties attached to it, it ceases to have any power. It would be a dreadful thing to live in any State where there were no punishments for lawbreakers. I read the other day that perhaps it would be better to live where everyone was subject even to tyrannical law than to live where there was no law. It would be truly terrible to live in any place where good and bad would fare precisely alike—where there would be no prison—where the thief and the murderer and the drunkard would be left alone—where all would be regarded as on an equal footing, let them do what they might! Laws must be respected and the breakers of them must be punished.

Now, if it is so in our imperfect civil communities, it must be much more so in God's government of the entire universe! It is not merely men with whom God has to deal, though they are to be counted by thousands of millions, but He has to deal with angels, good and bad. And we know not how many—perhaps innumerable races of beings—possibly very different from ourselves, yet like us in this respect, that they are under law and under God's government! It may be that every starry world teems with myriads of intelligent inhabitants—it is much more likely that it should be so than that it should not be so, seeing that God is not in the habit of creating anything in vain—and we can scarcely imagine that He has made all those mighty orbs to circle around His throne without suitable inhabitants to render due homage to Him! It becomes incumbent, then, on God—I say this with the utmost reverence for His sacred Majesty, that as He is the judge of the whole universe, He must do right. If one of our judges should say, "I never can pronounce a sentence of death upon a murderer—my heart is too tender for me to ever order the lash for the thief, or to send the wife beater to prison." What would we say to him? Why, we would say, "Then, sir, if your heart is so tender towards the bad, you are so cruel to the good that you must retire from the bench, for you are unfit to be a judge if you do not punish the guilty." We remember Abraham's question, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" We also read that "every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward." As long as God is God, He cannot trifle

with sin! You may trifle with it if you will, O foolish sinner, but it will be at your own imminent peril! But God, the omnipotent King, the maker and judge of all, will not trifle with it. He must crush rebellion. He must punish iniquity!

"But," perhaps you say, "you started by telling us that there was hope of peace. But how can that be if the law's sentence must be carried out?" I answer that this is the reason for our embassy—this is the great reason for which we are ambassadors for Christ—to say that, in Christ, God is able, without the violation of any demand of justice, to show the fullest mercy to sinners! Through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God's justice will suffer no blot, no slur if you—coming to Him and confessing your iniquities and believing in His Son—shall be completely pardoned and accepted. Salvation by substitution was the grand invention of omniscience—that Christ should bear—

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

that on His back should fall the stripes that were due to us—that in His heart should be sheathed the fiery sword that ought to have been sheathed in our hearts! It was most just that Christ should stand in our place. If I am asked how His substitution for us is consistent with justice, I reply—the first sin, by which we were ruined, was not committed by us personally, but it was committed by Adam, our representative. It is therefore perfectly consistent with the highest justice that, as we fell *representatively*, we should be lifted up representatively! We died through Adam's sin—we live again through Christ's life and death! And every soul that believes in Jesus may know that Christ was punished in his place. Christ, as his representative, bore his griefs and carried his sorrows. Christ was wounded for his transgressions and bruised for his iniquities—and now all the sins of every such person are blotted out and forever cease to be because Jesus Christ bore the full penalty for them! The believer's debt is paid, so it cannot again be demanded of any soul for whom Jesus died!

These are the terms of peace, then, and this is the blessed gospel of peace—"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and has committed unto us the word of reconciliation." This is the gospel that we preach—that whoever believes in Jesus Christ is reconciled to God through the death of His Son. Peace is possible! O blessed news! Blessed are the people that know this joyful sound! Bright should be the eyes of those who see the feet of the messengers that bring the glad tidings of peace possible between man and God!—

"How beauteous are their feet
Who stand on Zion's hill!
Who bring salvation on their tongues,
And words of peace reveal!"

Let me add to this the comforting assurance that *peace has been effectually made already in tens of thousands of instances*. There are many of

us, now present, who are enjoying the peace that Christ has made on our behalf. Having looked, by faith, to His sacrifice on Calvary, our sins have gone forever. Having rested where God has rested, even in Jesus, for Jesus is to God a sacrifice of rest, we now feel perfect peace toward God! We are no longer His enemies, but love Him and desire to obey Him perfectly. And though we do still err and mourn a thousand imperfections, yet we can truly say that we do love Him and that we long to be like He is! Whatever He commands, we at least desire to do and by His grace we are helped to do it. And whatever He forbids, we desire to abhor and to flee from it as from a poisonous serpent. Blessed be the name of God, we can speak to Him, now, without being afraid that He will destroy us, but saying, "Our Father, who are in heaven, the Spirit of adoption in our hearts makes us say unto You, 'Abba, Father, we love You and adore You. Oh, for grace to love You more!'"

Thus much, then, upon the great mercy that is implied in the apostle's declaration that we are "ambassadors for Christ."

II. Now, secondly, we have here A GREAT OFFICE MENTIONED—"We are ambassadors for Christ."

Why did God send ambassadors to men? He might have made peace without doing so, but He has chosen to put honor upon instrumentality and He has dealt with us as with reasonable beings. Further, why did God send men as His ambassadors? Would not angels have been better messengers? The probability is that an angel would have been quite unfit for such work as this. When a man, a sinful man who has, himself, been forgiven, talks to other sinners, he talks very tenderly and sympathetically—at least he ought to do so—and when he meets with any distressed souls, he recollects the time when he was in distress. And when he hears about their doubts and fears, he remembers his own. And when he mourns over their rebellions, he recollects what a rebel he used to be. And therefore he is gentle with them, and longs that, if possible, peace may be made between the rebel and his God. But if an angel had been Christ's ambassador, after he had preached most earnestly, you would always be able to make this excuse to him, "Ah, you cannot enter into our feelings, for you have never had our temptations and trials." As you went home, you would say to one another, "That was a grand oration that the angel gave us, but it did not help us much. It was all very well for him to talk as he did, but he has not a wife and children to provide for. He has no poverty to bear. He has not to feel the cold. He has not to suffer through being tempted, as we are, by evil passions and the like." Possibly, if an angel were to take my place here next Lord's Day, there would be many of you who would be very pleased with the change. But I think by the time two or three Sabbaths had passed, you would want your old friend back again, because you would feel that there was, after all, warmth of brotherhood within the human being's breast which you could never expect to find in cherubim or seraphim! When we, who once were enemies to God, tell you, who are still at enmity against Him, about our own rebellion and how it was ended by divine love, how the Lord

melted us down by His infinite pity and abounding condescension—you will say to one another, "Let us also go to Jesus. Perhaps we shall find Him equally kind to us." You will be thus graciously drawn to the Savior by the example of another who was in a similar case to your own. And if we tell you what a loving Lord we have proved Him to be, how easy His yoke has been and how light His burden, perhaps some who are laboring and heavy laden, will say, "We also will accept His gracious invitation which says, 'Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden,' and He will give rest to us even as He has given it to these, His messengers." It was wise and kind, on God's part, to send men to be "ambassadors for Christ."

That word, "ambassadors," suggests to us a few reflections. First, *every true minister of Christ is engaged upon royal business*. He is doing business for the King of kings, the great Lord of all! He does not come in his own name, or in the name of any church, or in the name of any earthly potentate, but he comes in the name of Him who made heaven and earth and who governs all things by the word of His power! I will, therefore, listen to him, even though he may be an illiterate man, for he is the servant of God. If it was really the gospel of Jesus Christ that I heard, little would it matter to me whether the lips that uttered it spoke in such tones as the golden mouthed Chrysostom used of old, or in plain and rugged language like that of Simon Peter. It was his Master who sent him and it was his Master's business to choose whom He would have as His ambassador! Therefore let me see the Master in the man and hear the Master's voice in the gospel which His servant preaches! And let me bless God both for the gospel and for the man who preaches it. And let me pray that since he has royal business to do, he may have grace to do it rightly.

For, as it is royal business, *it is important business*. I know there are some who fancy that to some of us who have preached so long, it is easy work to deliver a sermon. Martin Luther used to say that he never went into his pulpit without having his knees knocking together through fear, although he was a man of dauntless courage. And I can assure you that I never address you without feeling that it would be better for me to engage in breaking stones on the road, or in any job, however hard it might be, than to have to preach the gospel because if I am unfaithful to the many souls committed to my charge, what must be my portion at the last? Whether you think so or not, to me it seems that every sermon involves me in most dire peril unless divine grace makes me faithful. I have not, like a banker, to deal with gold and silver, but with immortal souls which are far more precious! Not with the interests of a State, in which my mistake might be rectified by some abler statesman—but I am concerned about souls which, if once lost, are lost forever! Since God has warned His watchmen against unfaithfulness, He may require the blood of souls at our hands if we warn them not—and He will call us to account if we have kept back any truth that He has taught us. Sometimes,

when we speak faithfully concerning error, people ask, "What need is there of such preaching as that? What have you to do with other people's religion?" Why, some of us were sent into the world for this very purpose—that we might have to do with other people's religion! No man under heaven shall be able to say that we knew that he was believing a lie and yet did not tell him that it was a lie! Not our business to interfere with others when we were sent here on purpose to interfere? If Christ's ambassador sees others attempting to keep up the war between his King and the rebellious subjects in His kingdom, it is his business to speak sternly of those enemies of God and man, and to plead with all his soul with the offending subjects to be at peace with his great King and Lord! So, as "ambassadors for Christ," we have royal business and we have important business—

"'Tis not a cause of small import
The pastor's care demands!
But what might fill an angel's heart,
And filled a Savior's hands."

And next, *all ambassadors have to act in accordance with their commission.* An ambassador must never go beyond his commission. His power comes from his king—he has no power of his own. And if a man who professes to be Christ's ambassador, puts on the airs of priestcraft and says that he has authority in himself—do not believe him! I have all necessary authority! I speak according to this blessed book, but I have none at all if I wander from it. Regard not a single syllable that any man, or even an angel from heaven may say to you if it is not according to Scripture! But when the humblest of us speak according to God's word, woe be to those who reject the truth! The gospel has such majesty in it that it demands acceptance from all who hear it!

Again, *an ambassador has no power to make terms with men on his own account.* The "ambassadors for Christ" have simply to declare God's terms of peace. How pleased some people would be if we could alter this truth of God just a little and take the corners off that one—if this doctrine were not so strict and if that precept were not so severe! But what have we to do with that? I have often said, when I have preached what I believed to be the truth and men have found fault with me for doing so, "the fault is none of mine." If I send my servant to the door with a message and she delivers the message, saying word for word what I told her to say—and if the man at the door should be angry with her because of the terms of the message, it would be most absurd and wrong! Let him be angry with her master who sent her with the message! And if I speak God's word and you object to it, your objection should be against my Master, not against me. I have nothing to do and no minister under Heaven has anything to do—but to preach that which is here in this book and to explain it in the simplest language possible—and to enforce it in the most earnest manner that he can! And as long as he does that, he speaks with authority. But if he gets away from that, his word is of no

more account than the songs that men sing in the street—and he deserves to have no respect from any man!

Let it be remembered, too, that *the ambassador will have to give an account of how he does his business* and, therefore, it is that I appeal to my beloved friends, the members of the church, that we may always have their prayers. We shall have to report to our Master how men treated our message and whether they would have peace or not. Sometimes, while preaching, I have felt as if I could imitate that Roman ambassador who met a certain king and told him that the Romans forbade him to advance further. The king somewhat jested at the stern command of the Roman, but the ambassador stooped down and with his stick drew a ring in the dust round the king and said, "You must give your answer before you come out of that circle, for if you step over that line, the Romans will accept it as a signal of war." I have sometimes felt, when preaching to this great congregation, as if there were some who had to decide for God or for the world before they stepped out of this place, for God's ambassador had, as it were, drawn a line all round them and said to them, "choose this day whom you will serve. If Jehovah is God, serve Him. Or if Baal is God, serve him." As we have gone to our home, we have prayed, "O Lord, we have again told the people Your message! We have not told it with the broken heart that we wanted to feel, but we have truly told it as far as the matter of it is concerned, though we have failed in the spirit of our telling it. Now, O Lord, make the people willing in the day of Your power, to accept the peace that Christ has made, for unless You work in them by Your gracious Spirit, we shall have to cry, 'Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?' for they will reject the Savior, refuse His peace and remain Your enemies even to the end of their lives." The "ambassadors for Christ" must give to their King an account of how they have done their work. May we be able to do it with joy and not with grief!

So, then, you see that the ambassador needs to be careful at all points and *he needs to be very faithful*. If he should be unfaithful, surely it must be woe, woe, woe to him forever! The murderer of men used to be hung in chains as a terror to other evildoers, but what shall be done to the man who is the murderer of souls by his unfaithfulness? As for anyone who buys "the cure of souls" in the market, so mercenary a beginning, so like to the proposal of Simon Magus, looks as though he who acted thus would prove to be like Simon, "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." "Ambassadors for Christ" must start right with clean hands. There must be no bribing in order to get into the ambassadorial office. And they must go on right—no frowns must ever make them turn aside from the truth of God and no smiles must ever make them soften their speech so as to please the ungodly! If there is any place where the thunderbolts of divine wrath fall most heavily, it must be the head and heart of the man whose ministry was an unfaithful one and who went down to hell with the blood of souls upon his skirts! Brothers and sisters in

Christ, pray for us! *Pray for us!* PRAY FOR US who are called to be ambassadors for Christ!" The choice even of a hymn has often been the means of the conversion of a soul. A sympathetic expression in prayer has given great comfort to mourners. Our very look has sometimes carried conviction to a hearer, though we did not know the person at whom we were looking. And our mode of speech and even our pronunciation has, under God, had some gracious results when He has willed to make it so! Pray for us, then, that we may be always so guided and directed by God that peace may be made between Him and thousands of immortal souls through our instrumentality!

III. I will not detain you many minutes while I speak upon the last point which is A GREAT DUTY INVOLVED.

And, first, to all to whom the "ambassadors for Christ" may come, let me say, *give us a hearing*. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ," so give us a hearing that we may deliver our message. Do not say, "We will not hear it." Shall we tell our great King that although He sent us as messengers of peace, the reply of the rebels was, "We do not even want to hear what the King has to say?" Even if you object to us, do not object to our message! Is there something objectionable about ourselves? We are sorry if it is so. But a sensible man, when he knows himself to be in danger, will be glad to accept help even from one whom he does not in all things admire. If you find fault with our tones and censure our manners, and slander our persons, do give good heed to our message! When Caesar swam across the river, he held up his commentaries, so that they should not be injured by getting wet. Surely, if we had to swim through a sea of persecution, we would hold up the gospel and pray that it might not be carried down by the flood. Strike us if you will, but hear our message! Yes, "hear, and your soul shall live." If it really is a message from God, hear it! Perhaps some of you say that you do not believe that it is God's message—but suppose it is? God grant that you may never know, by sad experience, what will follow the rejection of God's word of reconciliation!

A gentleman from London one day met a poor countryman. It was a Sabbath and the person from London had come down for a holiday. When he met the countryman, thinking himself to be a very wise man, he said to him, "Well, Hodge, I suppose you have been taking a walk through the fields." "No, sir," replied the man, I don't waste my time on the Lord's Day in that way. I have been worshiping Him and listening to His word." "So you shut yourself up in a stuffy building for a couple of hours and listen to somebody talking all because you believe the Bible? Don't you know that it is a pack of nonsense? The learned men have proved that it is so and everyone who believes it is a fool." "Yes," said Hodge, "very likely we are great fools. But yet, after all, we country people do know one or two things." "What do you know?" asked the gentleman. "Well, we know that it is a good thing to have two strings to your bow." "What do you mean, my good man?" "Well, I mean that I have got two strings to my bow. If this book should not prove to be true, it has given

me a deal of comfort and made me a better man than I was before I learned to value it. So that is one good thing. And if it should prove to be true, that is the second string to my bow—and what a blessed thing it will be to me that I have received it, and have enjoyed it! But look at you, sir," he said, "you have not one string to your bow. If the Bible is not true, I am as well off as you are and I think I am happier, on the whole, than you are, whoever you may be. But if it should prove to be true, what will become of you, sir?" That is the question that I should like to put to anyone who says that the Bible is not true. *Suppose it should be true, friend? What will become of you*? We who know it is true ask you to listen to the word.

The next thing is, embrace the message. It does seem to me to be a most blessed message that I have to bring to everyone here. It is this—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One
There is life at this moment for you."

Whoever trusts Jesus Christ is at once forgiven and accepted! The war is over and peace is proclaimed the moment that the soul repents of sin and believes in Jesus Christ. There cannot be a simpler, sweeter and safer Gospel than that! Dr. Watts truly wrote—

"Let everlasting glories crown
Your head, my Savior and my Lord!
Your hands have brought salvation down
And writ the blessings in Your Word!
What if we trace the globe around,
And search from Britain to Japan?
There shall be no religion found
So just to God, so safe for man!"

So embrace the message, we pray you, as you love your souls, and would not destroy yourselves! Accept the peace which the gospel brings to you!

And then, lastly, I say again to you who have embraced it, and who rejoice in it, *pray for us, pray for us*. I mean not for me, only, but for all who preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, or who teach it in any shape or form. I sometimes think that if all our friends knew our many anxieties, cares, and heartbreaks, they would never forget to pray for us. I thank God that many of you do remember us in your prayers, but there are some, perhaps, who forget that we are always in need of prayer—and if there is one person in this world who needs your prayers beyond all others, I am sure that I am that one! Think of the thousands of souls that gather here from Sabbath to Sabbath, drinking in every syllable that falls from our lips. Have you ever calculated how many thousands of persons pass through this place in one year? And then, week by week, the printed sermon goes over nearly the whole earth, not only in the English language, but in the language of all civilized men, almost without exception, so that no man knows where he may not find the sermon that was preached here. We constantly have information from persons who, for instance, have been lying dying of the yellow fever in the hospitals of Havana, or have been in Rio de Janeiro, or in Australia, or have wandered

into the vast prairies and have come across a log cabin and have found there that same word that was preached here within a short space of time after it dropped from our lips! Pray for us that all this may not be in vain!

And then, beloved, this church has sent out hundreds of ministers who are now located in all parts of the world and, almost without exception, preaching that same gospel that we have declared unto you! Think, also, of the thousands of members in this church—some very good people and some very strange ones—many sick, some dying, and always some needing counsel, or warning, or exhortation that requires all our wit and wisdom—and a great deal more to say the right word at the right time! Then there is that which comes upon us daily—the care of scores and hundreds of churches which, if they have any trouble, resort to us and bring their burdens to one who is burdened enough already! We are wretched to the last degree if we have not your prayers! But if you pray for us, nothing can stagger us! If you uphold us by your prayers, God will make us strong! But if you leave us, we shall be weakness itself. Pray for us, for "we are ambassadors for Christ."

There are strangers here to whom this part of my discourse may seem egotistic. I cannot help its seeming so to you! But I am speaking to my own friends here about what they know, but of which they sometimes need to be reminded. And if they will pray for me as the result of it, I shall not feel very much troubled in my conscience for having seemed to be egotistic to those who do not know. After all, our reliance is not even upon the prayers of the saints. God is our helper, and we have done His work in reliance upon His grace, but we shall be unfaithful tomorrow unless He shall guide and teach and uphold us. Therefore, again we say, brethren, pray for us! By the love you bear to Christ, pray for us! Amen

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THE COMMISSARIAT OF THE UNIVERSE
NO. 3149

A SERMON
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"What You give them they gather in."
Psalm 104:28.

THIS sentence describes the commissariat of creation. The problem is the feeding of the "creeping things innumerable, both small and great beasts," which swarm the sea, the armies of birds which fill the air and the vast hordes of animals which people the dry land! But in this sentence we have the problem solved, "What You give them they gather in." The work is stupendous, but it is done with ease because the worker is infinite—if He were not at the head of it, the task would never be accomplished! Blessed be God for the great *You* of the text! It is every way our sweetest consolation that the personal God is still at work in the world—leviathan in the ocean and the sparrow on the bough may be, alike, glad of this, and we, the children of the great Father, much more!

The notion of modern philosophers appears to be that the world is like a clock which an omnipotent phantom has set going and left to run on, each wheel acting upon its fellow by rigid law or, as a brother remarked to me, they think the Lord has wound up the universe like a watch and put it under His pillow and gone to sleep! What do you think brothers and sisters—do you find pleasure in a world bereaved of its God? To me, such philosophy is dreary, for my soul pines for an infinite love which will give itself to me and receive my love in return. I am orphaned, indeed, if my Maker will not pity me as His child and hear my prayers, compassionate my tears and succor and comfort me! Babes need a mother's heart as much as her hands. Would you wish to be a child brought up by machinery, washed by a waterwheel, rocked by a pendulum, fed from a pipe, dressed by a steel hand and, in fine, committed to the care of a wonderful engine which could do everything except love you? You would miss the eyes which weep with you and smile upon you, the lips which kiss you and speak lovingly to you and the dear countenance which laughs as you are fondled and pressed to a warm bosom. No, I can neither accept a steam engine instead of my mother, nor a set of laws in exchange for my God! There is a God who cares for all His creatures and makes the grass to grow for the cattle and herbs for the service of man. There is a Father to whom we speak and who hears us! One who waters the hills from His chambers and satisfies the earth with the fruit of His works—to whom we may come boldly in every time of need! Because Jehovah lives, the creatures are fed! He gives them their daily food, they gather it and so the work is done.

The general principle of the text is God gives to His creatures, and His creatures gather. That general principle we shall apply to our own case as men and women, for it is as true of us as it is of the fish of the sea and the cattle on the hills. "What You give them they gather."

I. Our first point is this, WE HAVE ONLY TO GATHER, FOR GOD GIVES.

In temporal things, God gives us day by day our daily bread, and our business is simply to gather it. In the wilderness, the manna fell outside the camp of Israel—they had not to make the manna, but to go out in the morning and gather it before the sun was hot. Providence has guaranteed to the child of God his necessary food. "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." Our part in the business is to go forth unto our labor and gather it. True, in some cases, necessary food is not gathered without excessive labor but this is occasioned by the injustice of man—not by the arrangements of God. And when true religion shall have fully operated upon all classes of mankind, none shall need to toil like slaves. They shall only need to perform such an amount of labor as shall be healthful and endurable. When no man oppresses his fellow, the work of gathering what God gives will be no hardship, but a wholesome exercise! The sweat of labor will then be a blessed medicine.

In this light let us view our worldly business. We are to go forth unto our work and our labor until the evening and to expect that bounteous providence will thus enable us to gather what the Lord, Himself, bestows. And if by this means He gives us food and raiment, we are to be therewith content. If our faith can see the hand of God in it all, it will be sweet to pick up the manna from the ground and eat it with gratitude because it tastes of the place from where it came.

As to *spirituals*, the principle is most emphatically true. We have, in the matter of grace, only to gather what God gives. The natural man thinks that he has to earn divine favor, that he has to purchase the blessings of heaven, but he is in grave error—the soul has only to receive that which Jesus freely gives! Mercy is a gift, salvation is a gift, and all covenant blessings are gifts! We need not bring a price in our hands, but come empty handed and gather what is laid before us, even as the birds gather their food and the cattle on the hills feed on the grass which freely grows for them. This is one of the first principles of the gospel. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights." And it is for us by faith to take our omer and fill it with the angels' food which has fallen all around us, take it into our tent and there feast, even to the fullest! 'Tis God's part to give; 'tis ours to gather in. Faith's sphere is that of the fleece which absorbs the dew, or the pool which is filled with the rain. Believer, this is the rule in all spiritual things! You are to be a diligent gatherer and to strive after high spiritual attainments, but still remember that your heavenly Father knows what you have need of before you ask Him. These superior blessings are His gifts—and the surest way of obtaining them is to come to Him for them and receive them by faith. You have not to pluck covenant blessings out of a closed hand—you have only to take from the Lord's open palm what

He delights to bestow. For you to be straitened and poor gives no pleasure to Him. Rather will it delight Him to fill you with His favor and to enrich you with all the blessings of His grace.

If the calm quiet spirit of this thought could enter our minds, how happy we would be! We would then sit down at Jesus' feet with Mary and leave Martha to fret alone. Tomorrow morning, before many of our eyes are open, the sun will be rising and, as soon as his first beams salute the earth, the birds of every wing will awaken and, seeing the light, they will begin to sing! But where is your breakfast, little bird? Where is the food for today for the nest full of little ones? The birds do not know, neither are they anxious, but they gather the first seed, or crumb, or worm which they find and, continuing to do so all day long, they are satisfied. Yes, and when summer is gone and the long warm days are over, and cold winter sets in, the birds sit and sing on the bare boughs, though frost is on the ground, for they expect that God will give—and all they have to do is to gather! We may learn much from little birds—yes, even from little birds in cages, for if those who keep them should forget to give them seed and water, they must die, must they not? And yet they sing! They have no great store—perhaps not enough to last them another day—but it does not fret them, neither do they cease their music! I believe Luther well translated their song when he said that it meant this—

"Mortal, cease from care and sorrow!
God provides for the morrow."

II. Secondly, it is certain that WE CAN ONLY GATHER WHAT GOD GIVES. However eager we may be, there is the end of the matter. The most diligent bird shall not be able to gather more than the Lord has given it—neither shall the most greedy and covetous man! "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so He gives His beloved sleep." "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman wakes but in vain." What God gives you, you will be able to gather in. But if you set about to heap up what your greed lusts after, no blessing will attend it. What a difference is often seen in two men placed in the same position in life, with the same work to do and very much the same possessions! You see one of them working cheerfully, happy as a king, sweetening his bread with content and joy in the Lord—while the other murmurs and repines, envying those who are richer and filled with harsh thoughts of God. What makes the one happy and the other wretched? Truly, only that the one has the grace of God to give him contentment and so is full—and the other has a brutish hunger and greed and so, is left to be his own tormentor. As it is with the poor, so is it with the rich—the heart has more to do with making us happy than our possessions have. He whose soul is full of God, faith and contentment, is a truly rich man! The reflection that we can, after all, gather no more than God gives, should make us restful and contented. It teaches us our dependence upon God and tends to lessen our self-confidence, to moderate our desires and to abate our cares.

Recollect, dear Christian friends, that *the same remark holds good with regard to spirituals as well as temporals*. You can only gather in what the Lord grants you. Before preaching, I was trying to find food for you all and I began to pray for it because I remembered that I could only gather for you what the Lord my God gave me. If I bring more than that, it will only be chaff of my own and not good winnowed corn from His garner. I often need to think of this, for I have to feed a great multitude with spiritual meat almost every day in the week. Where is the poor minister to get the supply from if the Lord does not bring it to him? He waits, therefore, upon his God with humble faith and prayer, expecting that fit matter will be suggested. You also, dear friends, can only obtain, when hearing the word, what the Holy Spirit gives you. You may hear a thousand sermons, but you will gather nothing that will really quicken or feed your souls unless the Lord gives it to you. Unless the Spirit of the Lord puts fullness into the word, all the hearing in the world will be worth nothing. The Holy Spirit must take of the things of Christ and reveal them to the inner man, or you will be surfeited with mere words, or puffed up with human opinions and nothing more! "What You give them they gather," and no more.

So is it when you set out to work for the Lord Jesus Christ among the ungodly. You will win as many souls as God gives you, but no one will be converted by your own power. When we have reason to believe that the Lord has much people in a city, it gives us much comfort in going there. I always do my best for my congregations because I feel that they are always picked persons sent to me by my Master—if there are few, they are more than I can edify if He does not help me. And if there are many, so much the more help will my Lord afford me. I can only gather in what the Lord gives. We may plant and we may water, too, but God must give the increase. We shall not be a sweet savor unto God, nor a savor of life unto life to any unless the almighty Spirit of the blessed God shall come forth and work with us.

Should not this lead us to much prayer? No dependence should be placed upon man, or upon the outward form of worship, for the most successful preacher cannot, by his own power, quicken the dead sinner, or regenerate a depraved soul! The Holy Spirit must be with us, or we prophesy in vain. The most laborious reaper in the Lord's harvest cannot gather more sheaves than his Master gives him. Pray for him, then, that he may not miss his reward. Pray for him that he may be strong for labor, that his sickle may be sharp, his arm vigorous and his harvest plenteous—that he may bring in a glorious load of sheaves to the garner! As for yourselves, when engaged in any service for God, take heed that you rest not in yourselves, for you can receive nothing unless it is given you from above. Your words will be no better than silence, your thoughts no more than daydreams and your efforts wasted strength unless the Lord shall go before you. "Without Me you can do nothing" is a truth of God you must never forget!

III. Observe, thirdly, that WE MUST GATHER WHAT GOD GIVES or else we shall get no good by His bountiful giving.

God feeds the innumerable creeping things, but each creature collects the provender for itself. The huge leviathan receives his vast provision, but he must go plowing through the boundless meadows and gather up the myriads of minute objects which supply his need. The fish must leap up to catch the fly, the swallow must hawk for its food, the young lions must hunt their prey. "What You give them they gather." God has not prepared, in His whole universe, a single corner for an idle being. In no society does the sluggard succeed and it is not desirable that he should. If a man will not work, he ought to die, for he is of no use alive—he is in everybody's way and, like a fruitless tree he cumbers the ground. God gives, but if a man will not gather, he deserves to starve.

It is so in business. Everybody knows that we must be diligent there, for "the hand of the diligent makes rich." The book of Proverbs deals very hard blows against sluggards—and Christian ministers do well to frequently denounce the great sin of idleness which is the mother of a huge family of sins. Idleness is a most contemptible vice—it covers a man with rags, fills him with disease and makes him a ready servant of the devil. It is a shameful thing that God, "who works up to now," and made us on purpose that we should work, should see us wasting time and strength and leaving good work unaccomplished. God will not feed you, idle man! His own verdict is, "if he will not work, neither let him eat." If you loaf about and say, "The Lord will provide," he will probably "provide" you a place in the workhouse, if not in the county jail! If the manna falls near him and the lazy man will not take the trouble to gather it, his omer will not be filled by miracle, neither will an angel be sent to carry bread and meat to his table. Up, you sluggard, and gather what the Lord has strewn!

The law of nature and providence holds good in spiritual things. "What You give them they gather in." There is a spirit abroad in the world—not so powerful now, thank God, as it used to be—which talks a great deal about grace and predestination, and therein I rejoice to hear what it has to say. But its inference from those truths of God is that men are to sit still, to be passive in salvation and to look upon themselves as so many logs—as if they had no will in the matter, and were never to be called to an account concerning the gospel which they hear! Now, this kind of doctrine virtually teaches that what God gives drops into our mouths and we need not gather in it at all—the very reverse of the Savior's exhortation to labor for that meat which endures unto everlasting life! Sovereign grace will not take us to heaven by the hair of our heads, or save us in our sleep, whether we will or not! Such teaching would have been repudiated by the apostles, for it acts like chloroform upon the conscience and plunges the soul into a deadly lethargy. The fact is, brothers and sisters, there is predestination and the doctrines of election and effectual grace are true—nor may we deny them! But yet the Lord deals with men as responsible beings and bids them "strive to enter in at the strait gate," and to "lay hold on eternal life." Such exhortations are evidently intended for free agents and indicate that our salvation requires energetic action! It

would not appear from Scripture that we are to lie dormant and be merely acted upon, for "the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." Of men as well as of birds it is true, "what You give them *they gather in*." God gives you faith, but you must believe! God gives you repentance, but you must repent! These divine graces are the work of God, but they are also the acts of man. How often shall we need to remind you, brothers and sisters that the Holy Spirit does not believe for us? How can He? Is faith to be exercised by proxy? That cannot be! Neither does the Holy Spirit repent for us—it is absurd to entertain such a notion! We must, ourselves, personally believe and repent! If any man does not repent as his own act and deed, his repentance and faith are not such as are spoken of in Scripture, or required by the gospel! Brothers and sisters, we should pray, repent and believe as much as if all these were wholly our own, but we are bound to give God all the glory of them, because it is only by His grace that we either can or will perform them! Men must hear the word, for "faith comes by hearing." We must believe the word, for "without faith it is impossible to please God." And we must repent of sin, for if sin is not forsaken, pardon is not given. We must fly to the City of Refuge, or the avenger of blood will destroy us! We must escape for our lives to the mountain, or the fire from God will overwhelm us in the City of Destruction. "What You give them they gather in." We *must* gather in, or we shall not have!

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we must not expect spiritual gifts without gathering them. For instance, our souls need food, but we may not expect the Lord to feed us unless we use the means, hear or read His word, attend to private devotion and the like. These are channels of grace to us and woe be to us if we neglect them! If you saw your friend so emaciated that you could count his bones—and so weak that he could scarcely stand—you would inquire what had reduced him so much, for he used to be a strong hearty man. You say to him, "My dear friend, what can be the matter with you?" You expect him to tell you of some mysterious disease. But no, his tale is far simpler—he confesses that he does not eat, that he has given up having regular meals and very seldom takes an ounce of nourishment. You quite understand his feebleness and decline—he is injuring his constitution by denying it nutriment! Now, when a Christian complains that he is full of doubts and fears and has no joy in the Lord as he used to have, and no enjoyment in prayer or labor for Jesus—if you find out that he neglects all weeknight services, never goes to the prayer meeting, reads anything rather than his Bible and has no time for meditation—you need not inquire further into his spiritual malady! The man does not gather in what God provides! He lets the manna lie outside the camp and allows the water from the Rock to flow untasted! And he must not be astonished that his soul is not in a right condition. Christians will find that if they neglect the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is, and if they forget to wait upon the Lord and so renew their strength, they will fall into a miserable, weak, low condition—and their souls will be full of doubts, cares, and anxieties

such as they never would have known if they had walked nearer to God and maintained intimate communion with the Savior!

As it is with ourselves, *so is it with us in reference to others*. God will give us souls if we pray for them, but we must seek after them. When the Lord calls a man to speak in His name, He intends to give him some success, but he must be on the watch to gather it. Some ministers have preached the gospel long, but have never seen much fruit because they never tried to gather it—they have had no meetings for enquirers, nor encouraged the young converts to come to them for help. What God has given them, they have not gathered. Many professors are always wishing that the church would increase—they would like to see an aggressive work carried on against the world—why do they not set about it? Why stand they gazing up into heaven? Do they expect to see souls converted without means? Dear brothers and sisters, it will not do for us to get silly notions into our heads! Up to this day God has been pleased to use instrumentality and until the Second Advent He will continue to do so! When the Lord descends from heaven, it will be time enough for us to talk of what He will then do—but till He comes, let us continue to gather the souls He gives us. We are not in such great need of conferences about how to win souls as of men who will do it. I vote for less talk and more work! We cannot have too much prayer, but we certainly need more effort. The Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry unto Me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they *go forward*!" We cry, "Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord!" and the Lord replies, "Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion!" God is awake enough—the awaking is needed by us! We have been praying for His Spirit, and rightly enough, but the Spirit of God is never backward—we are straitened in ourselves! He would use us if we were vessels fit for His use. Oh, that we would yield ourselves fully to the Spirit of God, to be borne whichever way He wills, even as the clouds are driven by the wind! Then He would draw and we would run—He would give and we would gather!

IV. The fourth turn of the text gives us the sweet thought THAT WE MAY GATHER IN WHAT HE GIVES. We have divine permission to enjoy freely what the Lord bestows!

Poor sinner, whatever the Lord has given in His gospel to sinners, you may freely gather in. When the manna fell in the wilderness, no guards were appointed to keep the people away. No inquiry was made as to the character or experience of those who came to gather it. There it was and no one was denied. Over the heads of the people might have sounded the words, "Whoever will, let him come and take of the manna freely." Tests and qualifications there were none and yet the special design was the feeding of Israel. No discriminating Rabbi cried out, "You must not come unless you feel a law work within and are sensible sinners." Not a word of the sort was whispered! And the Lord has appointed no one to keep sinners away from the water of life, but He has chosen many to bid poor souls draw near and drink! And the Holy Spirit, Himself, puts forth His power to draw men to it. Jesus says, "He that comes to Me I will in no

wise cast out." And I, for one, have no commission to discourage any, nor will I. What He gives you, you may gather in! The little birds ask no questions as to whether they may enjoy the seeds or the worms—they see the food and take it boldly—so, Sinners, it is not for you to raise difficulties about the mercy of God! Whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved and that *whoever* is a wide word. You need not say, "I do not know whether I am elected." Neither can I tell you, nor can any other man. "The Lord knows them that are His," and none of us know anything about it except as far as His Spirit teaches us that we ourselves are His. Your thoughts should run in another direction—Christ Jesus came to save sinners—are you a sinner? "Whoever will, let him come." Are you willing? Then come along with you and quibble no longer!

God does not guard His great garden of grace as men protect their little patches of ground, wherein they hang up old garments or dead crows to keep the birds away. The Lord gives freely and upbraids not. Certain preachers hang up the dead black crow of their own morbid experience to scare away poor sinners from coming to simple faith in Jesus, but the Lord has no scarecrows in His garden! Do but come, you blackest of sinners, and He will receive you. The strangest bird, with speckled wings, may freely gather what mercy gives. Whatever is preached in the gospel as the object of faith, everyone that believes may have. Whatever is promised to repentance, everyone that repents may have. And whatever is promised to coming to Christ, everyone that comes to Christ shall have. "What You give them they gather," for God gives it to be gathered! He gave the manna on purpose for it to be eaten! He would not have sent bread from heaven if men had not needed it and if He had not meant to feed them. Grace must have been meant for sinners—it will suit no other persons. If I have a hard heart, the Spirit of God can soften it—why should He not do so? Here is a foul sinner and yonder is a fountain filled with blood which completely cleanses—why should he not wash? What was Christ meant for but to be a Savior? And if He is a Savior, why should He not save *me*? Surely, when I am thirsty and I see the water springing up before me, I may as well drink. Sinner, there is a spring open here by the grace of our Lord Jesus! You have come this way and, therefore, I suggest to you and I pray the Spirit of God also to suggest it to you, that between the fountain and the thirsty soul there ought to be a connection begun at once! God invites you, your need calls you, may His Spirit draw you—for even now what He has given you may gather in!

V. The last thought is, GOD WILL ALWAYS GIVE US SOMETHING TO GATHER IN.

It is written, "The Lord will provide." The other day, as I walked on a common, I picked up a dead sparrow. Going a little further, I found another. And my friend said to me, "I have found another." And he remarked, "It must have been a bad season; these birds must have been starved." "No, no," I said, "you are not going to pick up dead sparrows killed by the weather. That cottager over the hedge has some rows of young peas, and he keeps a gun." Men kill the birds—God does not starve them.

Brother, *if you are under the guardian care of God you shall not want.* If you are your own shepherd, you will probably stray into very lean pastures one of these days, but if the Lord is your Shepherd, you shall not want. He will make you to lie down in green pastures. "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger," for they try to take care of themselves. "But they that seek the Lord," although they are often very simpleminded people and easily imposed upon, "shall not want any good thing," for God will take care of them. I have often noticed how wonderfully poor widows manage to live and struggle through with large families. When they were dependent upon their husbands, they were often badly off. And when their husbands died, it seemed as if they must starve! But if they are Christian women, they look to God and God becomes their husband—and He is a far better husband than the man they have lost! When God takes the children in hand and becomes their Father, they cannot lack. Help is raised up in unexpected quarters and they are provided for—they can scarcely tell how. If, in providence, we have learned to live by faith in God, we may be sure that He will not fail us. "The Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish."

Thus is it also in spiritual things. If you are willing to gather in, God will always give. Go to the Bible and say, "Lord, give me a promise," and you will find one suitable to your case. Go and hear His servants whom He has sent. Go with hearts ready to receive the word and you will not return empty. The Lord will make us speak to your case as much as if we knew all about you! Bring your largest vessel with you and the Lord will fill it to the brim. Never does a believer open his mouth wide but the Lord fills it! Be you ready to gather and you may be right well assured that the divine fullness will never cease to supply your need!

Thus, from a very simple text, we have had our lesson. Go home and feed upon what you have gathered—and take care to bless the name of the Lord!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 34.

The title of this psalm is, "A Psalm of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech (or, Achish); who drove him away, and he departed." It relates to a sad scene in David's life when he had to feign madness in order to escape from his enemies. But I notice that although the fact is recorded, yet David does not dwell upon it in the psalm. He had acted as a fool or a madman, but he was not fool enough, or mad enough, to glory in his shame! I have heard some men, whose past lives have been very disgraceful, who, after their professed conversion, have seemed to make a boast of their sin. David does not do that, nor will any other right minded person. Let us always be ashamed of our sin, even while we magnify the grace of God which has saved us from it. Though we may feel that it is necessary to mention it in order to encourage others to hope in the mercy of God, yet we must take care that we never

even *seem* to dwell upon it with any kind of gusto. Thus the psalm begins—

Verse 1. *I will bless the LORD at all times.* "Whether the times are dark or light, whether I feel well or ill, whether the Lord deals with me graciously or severely, I will bless Him at all times."

1. *His praise shall continually be in my mouth.* What a blessed mouthful! If we could but carry out this resolve of David, we would not find as much fault with others as we often do. We shall have little or no opportunity for grumbling and murmuring if praise to Jehovah shall continually be in our mouth!

2. *My soul shall make her boast in the LORD.* All men are more or less given to boasting but it seems to be especially characteristic of Englishmen and Americans. Well, there is a right way of boasting. If you can truly say, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord," you may boast away as much as you like!

2. *The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.* Any other kind of boasting makes humble people sad, but when we boast in the Lord, the more we boast the more the humble rejoice!

3. *O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together.* Let each one of us throw his stone upon the mound to make the heap as high as possible, for everyone has some peculiar cause for gratitude and thanksgiving.

4. *I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.* It was a very poor way of seeking the Lord when he had got into the hand of the Philistines and was planning in his own mind a disgraceful way of escaping from them. It was not that calm quiet calling upon God that one would have liked to see in David. Still, God heard him and that makes the deliverance all the more wonderful.

5. *They looked unto Him.* [See Sermon #195, Volume 4—LOOKING UNTO JESUS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "All these people that have come at my call to join me in praising the Lord—"They looked unto Him."

5. *And were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.* No, not one of them! If they looked to God, light shone from God upon their faces and their faces glowed with the holy radiance, so they had no reason to be ashamed.

6, 7. *This poor man cried,* [See Sermon #2193, Volume 37—A POOR MAN'S CRY—AND WHAT CAME OF IT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them.* David's deliverance had been so special that he could not help feeling that some special deliverer had been employed on his behalf—"the angel of the Lord" had been sent to his help. Then David, why did you act like a madman? Ah, that was through his lack of faith, yet even lack of faith must not make us rob God of His glory. What though we were unbelieving, He was faithful! Therefore let us give Him His due recompense of praise. Let us try to blot out the remembrance of

our own weakness with our tears, but let us not erase the memory of God's loving-kindness to us.

8. *O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusts in Him.* You may not only believe that God is good, but it may become a matter of experience with you—"O taste and see that the Lord is good." You cannot see the goodness of God to perfection without tasting it, so use the sense of taste as well as that of sight! Some people want first to see, and then to taste, but David says, "Taste and see."

9, 10. *O fear the LORD, you His saints: for there is no want to them that fear Him. The young lions do lack.* They are strong, cunning, ravenous, yet they "do lack."

10. *And suffer hunger.* They try to take care of themselves and, therefore, they get badly taken care of.

10. *But they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.* [See Sermon #65, Volume 2—LIONS LACKING—BUT THE CHILDREN SATISFIED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] When God takes care of us, we are well taken care of, though we are not lions, but sheep—for we have a Shepherd and the lions have not—so we "shall not want any good thing."

11. *Come, you children, listen to me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.* I should not wonder but that when David played the madman and scribbled on the doors of the gate, the children in the streets gathered around him and mocked him. Wherever we have done harm to any, let us try to do them good. So did David—he sought to gather the children about his knees and to talk to them—"Come, you children." He does not begin by saying, "Standoff, you children." There would be no teaching them in that way! You must seek to draw them to yourselves if you would draw them to your Lord. "Come, you children, listen to me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord." Though David had been anointed king, he remained a teacher of children! And the highest honor we can have is, for Christ's sake, to teach the little ones. Children love bright, happy teaching—they naturally desire life and happiness—so David begins.

12, 13. *What man is he that desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking guile.* Children's tongues are very active and they need to be reminded that their tongues must be sanctified or they will say what is evil. David had both spoken and acted with guile at the court of Achish, so he particularly dwelt upon that matter. "Depart from evil"—run away from it—not merely do not *do* it, but get away from it! "Depart from evil, and do good."

14. *The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous.* He does not merely give a glance at them now and then, but His eyes rest on them. He is always watching them.

15. *And His ears are open unto their cry.* The translators put in the words, "are open," but they were not needed.

16. *The face of the LORD is against them that do evil.* You know what we mean when we say, "I set my face against it." So God sets His face

against the wicked. Note how near both the righteous and the wicked are to an observing God; in the first case, His eyes are upon the righteous, and in the second, His face "is against them that do evil."

16. *To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.* He will stamp them out as men do with fire. He will not even let them be remembered—He will use means to ensure that their unholy example shall die with them.

17. *The righteous cry, and the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.* That is something to teach the children—teach them from your own experience that God does hear and answer prayer. Teach them to always pray to God and to believe that prayer has real and beneficial results! "The Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles."

18. *The LORD is near unto them that are of a broken heart; and saves such as are of a contrite spirit.* We often hear of people who die of a broken heart, but here we read about people who live with a broken heart. And it is the best way of living, too—with a heart that is broken for sin and broken from sin—a heart that in every portion of it feels the power of God!

19. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous.* Do not tell the children that the good are always happy and that the good escape trial, because you will deceive them if you do. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous"—the happiness, the glory, the heaven of the righteous is not here, but hereafter! "Many are the afflictions of the righteous."

19. *But.* Blessed, "but."

19. *The LORD delivers him out of them all.* Not only out of some of them, but "out of them all." The righteous do not get out of them by their own power, but the Lord delivers them—they have a divine helper!

20. *He keeps all his bones. Not one of them is broken.* The righteous may have skin wounds and flesh wounds, but they shall not suffer any real hurt. God will not let His people be so injured as to be incapable of holiness. There shall be no bone breaking in Christ's mystical body, even as not one of the bones of Christ was broken!

21. *Evil shall slay the wicked.* Sin itself shall slaughter them.

21, 22. *And they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. The LORD redeems the soul of His servants: and none of them that trust in Him shall be desolate.*

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"NEVER, NO NEVER, NO NEVER"
NO. 3150

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 24, 1909,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 16, 1873.

"Let your conversation be without covetousness: and be content with such things as you have. For He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." Hebrews 13:5, 6.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the whole or parts of these two verses, are as follows—Sermons #477, Volume 8—NEVER! NEVER! NEVER! NEVER! NEVER!
#1449, Volume 24—A VILE WEED AND A FAIR FLOWER
and #1880, Volume 32—A LESSON AND A FORTUNE FOR CHRISTIAN MEN OF BUSINESS—
Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

WHEN the Lord foretold, through the mouth of His servant, the Prophet Isaiah, that He would "make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow," surely He must have had in His mind such precious truths of God as this one which we have in our text, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." This is the very essence of consolation! I might truly say that it is the quintessence of delight! Here is solid spiritual food condensed into a very small space. Take these eight words and extract the marrow from them, or treat them as a honeycomb and get the sweetness out of them into your soul—and it will be full of content, no, more—it will be overflowing with sacred delight! "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

I. With such a text before us, we need no further preface, so we will at once begin our meditation upon the text. And first, I will ask you to VIEW THESE WORDS AS A QUOTATION.

You observe that the apostle writes, "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you," from which it plainly appears that Paul was quoting from Holy Writ. This should teach us how necessary it is for us, also, to quote Scripture whenever we can. The Holy Spirit abounds in gracious thoughts and in fitting language in which to express those thoughts, so He has no need to make extracts from what He has previously said. Yet He pleases to do so. Instead of giving us a new promise, He here gives us an old one over again, as if to remind us that there are no better things in the world than the Word of God, Himself, and that the very noblest expressions are those which have been already used!

Besides, the Holy Spirit here puts honor upon the Old Testament by quoting from it for the consolation of New Testament believers. There are some persons who seem to think more of the New Testament than they

do of the Old Testament. I have met with Christians in Germany with whom it has been quite a superstition that the evangelists were superior to the apostles and that the apostles were superior to the prophets. I trust that such notions as those will never spread among us! We see here that when an apostle writes as an inspired man, he quotes from the Pentateuch, he quotes from the Chronicles and he quotes from the prophecy of Isaiah—so that we are to honor the Old Testament and not to look upon it as a secondary book compared with the New Testament, but to reverence the divine teaching in both portions of the inspired word.

In addition to that, the Holy Spirit bids Paul apply this Old Testament promise to us to show us that the Words of God spoken to saints in the ancient times were spoken also to us, so that if the Lord gave a promise to Jacob, it was not meant to be restricted to Jacob, but to belong to all those who, like Jacob, can wrestle in prayer! And that if God spoke, as He did, a promise to Joshua, it was not intended to be only for Joshua, but for all who were in like circumstances to his. Scripture promises have, all of them, a message to all believers—and if you believe in Jesus Christ—what God has said to other believers of old He says this day to you!

I think we may learn much from the fact that this promise is a quotation from the Old Testament. Where did Paul find it? It is not very easy to say, because it occurs in various places and the apostle has not quoted it literally. He has given the sense rather than the exact words of the quotation. He may have quoted the Septuagint version rather than the Hebrew, for no doubt he was familiar with both. There is not any one text in the Old Testament of which you could positively say that it is the one he intended, but there are several passages, any one of which you might say, "The words are almost here, and the spirit and meaning of the passage are entirely here."

One of the first passages which Paul may be supposed to have quoted is Genesis 28:15. The fugitive Jacob lies asleep, with a stone for his pillow. In his dream, he sees a ladder reaching from earth to heaven. At the top of it stands the Almighty, who makes a covenant with him—and among the other covenant promises is this, "Behold, I am with you, and will keep you in all places where you go, and will bring you again into this land; for *I will not leave you* until I have done that which I have spoken to you of." Here you get the words, "I will not leave you." Does not that passage, in its proper connection, suggest that *the promise is very applicable to young people starting out in life?* Jacob was leaving his father's house under very unfavorable circumstance and he was going to a distant country where he had relatives, but strangers might have been kinder to him than Laban was, for he got all he could out of him and gave him as little in return as he could! So Jacob, starting for Padanaram, gets this promise from God, "I will not leave you."

I can conceive of that promise coming to some young friend here. You have committed yourself to God's keeping. You are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and now you are about to start on a new career. Some

measure of trembling comes over you and you have been breathing this prayer to God, "O Lord, lead me in the way in which You would have me go—guide me in all my untrodden way." It is just possible that you are going to a distant land and you are a lover of your home, as Jacob was, and you feel some natural anxiety concerning the change that you are about to make. Here comes in the promise that is just suited to your case, "I will not leave you." Jacob proved the truth of that promise. Although he had many trials, which were, most of them, of his own making, yet never was he deserted by his God! In his old age, he said, "All these things are against me," but he was not speaking the truth when he said that, for even then everything was working for his good! And, notwithstanding his troubles, he died a blessed old man who was able to give blessings to others as well as to enjoy them himself. So, my dear young friend, take this text as the Lord's promise to you for many years to come, "I will not leave you until I have done that which I have spoken to you of."

There is a second passage which is more nearly to the point from which the apostle probably quoted. That is Deuteronomy 31:6-8. Moses first speaks to the children of Israel and he says to them, "Be strong and of a good courage: fear not, nor be afraid of them: (that is, of the Canaanites) for the Lord your God, He it is that does go with you; He will not fail you, nor forsake you." Then turning to Joshua, Moses says, "The Lord, He it is that does go before you; *He will be with you, He will not fail you, neither forsake you*: fear not, neither be dismayed." In Joshua 1:5, we find that the Lord repeated the promise to Joshua, "I will not fail you, nor forsake you." In the version which Paul may have read, the words here may have been identical with those he uses in writing to the Hebrews. What do we learn from the context of this passage? *God was here speaking to those who were about to lose their leader and who would need this assurance*. Moses was about to die. He had been the mainstay of the children of Israel and they had always looked up to him as their leader. Under God, Moses was the father of that nation and he carried them like children in his bosom. If they wanted water, it was he who smote the Rock to make the stream gush forth. If they needed that their enemies should be destroyed, it was he whose uplifted hands brought them the victory! Now Moses was about to go up to the top of Nebo and to die there—and the people greatly trembled at the prospect of losing him. But the Lord gave them this promise to console them, "I will not fail you, nor forsake you."

Moses dies, but Moses' God does not die! The strong man, whose eyes had not waxed dim, and whose natural force had not abated, must look from the mountaintop upon the good land beyond the Jordan—and then his God must take away his soul as with a kiss—yet God would not be gone. He is the dwelling place of His people in all generations! You see then, dear friend, what is the bearing of the text upon your experience. You have lost, or are about to lose, the mainstay of your house. Your fa-

ther is failing in health and you cannot shake off from your mind the apprehension that in a few more days, you may have to pay a visit to the grave. One in whom you have rightly reposed much confidence and in whose presence you have felt that all was well, is soon to be taken away from you. But be not distressed as though God Himself were about to die, for Jehovah ever lives and He said to you, "I will not fail you, nor forsake you." You who are already, or who soon will be a widow, dry your eyes with this blessed handkerchief! You who are, or soon will be, a fatherless child, be of good comfort, for your Father in heaven will not leave you nor forsake you! Perhaps I am addressing members of a bereaved church. You have lost a man of God who went in and out among you as Moses did among the children of Israel in the wilderness—and you are asking, "Where is his successor to come from?" Perhaps there is a Joshua within sight, but you are half afraid as to whether he will have the power needed to carry on the great work. Trust that the God who was with Moses will also be with Joshua and take this promise home to your own heart—and say to each of your fellow members in the sorrowing church that the Lord has said, "I will not fail you, nor forsake you."

There is another passage from which Paul may have quoted, in the first book of the Chronicles, in the 28th chapter, at the 20th verse, where David says to his son, Solomon, "Be strong and of good courage, and do it: (that is, build the temple) fear not, nor be dismayed: for the Lord God, even my God, will be with you; *He will not fail you, nor forsake you*, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord." I scarcely need indicate that *the promise is applicable to any who are about to undertake some great enterprise for God's glory*. You have not to build a material temple, but you have, perhaps, to build up a spiritual church, or to evangelize a wide district, or to gather together a class of young people—and you feel half afraid that you are unequal to the task—but will not this promise be like a girdle about your loins? Will it not strengthen you to do exploits when the Lord says, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you"? Go in this your might, O you who are full of weakness and trembling! Go, for God bids you go and, therefore, let not your heart again ever fear!

One other passage contains part of our text in another form. It is that well known one in Isaiah 41:10—"Fear you not; for *I am with you*: be not dismayed; for I am your God: I will strengthen you; yes, *I will help you*; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness." There the promise is enlarged, but the sense of it is the same—it is a promise of the divine presence and of the divine help to the Lord's tried and afflicted people!

II. Now we will change the run of our thought and VIEW THESE WORDS AS AN ADAGE OR HOUSEHOLD WORD FROM GOD.

I think this must have been a sort of proverb or common saying among the early Christians, "The Lord has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you," and that it was one of the things that they constantly said, the one to the other. I wish that we had more such holy proverbs

current among us nowadays—that our common sayings were more worth saying than they often are, and that our proverbial philosophy were more truly Christian philosophy!

This saying, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," is *peculiarly a saying of God*. Paul puts a, "Thus says the Lord" to this saying—"He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." To my mind, it invests these words with special power to my soul when I remember that it is God who speaks to me and to each of my fellow believers, and says, "*I—I* say this, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." As I repeat these words, they may not seem to you to have much power in them, but if the Holy Spirit will impress these simple syllables upon your heart, they will come to you full of the music of heaven and you will realize that it is GOD who says, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

Further, *these words are remarkably forcible in the original*. You probably have heard that in the Greek there are no less than five negatives. We cannot well translate them into English except in such language as that of the verse we were singing just now—

"The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes!
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!"

In our English language, two negatives would destroy each other, but it is not so in the Greek language—and the heaping up, as it were, of these denials on God's part of all thought of ever forsaking His people ought to be sufficient to satisfy even the most doubtful among us! If God has said, "I will not, *not*, NOT, no never forsake My people," we must believe Him! And we must chase away all thought of the possibility of the Lord's forsaking His servants, or leaving them to perish.

These words also derive much of their preciousness as a Christian proverb from the fact that *they relate to God Himself and His people*. They are God's own words and they speak concerning Himself—"*I* will not leave you." This is not merely a promise of deliverance out of trouble, or of the presence of angels to bear us up in their hands lest we dash our feet against a stone. God is not here promising us any temporal mercies, nor indeed any spiritual mercies by themselves, but He is speaking concerning *Himself*, who is the substance of all His own promises, but infinitely greater than the promises! And He says, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

And you will observe that *this promise ensures to us God's presence and God's help.* "I will never leave you"—that is, "I will always be with you"—"nor forsake you." The force of that promise is, "Being with you, I will never let you work alone. I will help you. I will not desert you as to My presence and I will not desert you as to My succor. I will be with you and I will help you in all that you have to do." This is a double promise and it is doubly sweet!

Besides that, *this promise wards off from us the most terrible calamity that could possibly occur to us*. It may help to make this promise increasingly precious to us if we think for a minute what would become of us if God did leave us or forsake us. Then, indeed, might the heavens be hung with blackness and the light of the sun be put out forever if God should leave us! The straight road to hell would be open before us and we should soon be going there if we were forsaken of God. It would have been far better to never have been born, or never to have known the way of life at all than, after all, to be deserted of God and be left to perish! Thank God that can never be the portion of anyone who has truly trusted in Him.

Recollect also that, *if He had not been God, He would have forsaken us long ago*. Our patience with our fellow creatures holds out but a very little while. But it is because God is God and, therefore, changes not, that we are not consumed. Have you not done a thousand times enough to have made Him forsake you if He were like the sons of men? I confess sorrowfully that I know I have. And if He could turn from His eternal purpose, and if His everlasting love could change, then surely He would long ago have cast my poor soul far away from His presence, to receive its well-deserved punishment! Is it not a blessed thing to think that the very thing that is most to be feared by any man can never happen to a believer, for God has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you"? You well deserve to be forsaken of God, but He will never leave you! He will deal with you in the way of grace, and not of justice. If He left you, you would utterly perish, but He will not and cannot do so—you are too dear to Him for His heart to ever turn away from you.

And while this promise averts from us the direst ill, *it secures to us the richest possible blessing*. To have God with us—is there anything beneath the sky—is there anything above the sky that is a choicer blessing than that? To be with God and to have God with us is the very heaven of heavens! And he who has this blessing here has a veritable heaven upon earth! No other blessings can ever be compared with this one. No mirth of them that make merry in the dance or of those who shout by reason of wine can ever be likened to the holy excitement and enthusiasm of a soul that is in the presence of God and knows that it is there! To be helped of God, which is the second part of the promise, is bliss indeed. What better help than that does anyone need? We are glad to be helped by our fellow Christians who have the ability to aid us—but to be helped of God is to have the treasury of heaven and the great deeps of divine omnipotence to draw upon! Whatever it is that we really need, we already have if God is with us, for, "no good thing will he withheld from them that walk uprightly." The best of blessings are secured to the man or woman to whom God has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

Then, beloved friends, *this is a promise that only God could give*. The husband whispers in the ear of his wife, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," but he forgets the hour of death when he must go from all below. The mother, as she presses her child to her bosom, says, "I will nev-

er leave you, nor forsake you," but she knows not how soon that little child may be an orphan to need another's care. Friend says to friend, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," forgetting how changeable human friendships are, for many are the hearts that have been torn asunder by vows, honestly whispered at the time, which have been forgotten through the lapse of years, or have been treacherously broken. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," is not a promise for mortal lips to utter! Transient beings like ourselves must not venture to say, "I will never do this or that," for, alas, we know not what we may do, or may not do! Even though we think we shall never prove to be traitors, yet traitors we may prove to be. Or if not traitors, our power may fail so that we shall be unable to do what we have promised. But when Jehovah says, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," it is a divine promise and He who utters it, divinely keeps it! 'Tis a fit promise for God to speak and 'tis a fit promise for God's servants to hear. You have lost many of those dear to you, but you have not lost your God! They have gone from you, one by one, "as star by star grows dim," but His light still shines on—and shall shine on forever!

Further, beloved, *this choice promise provides against all troubles*. We do not know what troubles may come upon us. Let us not think about them. They will come soon enough and it will be quite sufficient for us to trouble ourselves about them when they do come. But whatever they may be, "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." There may come to us great losses. Our riches may take to themselves wings and fly away—where we had large estates, we may be without a place where on to lay our head. But "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." We may be the victims of cruel slanders and under the pressure of those slanders those that used to respect us may avoid us—and former friends may be alienated from us. But "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." We may have to suffer great pain and the earthly physician may be unable to relieve us. But God's promise will still avail us, for, "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Sore sinking of heart may come upon us and all God's waves and billows may roll over us—but "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

In the course of our service for God, we may meet with many difficulties. Where we looked for helpers, we may find opponents. But let us still press onward, for, "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." We may have to move to distant lands, but "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Days of weakness may come to us, when the pillars of the house shall tremble, when they that look out of the windows shall be darkened and our teeth shall fail because they are few. The infirmities of old age may tell upon us, but "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." And with old age may come the loss of children and friends till we seem left, "like the last rose of summer," or the last sere leaf of the woods in the autumn—yet "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." And then shall come the chill river of death and

the gathering darkness of the night—but "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." And after that shall come another world where our spirit shall fly through tracks unknown and where new and wondrous scenes shall burst upon our astonished view! And, in the fullness of time, Christ shall come and the last great battle shall be fought—but whatever is to be, or is not to be—a Christian has nothing to fear, for, "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Come forth, you dragon bound with the chain and ravage the world again if so it must be! Rise, Antichrist, from your den amidst the seven hills! Pollute the churches once again if you can! Let war and bloodshed, famine and pestilence break loose again with unknown fury—but whatever happens, in time or in eternity, "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." "Therefore will we not fear, though the earth is removed, and though the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea." If the Lord of hosts is with us, what grounds can there be for fear? I know of no presumable dangers, no imaginable troubles, no conceivable difficulties through which, and out of which, and beyond which this text will not carry us—if by faith we grasp it—"He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

III. Now I must pass on to the next point. We have viewed these words as a quotation and as a proverbial saying. Now the practical outcome of this subject, according to the text, is that we are to VIEW THESE WORDS AS A MOTIVE FOR CONTENTMENT. "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have. For He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." That is to say, do not be grasping, do not be seeking to rake all the world to yourself, do not stretch out your arms, like seas, to enclose all the shore!

"But," says one, "I have so very little." You have as much as God has been pleased to give you, so be content with such things as you have. "I wish I had a great deal laid by," says another. Do you need more than this—"He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you"? "I wish I had a large regular income," says another. This looks pretty regular, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Someone asks, "But does that mean temporal things? "Do you think that God will let your body die of starvation when He promises to take care of your soul? There is an ancient promise for the man who walks righteously and speaks uprightly—"Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." And it shall still be so in this matter, also—the Lord will not leave you, nor forsake you if you trust in Him. It seems to me that the man who can claim this promise has his fortune made for him. If he had made large investments, they might turn out badly. If he possessed large estates, they might have to be sold. If he had wealthy friends, they might all forget him, for memories are not always very strong in the direction in which some people wish they might be. Many a man has fallen from the pinnacle of personal wealth to the pit of personal need—and many others who were waiting for dead men's shoes, have had to go barefoot to their own graves. It is poor confidence that trusts in men, but it is blessed confidence that rests in this glorious truth of God, "He has said, I will never leave you, nor for-

sake you." "Trust in the Lord, and do good: so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed."

But I know how it is with many of us—we cannot live by faith! We are so apt to think that something to see and to handle is so much more satisfactory than a promise of God. But is not that a species of blasphemy? Is not God's promise better, surer, more satisfactory, more ennobling, and more divine than anything that can be seen? O child of God, what more do you need than this gracious assurance, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you"? What though your wallet holds but little, if your God has said that He will fill it every morning and every evening, what more do you need? The children of Israel tried to store the manna, but it bred worms and stank, for they were to gather their daily supply morning by morning. There is many a man who has not been content to trust in God, so he has asked for something to look at and to handle—and he has had it and it has been a stench in his nostrils all his days! And he has never again been the man he was when he had not given way to an evil spirit of covetousness! I would rather be the poorest Christian in this world and live on this promise, than be the richest man that lives and not have this promise! And in saying this I am sure that I am speaking for every Christian here. Our true treasure is this, "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." That is our bank stock in the Bank of heaven! All else that we have is but the spending money of a traveler when he stays at an inn. But we are soon to be up and away to the land where our true treasure lies, where our God and our Father lives who has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you"!

IV. The last point is that THESE WORDS ARE TO BE VIEWED AS A REASON FOR COURAGE. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper and I will not fear what man shall do to me."

If God says to me, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," I never ought to be the victim of fear of man. Yet the fear of man that brings a snare is one of the curses of the lives of many professors. They are afraid of opposition and afraid of persecution—and although persecution is very mild nowadays compared with what it used to be, they are afraid of the public opinion in their little circle, afraid of the contemptuous remarks that will be made, afraid of the cold shoulder, afraid of the innuendoes and the dark hints, afraid to be thought to be one of those "vulgar people" who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and who desire to follow Him "wherever He goes." That horrible fear of losing the respect of ungodly people still operates upon thousands and tens of thousands who, if they only realized the truth of this promise, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," would, each one, say, "Let men think what they like of me. Let them call me a fool or a fanatic. Let them shun me, but what does it matter as long as You, my Lord, do not forsake me?"

So, my brothers and sisters in Christ, let every one of us, first of all, fling away from our souls, by the power of God's Spirit, all desire to grasp this world and make that our god! Let us abhor covetousness. If God

sends us wealth, let us reckon that we are only stewards of it and use it for His glory. If He does not send it to us, let us be quite content to be without it, for it brings a heap of trouble with it! Let us always keep the world under our feet and reckon it to be unworthy of a Christian's craving!

Then let us fling away all cowardice and boldly say that the Lord is our helper, so we will not fear what man may do to us. Accursed be the lips of any minister who dares to say, "I must not utter that unpopular truth of God for fear I should have the censure of the public press or public opinion." Shall such fear as that ever stop us from uttering what we believe to be true? If it does, how shall we be able to give in our account at the last great day? I reckon it to be my business, as a man sent of God, never for a moment to consider how you or anybody else will like what I have to say in my Master's name, nor whether it shall be approved by this man or that, whether he is eminent in rank or eminent as a critic! No, let him be what or who he may, if I have done my Master's work faithfully, it matters not to me whether the man praises it to the skies or condemns it to the bottomless pit! In the pulpit it does not concern me what man's judgment upon my message shall be—and you in the pews must never hesitate to take the consequences of doing what is right. Be just in your business, come what may of it! Be honest in your profession, carry out your principles and if that should involve loss, be content to lose! Whatever comes of it, be straight—as straight as though God had ruled you with His own divine hand and there was ne'er a bend or crack in your character! Press onward towards the goal of sincerity and purity—and may God strengthen you to reach it!

Though there are a thousand influences that might make a true man fall and cause a brave man to turn coward and might urge you to sell your principles, or at least to take off the sharp angles of them, do not do it—do not do it—by the love of God, do not do it! As "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you," do not leave your God, do not forsake his truth! Your fathers died rather than give up the gospel. Your ancestors fought for it on many a bloody field. We have cast away the sword of the warrior and we have done well, for we fight not with carnal weapons, but, by the grace of God we grasp "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God"—and with brave hearts and strong we stand steadfastly for the faith! And so will we stand until the truth shall win the day and the victory shall be unto the Captain of our salvation! Stand fast, brothers and sisters, in the name of God, and may the Lord bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 13:1-21.

This is a practical chapter at the close of this most instructive epistle.

Verse 1. *Let brotherly love continue.* The word, "continue," implies that the "brotherly love" exists. There are many things which might put an

end to it, so see to it that as far as you are concerned, it continues. Under all provocations and under all disappointments, "let brotherly love continue."

2, 3. *Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body*. And being likely, therefore, to take your own turn of suffering and to need the sympathy of your fellow Christians. Show sympathy to others while they need it and they will gratefully remember you when you are in bonds or in adversity.

4. *Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge*. And terrible will be their doom when God does judge them! They may think that because they sin in secret, they shall escape punishment—but it shall not be so. Whether men judge them or not, God *will* judge them.

5. *Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have: for He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you*. Therefore you have a grand reserve! What you have in possession is only a little spending money to use on the road to heaven, but "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." You may confidently fall back upon the providence of God in all times of straitness and need.

6-8. *So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today and forever.* [See Sermons #170, Volume 4—THE IMMUTABILITY OF CHRIST; #848, Volume 15—JESUS CHRIST IS IMMUTABLE and #2358, Volume 40—THE UNCHANGEABLE CHRIST—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] It is for your own benefit to remember in your prayers those who preach the Word of God to you, for what can they do without divine assistance and how can you be profited by them unless they are first blessed of God? Remember them, therefore.

9. *Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines*. Do not put yourself into every man's hand to let him play with you as he pleases. The fish that never nibbles at the bait is not likely to be caught by the hook—and he who will not give heed to "divers and strange doctrines" is not likely to be carried away in the net of heresy!

9. *For it is a good thing that the heart is established with grace, not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.* Some in the apostle's day made religion to consist almost entirely in observing certain rules as to what they ate and what they drank. "Be not so foolish," says Paul, "there is something better than that. Seek to have your heart established with divine grace."

10. *We have an altar, of which they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle*. Those who cling to the external and ceremonial observances

of religion have no right to the privileges which belong to those who come to the spiritual altar—they cannot share that secret.

11-14. *For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.* Then, my brother or sister, do not look for a continuing city *here*. Do not build your nest on any one of the trees of earth, for they are all marked for the axe—and they will all have to come down, and your nest too, if you have built upon them.

15. *By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.* [See Sermon #2048, Volume 34—A LIFE-LONG OCCUPATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] If you are believers in Christ, you are God's priests and this is the sacrifice that you are continually to offer—the fruit of your lips, giving thanks to God's name!

16. *But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.* We are to do good to others, to communicate [give] of our own good things to those who need them and to do this at some sacrifice to ourselves, "for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

17-19. *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.* You must have noted how often the apostle asks for the prayers of those to whom he is writing. So we are following a good example when we ask you to pray for us.

20, 21. *Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is ever pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.* [See Sermons #277, Volume 5—THE BLOOD OF THE EVERLASTING COVENANT; #1186, Volume 20—THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT and #1368, Volume 23—THE GOD OF PEACE AND OUR SANCTIFICATION—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

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"This do you, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes."
1 Corinthians 11:25, 26.

[Mr. Spurgeon preached many times upon these and the preceding verses. The following sermons have already been published—#2, Volume 1—"THE REMEMBRANCE OF CHRIST; #2307, Volume 39—THE GREATEST EXHIBITION OF THE AGE; #2595, Volume 44—WHAT THE LORD'S SUPPER SEES AND SAYS; #2638, Volume 45—THE RIGHT OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER; #2872, Volume 50—THE LORD'S SUPPER; #3099, Volume 54—THE DOUBLE FORGET-ME-NOT and #3130, Volume 55—"IN REMEMBRANCE"—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

IT would be a waste of time and would tend to mar our fellowship with Christ, were I to attempt an enumeration of the errors and misapprehensions into which men have fallen concerning the objective of the Lord's Supper. There are some communities of men among us—and they seem to be multiplying—who turn the communion table into an altar and convert the bread and wine, which are but a memorial, into the semblance of a sacrifice. I will only say that into their secret may we never enter and with their confederacy may we never be united, for their table is the table of idolatry, and their altar is little better than a sacrifice unto devils! Such offerings cannot be acceptable unto God, for those who observe them turn aside altogether from the simplicity of the truth of God unto the occult devices of Antichrist.

This simple feast of the Lord's Supper, consisting of the breaking and eating of bread, and the pouring forth and drinking of wine, has two objectives upon its very surface. It is intended *as a memorial of Christ*, and it is intended as a shouting or a manifestation of our faith in Christ, and of Christ's death, to others. These are the two objectives—"This do you in remembrance of Me"—and "Thus you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes."

I. First, then, WE VIEW THE SUPPER OF OUR LORD AS BEING A MEMORIAL OF HIM. And as such, *it is simple and very significant.*

How plainly it sets forth Christ's incarnation! We take the bread. That bread, upon which we feed and which becomes assimilated with our flesh, is the type of the incarnation of the Savior who veiled His glory in our human clay. The same bread broken becomes the type of that body of the Savior rent and torn with anguish. We have there the nails, the scourge, the cross—all set forth by that simple act of breaking the bread. And when the wine is poured out, there is no mystification, but rather

the disclosure of a mystery. It represents the blood of Him who took blood in order that He might become one blood with us, His incarnate people and who, "being found in fashion as a man," "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." So that just as the wine is pressed from the cluster and is poured forth into the cup, so was His blood pressed from Him in the wine press of divine wrath and poured forth that He might make atonement for the sin of men. A child, standing by the communion table, and asking the question of his father, "What does this ordinance mean?" might very soon be told, "My child, we break this bread to show how Jesus Christ's body suffered. And we pour out this wine in token that Jesus Christ poured forth his heart's blood for the sins of men." It is marvelous that men should have added so many things of their own invention to screen and veil this very simple and, therefore, very sublime ordinance! Brothers and sisters, let us come to those two symbols and here discern Christ's body broken for our sin and view His blood streaming forth for our redemption!

The type, however, is suggestive because it not only sets forth the suffering of Christ, but also the result of that suffering. It pictures the end as well as the means. That is to say, when I take that bread and eat it, and take that cup and drink from it, I bring to remembrance—to my own remembrance and the remembrance of those round about me—not merely the fact that Christ suffered, but that He suffered for me and that I had an interest in Him. Believe me, beloved, this truth of God is so simple, that while I speak, I can half fancy some of you saying, "Why does he not tell us something new?" But let me say to you, it is always a new truth and there is no truth which the Christian heart more readily forgets! Oh, that I could always feel that He loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*! I know He did—it is long since I had a doubt about it—but I do not always remember it. Going abroad into the world, how apt we are to let the remembrance of the Savior's love slip! The love of wife and husband follows us like our own shadow. The love of our dear child seems to encompass us like the atmosphere in which we live. But Jesus Christ is not visibly here, and therefore the remembrance of Him requires spirituality of mind—and we are carnal—too often but babes in grace, and so we forget His sufferings. And, worse still, we forget our interest in them! Oh, that I could have the cross painted on my eyeballs that I could not see anything except through the medium of my Savior's passion! O Jesus, set Yourself as a seal upon my hand and as a signet on my arm, and let me wear forever the pledge where it is conspicuous before my soul's eyes! Happy is that Christian who can say, "I scarcely need that memorial." But I am not such an one and I fear, my brothers and sisters, that the most of us need to be reminded by that bread and wine that Jesus died—and need to be reminded, by the eating and drinking of the same, that, He died *for us!*

I do not want to say a word tonight that shall have any oratory in it—any elocutionary display about it. I want to speak so plainly that those of you who are not Christians will say that it was a dry and dull sermon! I do not care what you say, or what you feel—if I can get each believer here to just think over this thought and remember it—"The Lord of glory loved *me* and gave Himself *for me*. That head which now is crowned with glory

was once crowned with thorns—and crowned with thorns *for me*. He whom all heaven adores, who sits upon the loftiest throne in heaven, once did hang upon the cross in extreme agony for me—*for me*." I know you are apt to think that He died for so many that He had not a special end to serve in redeeming you, but it has been very beautifully said that as the love of Christ is infinite, if you divide the infinite by any number you please, (I do not care what the divisor is, whether it is ten, or whether it is twenty million), the quotient is infinite and so, if the love of Jesus Christ, infinite as it is, can be supposed to be divided among us, we would, each one of, us have an infinite love! It is our arithmetic that teaches us this, but, oh, if we do but know by experience the infinite depth, the amazing abyss of the love of Jesus to each one of us, our souls will be comforted and rejoice with unspeakable joy! The sign, then, is significant.

But, in the next place, it is worthy of notice that *the memorial which we are about to celebrate tonight is a joint one*. There is something painful, but pleasing, when the father dies, for the children come together at the funeral and go together to his grave. Many family heartbreaks have been healed when the various members of the family have joined in a memorial to their father. The poor man's grave, especially, has much charm in it to me. Here come the sons and daughters and pool together their shillings to buy the grave and to buy the coffin. Often, over the rich men's grave, there is a squabble as to who shall share his wealth—but there is not any such quarrel in this case. The man has died penniless and John, Mary and Thomas all come—and they all see who can do the most in providing their father's grave. And if there is a tombstone, it is not only one who pays for it, but they all put their money together, so that Father's memorial may be shared by them all! How I like that thought! So in this ordinance, "we being many are one bread," and we being many are one cup. Brothers and sisters, I cannot do without you! If I want to celebrate the Lord's death, I cannot go into my chamber and take the piece of bread and the cup and celebrate the ordinance alone—I must have you with me! I cannot do without you! And you, the most spiritually minded of you, if you shut yourselves up in a cell and try to play the monk and the super excellent, cannot keep this ordinance! You must have fellowship with other believers! You must come down among the saints, for our Savior has given us this memorial which cannot be celebrated except jointly, by the whole of us together! You Christians must come together to break this bread and to drink of this cup. "This do *you*, as often as *you* drink it, in remembrance of Me." Did the Master foresee that we would be so apt to split up into sections? Did He know that we would be so apt to be individualized till we forgot to bear one another's burdens? And did He, therefore, while He made baptism the personal, solitary confession of faith, make this communion to be a united joint memorial in order that we might be compelled to come together—might by sweet constraint be driven to meet in the same place with one accord, or else be unable to make a memorial of His death?

It is a joint memorial. You have thought that over. Well, now, let us try and link hearts together. Are there any differences between us tonight? I

am not conscious, my beloved, of any difference with any one of you. If I were, I would seek grace to shake it off. And if you tonight are conscious of anything against any brother or sister with whom you will commune at the table, I pray you now to put it all away before you come here. Remember that you must eat and drink jointly with that very friend with whom you have offended now and, therefore, make up the offense, and so come together. God has forgiven you so much that you may well forgive your brother this little, supposing him to have offended you. Come, then, together, beloved—together let us keep the feast!

At the same time, I must not forget to remind you that *while a united memorial, it is most distinctly a personal one*. There can be no Lord's Supper, though we all meet, unless every man puts the bread into his mouth and unless each one of us, himself, drinks the wine. That cannot be done as a joint act. The bread is passed around and there must be a distinct reception on the part of every person here. So let us not lose ourselves in the crowd. We are drops in one great sea, but still we must remember that we are drops and, as no drop of the sea is without its salt, so let no one among us be without the salting influence of true communion with Jesus. Dear friend, I cannot commune for you and you cannot commune for me. If you are all happy, I shall be glad, but it will be little benefit to me unless I can see the Savior, too, and so will it be with each one of you. Therefore let me pray you to cry unto God to give divine grace to you to now *personally* remember the Lord Jesus Christ—His love for you, His death for you, His rising for you. "He loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*!" let that thought be uppermost in your mind just now.

Yet further, I must not fail to remind you that *as a memorial of Christ, while it is very solemn, it is singularly happy*. Christ has ordained, as a memorial of His death, what? Why, a feast! Not a funeral, not a meeting together to sing dirges over His mangled body, or to go to a grave to weep! That might have been a memorial, but we have a better one—we have a happy one! It is very significant that after supper they sang a hymn. Singing *then*? Oh, yes, singing! Joy becomes a feast and joy is to attend our recollection of the woes of Jesus. The position which we ought to occupy at the Lord's Table also suggests that Christ meant us to be happy. Did He ordain that we should kneel? No, there is not a hint of it! Did He intend us to stand? There is not a syllable about it! How was the Lord's Supper originally received? The guests reclined around the table, leaning their heads in each other's bosoms! It was the easy posture of the ordinary feaster in Oriental nations. The most proper posture for us, seeing that we could not well lie along, is to sit in the easiest posture conceivable. Choose for yourselves—never mind what people say about reverence! Familiarity with Jesus is the highest reverence! Put your body at the communion table into the easiest possible position in which you can rest and you have then reached Christ's ideal.

It is a feast where you are to be perfectly at ease, in contrast, mark you, with the Passover. There they stood, with their loins girt about, with their hats on and with their staves in their hands—and they ate like men in haste who had to go through the wilderness! Now, we have gone through the wilderness! We who have believed have entered into rest—our Passover has been eaten. We fear not the destroying angel—he has

passed over us. We are out of Egypt, we have entered into Canaan and though the Canaanite is still in the land, we are driving him out. We are not now keeping the Passover with haste, and fear, and confusion—it is the Lord's Supper of rest, and joy, and peace! For, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." It is a happy memorial! Joy becomes the face of everyone who shall come to the table tonight, or at any other time!

Well now, brothers and sisters, if to remember Christ is the objective of the Lord's Supper, then you will not have come here to any purpose unless you remember Him! So I pray you to put away every other thought. Have you doctrinal difficulties? Leave them till tomorrow! Have you a sick child, or does business go amiss? Well you will not relieve your cares by violating this sacred hour. Let these burdens be cast on Him who cares for you! One thing you have to do with, it is Jesus Christ crucified—crucified for you, received by you. Now blot out the other stars and let one star alone shine in the sky—the star of Bethlehem! Bid farewell to every love but the love of Jesus and to every fellowship but fellowship with Him. Ask the Lord to take your heart as an arrow and fit it to His bow—and shoot it right up to where Christ is in heaven. "Set your affection on things above." Many people misquote that, "Set your *affections*." Paul wrote no such thing! "Set your affection"—tie your affections into one bundle and make them *one affection*—and then set it upon things above. Let your whole heart lie in the bosom of the Savior. I pray the Master that we may not, one of us, hold back—not even you, Mrs. Much-Afraid, nor you, Little-Faith. Nor you, Ready-to-Halt—may you forget your crutches and may you now remember only Him who is the all in all of both the strong and the weak—

"The strong, the feeble and the weak,
Are one in Jesus now"

and let them know it as they sit here and remember Him!

II. The second objective of this communion supper is THE SHOWING OF CHRIST'S DEATH TILL HE COMES.

"Till He comes." I must not say anything about that except that He will come! And I think that ought to be enough for Christians. To my great sorrow, I had sent to me this last week, two or three copies of a tract purporting, according to the title page to have been written by myself, prophesying the coming of the Lord in the year 1866. Now, you may expect to hear of me being in Bedlam [London insane asylum] whenever by my tongue or my pen, I give countenance to such rubbish! The Lord may come in 1866, and I shall be glad to see Him, but I do not believe He will. And one reason why I don't believe He will, I have told you before—it is because all these false two-penny-halfpenny prophets say that He will. If they said He would not, I would begin to think He would, but inasmuch as they are all crying as one man that He will come in 1866, or 1867, I am inclined to think He will not come at any such time! It seems to me that there are a very great many prophecies which must be fulfilled before the coming of Christ—which will not be fulfilled in the next 12 months. And I prefer, beloved, to stand in the position of a man who knows neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man comes—

always looking for His appearing, but never interfering with those dates and figures which seem to me to be proper amusement for young ladies who have nothing to do, and who take to them instead of reading novels. And for certain divines who have exhausted their stock of knowledge about sound doctrine and, therefore, make up and gain a little ephemeral popularity by shuffling texts of Scripture as the Norwood gypsies shuffled cards in days gone by! Leave the *prophets* to divide the *profits* which they get from simpletons—and as for you, watch for Christ's coming, whether it shall be today, or tomorrow—and set no limits, and no dates, and no times! Only work while it is called today. Work so that when He comes, He may find you, as faithful servants, ready to come in to the wedding with Him. "Till He comes," then, the Lord's Supper is to be a showing forth of His death!

Let us just notice how we show it forth.

I think *we show it to ourselves*. The Lord's Supper may be celebrated without any spectators. It should be in public where it can be, but if there are none to look on, it may be otherwise. In Venice, in Milan, in Paris and in other cities where Romanism prevails, five or six of us have met together in our room at our hotel and we have had the true Lord's Supper there, though there were none to look on. And probably if there had been, in some cities where we have partaken of it, we might have been amenable to the law! 'Tis a showing forth of Christ's death to ourselves. We see the bread broken and see the wine poured out, and we ourselves see here, in symbol, Christ crucified! And we see as before our eyes, when we eat and drink, our interest in the sacrifice offered upon Calvary!

But next, *we show it to God*. We do, in effect, say before the all witnessing Jehovah, "Great God, we break this bread in Your august presence in token that we believe in Your dear Son. And we drink this wine here before You, You searcher of hearts, to solemnly say to You again, 'We are Yours, bought with Jesus' blood and washed clean in it.'" It is a showing of Christ's death to God!

Moreover, *it is a showing of it to our fellow Christians*. We say to those who sit with us, "Come, brothers and sisters, let us join together. We join with you, why don't you join with us?" We say to you, 'We love Him,' and you say the same to us. Together we clasp hands and renew our Christian fellowship with one another through renewing our fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ. We do, as it were, teach one another, admonish one another and comfort one another when we thus show forth the Lord's death.

But besides showing forth Christ's death to ourselves, to our God and to our fellow Christians, *we also show it to the world*. We do, in effect, say to the world, "Here we show that we believe in Him whom you crucified. He who went outside the camp, the man of Nazareth, despised and rejected of men, is our Master. You may trust in your philosophies—we trust in Him. You may rely upon your own merits, sacrifices and performances, but as for us, His flesh and His blood are our dependence. As we eat this bread and drink of this cup, Christ Jesus is set forth to you as being all in all to us—the bread which sustains our spiritual life and the wine which gives us joy, sacred exhilaration and delight."

And then, in addition to saying this to the world, *we also say it to sinners* who may happen to be present, and to whom it may be blessed. How often within these walls has God blessed the breaking of bread to the conversion of souls! Let me refresh the memories of such. Some of you had been looking on from these galleries—you dared not come down with the people of God, but you did not want to leave. And so you sat and you looked on. And your mouths were watering, not for the bread and wine, but for Christ! You wanted Him and gradually you were like the robins in the cold wintry days. You first, as it were, tapped at the church's windowpane very gently and you were afraid, so you stepped back again. But the entire world was cold and there was not a crumb for you anywhere else. Then you saw the open window of a gracious promise, "He that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out" and, pressed by absolute necessity, you came to Jesus! You came into the family circle of Jesus Christ's people and you feasted, and tonight you are glad!

Well, dear friends, as we come together at the table, we will be remembering any among the onlookers who are not yet brought to Christ. We will think of them and we will breathe this prayer, "Lord, save them! As we show forth Christ, help them to see Him. May they say, 'Yes, His body was broken for sinners, His blood was poured out for sinners, so we will trust Him.'" And if they trust Him, they shall be saved!

Well, now, may we accomplish these two designs—to remember Christ and to show His death. We can only do it by His Spirit. Let us, with bowed head, ask for that Spirit. Let us seek that we may worship Christ in spirit and in truth while we receive the outward symbols of His suffering.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 17; 18:1-9.

Chapter 17:1. *These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Your Son; that Your Son also may glorify You.* Christ's great intercessory prayer begins with His appeal to His Father to glorify His Son. Christ knew all that He would have to suffer during that "hour" to which He had looked forward to from eternity, but His eyes could see beyond the gross with all its shame, the crown with all its glory! The Son being glorified, He would also glorify His Father and there is a wondrous glory that comes to the Father through the death of His Son upon the cross.

2. *As You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.* [See Sermon #566, Volume 10—GENERAL AND YET PARTICULAR—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Some people seem unable to see that there is perfect harmony between the general and the particular aspects of Christ's atonement. As the one mediator between God and men, He has absolute power over all men, to do with them as He wills, yet that power has a special relation to those whom His Father gave Him before the foundation of the world. And they are those who come to Him in accord-

ance with His declaration, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and He that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

3. *And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.* [See Sermon #2396, Volume 41—ETERNAL LIFE!—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] So that the only way to obtain eternal life is to know God the Father and God the Son—and the best way to know them is to ask God the Holy Spirit to teach us what is revealed concerning them in the sacred Scriptures which He inspired holy men of old to write.

4, 5. *I have glorified You on the earth: I have finished the work which You gave Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify You Me with Yourself with the glory which I had with You before the world was.* As Christ had carried out His Father's will and done the work He had been sent to do, it was but right that He should go back to the glory which He had, for a season, voluntarily laid aside. You notice that although He had not then died upon the cross, He was so certain that He would there complete His great mediatorial work that He spoke of it as being already "finished."

6. *I have manifested Your name unto the men which You gave Me out of the world: Yours they were, and You gave them to Me; and they have kept Your Word.* No one but Christ could or would have borne such a testimony concerning His fickle, feeble followers. Happy will it be for us if He can also say concerning us who profess to be His disciples, "They have kept Your Word."

7, 8. *Now they have known that all things whatever You have given Me are of You. For I have given unto them the words which You gave Me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from You, and they have believed that You did send Me.* You see how the truth reached these disciples. The Father gave the words to His Son in His mediatorial capacity. And He gave those words to His disciples—and they received them and believed that Christ was indeed the sent one from the Father.

9, 10. *I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me; for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I am glorified in them.* [See Sermon #2331, Volume 39—CHRIST'S PASTORAL PRAYER FOR HIS PEOPLE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] See what perfect union there is between the Father and the Son, and note their mutual relationship to the chosen people, "They are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine."

11, 12. *And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name: those that You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled.* So it is clear that Judas was not among those who were given to Christ by His Father—if He had been, He also would have been "kept."

13. *And now come I to You.* Christ looked beyond all that was to happen to Him before He could return to His glory and, as He saw His Father waiting to welcome Him, He cried "And now come I to You." These might be appropriate words in the mouth of a dying believer: "And now come I to You."

13, 14. *And these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Your Word, and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* Never did anyone more thoroughly mix with men than Christ did—and never had anyone greater sympathy with human beings than He had—yet everyone knows that He never was "of the world." He was distinct from all who were round about Him and He says that His disciples were as He was. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Christ's people have a life that others have not. They have a relationship to God that others have not. They are swayed by motives which others understand not and they are journeying onward toward a perfection to which others do not even desire to attain! So they are not of the world and the world treats them as speckled birds—and hates them even as it hated their Lord and Master.

15. *I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from evil.* [See Sermons #47, Volume 1—CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR HIS PEOPLE; #2355, Volume 40—CHRIST'S NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE PRAYER and #2703, Volume 46—THE PRESERVATION OF CHRISTIANS IN THE WORLD—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Christ did not pray that there might be monasteries and nunneries where His servants might be shut away from the world, nor even that His followers might die in early youth and go home to Heaven! He prayed that, remaining in the world for gracious purposes—to be its salt and its light—they might themselves be kept from the evil that is in the world. It would be a dreadful thing, indeed, if the chosen people of God were to be overcome by the world. So Christ prayed that His Father would keep them from the evil, for He well knew that they could not be kept from it by any power that was not divine. There is no less power needed for the preservation of a believer than for his regeneration. The sustaining of a saint is a constant miracle which can only be worked by God Himself.

16, 17. *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Your truth: Your Word is truth.* [See Sermon #1890, Volume 32—OUR LORD'S PRAYER FOR HIS PEOPLE'S SANCTIFICATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Some men tell us that the truth of God is *in* the word, but that the word is not the truth. I read, the other day, that we might regard the Bible as a casket which contained the jewel of the truth, but was not itself the jewel. Christ did not talk in that fashion, for He said to His father, "Your Word is truth." This shows that God's Word is not merely the casket of truth, but is the truth itself!

18. *As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.* They are sent ones, even as Christ was *the* sent one. As He is the Christ, they are Christians, anointed with the same anointing as He Himself is and they should endeavor to be in all respects missionaries to the world, even as Christ was God's great missionary to the lost.

19. *And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.* "I set Myself apart wholly for them, that they also may be set apart for holy uses."

20. *Neither pray I for these alone.* "For these who are already saved by My Word."

20. *But for them also which shall believe on Me through their word.* And so His blessed arm encircled not only the converts gathered to Him by His own personal ministry, but also those who should, in later days, be converted under His servants' ministry! And it always seems to me to have been great condescension on His part to have said, "I pray for them also which shall believe on Me through *their* word." We should have expected that He would have said, "through *My* Word," and indeed, it is His Word that leads sinners to repent and to believe! Yet Christ puts this honor upon those who speak His Word out of the fullness of their hearts. They have by *experience* made it their own, so He calls it theirs and gives them this honorable position as the messengers of the gospel of salvation.

21. *That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that You have sent Me.* I wish that we could see more of this blessed unity, yet it does exist, even if we cannot see it. Wherever there is any true spiritual life—it matters not how much it may be marred by denominational divisions—there is and there always will be, an essential unity. All Christians are one family in Christ. I do not mean all who *call themselves Christians*, but all who really are believers in Christ. The inner life is one, the source of that life is one, the nourishment of that life is one and the end of that life is one—so that all who possess it must be one—one in Christ and one with one another, even as Christ is one with the Father.

22, 23. *And the glory which You gave Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one.* That is the real secret of the saints' unity—"I in them," together with the everlasting union of Christ Jesus with the Father—"and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one."

23. *And that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.* [See Sermon #1472, Volume 25—THE GLORY, UNITY AND TRIUMPH OF THE CHURCH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This is a great deep—the words are very simple and clear—but their meaning is unfathomable. Is it really true that the Father has loved His chosen ones as He has loved His only-begotten Son? It is such a wondrous thing that one might be willing to lie awake at night to meditate upon the amazing truth here revealed in our Savior's Words—"You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me."

24. *Father, I will that they also whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.* [See Sermons #188, Volume 4—THE REDEEMER'S PRAYER and #1892, Volume 32—WHY THEY LEAVE US—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Some foolish folk talk about the saints being put away for a while into some purgatorial "limbo" in order that they may be made ready for heaven but Christ speaks not so! He says, "I will that they…be with Me where I am." We care not to answer curious questions about the disembodied state—it is enough for us that Christ knows all and that we shall be with Him forever!

What shall be the occupation of those who are with Christ? "That they may behold My glory." There will be something worth looking at, something to be delighted with forever and ever! "The glory which You have

given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world." So God must have loved His people before the foundation of the world, for He has loved them as He has loved His Son! There was no beginning and there shall be no end to the Father's love to His people! He says to each one of them, "I have loved You with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn You." Here are waters to swim in—plunge into them and revel in the bliss they are meant to convey to all who are in Christ Jesus!

25-26. *O righteous Father, the world has not known You: but I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me. And I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it: that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.* [See Sermons #1378, Volume 23—THE RIGHTEOUS FATHER KNOWN AND LOVED and #1667, Volume 28—"LOVE AND I"—A MYSTERY—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] How rich is this language! How musical! Surely, never did any human poem match this peerless prose of the divine teacher! And now, what a descent it is as we pass on to the next scene in His life!

John 18:1, 2. *When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where was a garden, into the which He entered, and His disciples. And Judas also, which betrayed Him, knew the place.* [See Sermon #2767, Volume 48—JESUS IN GETHSEMANE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] He was familiar with the Master's place of retirement for private prayer and he had, doubtless, heard the Master pray there. Yes, and many a Judas knows the place where the saints meet for worship and knows the communion table, too, and knows some of the most hallowed gatherings of God's people where they pour out their hearts in private prayer. And the pity is that knowing all that—the ancient Judas and the modern one do not savingly know the Master Himself!

2. *For Jesus ofttimes resorted there with His disciples*. If ever any man might have lived without prayer, it was our Lord Jesus Christ! His humanity was perfect, yet He abounded in prayer. And the nearer we grow to Christian perfection the more shall we pray. I heard of one who said that she was so perfectly acquiescent in the will of God that she had left off praying, she had got beyond that! What a fearful delusion! God save all of us from ever falling into it! Here is one who could say from His heart, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as You will." He expressed in prayer His perfect acquiescence in His Father's will. Did Christ, our Lord and Master pray so, and will any who profess to be His followers speak so presumptuously as to say that they can live without prayer? God forbid!

3. *Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons*. What strange paraphernalia they brought with them to the Garden of Gethsemane—"lanterns" to show them the way to the Sun of Righteousness. "Torches" with which to find out the bright Morning Star and, "weapons" with which to overcome the Lamb of God, who had nothing to oppose them with but His own innocence!

4. *Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth and said unto them, Whom do you seek?* It is a wonderfully suggestive thought that Jesus knew everything that would happen to Him. Martyrs and other sufferers for Christ's sake have had some measure of foresight of what they had to endure, but none of them could have so exquisite a foretaste of everything as our blessed Lord had. He knew it all—every single atom of pain, anguish and heartbreak. He knew it all, yet He calmly "went forth" to meet it and said to those who came to drag Him away to His death, "Whom do you seek?"

5, 6. *They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said unto them, I am He. And Judas also, which betrayed Him, stood with them. As soon, then, as He had said unto them, I am He, they went backward and fell to the ground.* "Jesus said unto them, I Am," as though appropriating to Himself the name of Jehovah. And "they went backward, and fell to the ground," astounded and confounded! Even though He restrained His omnipotence, He claimed the omnipotent name, I AM, and before the majesty of that name they prostrated themselves upon the ground!

7-9. *Then asked He them again, Whom do you seek? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am He: if therefore you seek Me, let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, Of them which You gave Me have I lost none.* [See Sermons #2368, Volume 40—THE LIVING CARE OF THE DYING CHRIST and #2616, Volume 45—CHRIST'S CARE OF HIS DISCIPLES—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] That was a very gracious saying of Christ's, "If therefore you seek Me, let these go their way." This is what Christ says on His people's behalf to death and to the law and the justice of God. And though this saying does not excuse the disciples' flight, it does make some sort of apology for their going away, every man to his own home. Christ knew that they would be safer there. One of them followed Him afar off instead of going his way—and you know what came of it. There is a time for openly following Christ, but there is a time when Jesus says, "Let these go their way." So, right to the end He takes care of His sheep and bids them scatter for a while now that the sword is about to enter their Shepherd's heart.

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THE LOWER COURTS
NO. 3152

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"For if our heart condemns, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, then have we confidence toward God."
1 John 3:20, 21.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon, on verse 21, is #1855, Volume 31—
WHAT IS THE VERDICT?—
Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THE fault of a very large number of persons is that they will not lay spiritual things to heart at all, but treat them in a very superficial manner—or, if they exercise any judgment concerning them, it is of the most superficial kind. Now this is very foolish because, to say the least, the soul is of some value. And if men lay to heart the loss of their bodily health or of their estate, much more ought they to lay to heart anything which concerns their soul. It is very wicked as well as very foolish because, in refusing to lay spiritual matters to heart, we virtually tell the God who made us that He is of no account to us, that we are quite indifferent to His being, to His character, or to His commands. It is telling Him that we do not desire to be obedient to Him and that if we have been disobedient to Him, we do not trouble ourselves about that. It is also as dangerous as it is foolish and wicked to be unconcerned about spiritual matters, for God will not be trifled with and, one of these days, those who would not lay eternal things to heart will find their souls full of anguish—and with remorse they will be visited for this lightness of theirs. Whereas, today, like those of old who were invited to the wedding of the king's son, they make light of it and go their way to their farm or to their merchandise, there will come a day when they would give all their farms and their merchandise if they might have but another hour's respite, another invitation of mercy and another opportunity to seek and find the Savior. I do pray that if any here have been among those who do not lay to heart the things that concern their immortal souls, they may not any longer be allowed to remain in the company of such vain and sinful persons, but may come out from that congregation of the foolish and begin to lay to heart the things which make for their eternal peace.

Then, beloved friends, there is another class of persons, very much superior to those of whom I have spoken, who nevertheless make a mistake of another kind. They *do* lay the things of God to heart and they are

constantly weighing themselves in the balances of conscience. They look within again and again—they are not afraid of heart searching—indeed, they spend the most of their time in that stern occupation. Am I about to blame these friends? I must answer, "No and yes." I will not blame them for what they do, for they do the right thing—but I shall blame them for what they leave undone! Namely this—they forget that the tribunal of conscience, though a very important one, is not the supreme court and that, although it is well to try matters before the heart to see whether it condemns or acquits, yet there is another court, far higher than the court of the human heart—"God is greater than our heart, and knows all things." There are some good Christian people who are always distressed because they never take their cases into the supreme court and, on the other hand, I fear that there are some ungodly professors who are always presumptuously at ease because they have been satisfied with the verdict of the lower court, which is very liable to err in its judgment—and so they have never presented their case before the great judge who cannot by any means make a mistake.

I am going to speak of these two courts. First, of the lower court of the heart or conscience, and then of the higher court where He presides who is "greater than our heart, and knows all things." In speaking upon this subject, I shall mention four forms of verdict which may be given in the court of the heart. The first is *a correct verdict against ourselves.* The second is *an incorrect verdict against ourselves,* (the first verse of our text applies to both of these). The third is *a correct verdict of acquittal,* (that is in the second verse of our text). And then, lastly, I will say something about *an incorrect verdict of acquittal*, which, perhaps, our heart may sometimes give.

I. First, then, the apostle speaks of A CORRECT VERDICT AGAINST OURSELVES—"If our heart condemns us."

There are some persons whose hearts justly condemn them and the voice of conscience is, in them, the voice of God. The echo of the divine sentence, "Depart, you cursed," is heard by them in the halls of conscience before the voice of God has spoken it—strangely contrary to echoes among men, which always *follow* the voice. Conscience is saying, "You will be driven, O man, from the presence of God!" Now, in this case, the court of conscience sits under the King's arms with the marks of divine authority displayed above its head. And conscience sitting thus as a judge, judges rightly when it judges by the Word of God. Righteous judgment must not be according to man's whim or fancy, but according to the supreme law of God—and the verdict of conscience is worth nothing unless it is so formed. The charge against the culprits is that they have broken God's law and, in the case of many of them, that they have also rejected God's mercy. They have offended against the law and the gospel!

There stands a prisoner at the bar and there sits conscience as the judge. And over its head I see tokens of God's authority permitting conscience to judge him! The first witness that is called against the prisoner

is memory. I put to it certain questions. "Memory, what have you to say concerning the life of this man? Has he kept God's law?" And Memory answers truthfully, "No." "Has he then violated it?" "Yes, thousands of times." "How long is it since he began to violate it?" "From a child." "Has he continued to do so?" "Yes, to this very hour." "Has he not repented of his sin and craved forgiveness from God?" "No, he has pretended to repent. He has had twitches of conscience—he has been alarmed at times, but he has hardened his heart and gone back to his sin and done scorn to the Spirit of God." "Memory, can you tell me how often the prisoner has broken God's law?" "I cannot. Count the stars of the sky, or the sand by the seashore— only then can you know how often he has sinned." "Against which of the commands has he offended?" "Against them all." "Can you give us some instances?"

I will not ask Memory to expose any of you before this congregation, but I will ask your own memories to charge each one of you with your own sins whatever they may have been—that sin of licentiousness, that piece of trickery in trade, that angry thought, that hard word, that oppression of the innocent, that tempting of another to sin, that ruin of another in body and soul, that putting down of conscience on such and such a night when he struggled with you and would have had you cease from sin—that wicked resolve not to be melted down under a certain especially earnest sermon, that desperate determination not to feel the force of divine love even when it came so near to you as to graze you! Who of all the unpardoned sinners in the world has not some special sins to remember, to blush over and to weep over, yes, with tears of blood if that were possible? Ah, Memory, if you should tell all that you have recorded, your story would be too terrible for us to hear and we would have to close the court, or bid some withdraw out of hearing, for you would have much to tell which would not be fit for their ears to hear!

Another witness is called, for it would not be right to condemn a man upon the evidence of only one witness, however excellent that witness might be. So I call the man's own knowledge into the witness box, and examine it. "What do you know, man, concerning yourself? Are you at this moment a lover of God?" "No," he says. "Are you at this moment one who loves Christ? Are you at this hour one who desires to be reconciled to your Maker? Do you desire to glorify God? Do you desire to overcome all sin and to live in perfect holiness?" The answer is a negative in every case and the judge hears this. It is not merely what the man has done, but what the man is—not merely what he was yesterday, or in his youth, but what he is today. He is still an enemy to his God and he has no love to his Maker! He is still content to lead an unholy life. So in the mouth of these two witnesses his guilt is established.

But there are witnesses for the defense, so let them be heard. These are usually two—self-love and self-esteem. The man pleads that he is no worse than others! Yet a thief would not be allowed to escape punishment if he pleaded, "I am no worse a thief than my brother thieves." The

man next says that he has done many good things, as if the keeping of one law of God would be any excuse for having broken another. This is as if the thief should plead before the judge that he was not a drunk, or if he had committed burglary, that he had not been a murderer. Would this be accepted as an excuse? Then the man pleads that he has attended a number of outward religious ceremonies—which is just as if a thief should say that he washed his hands every morning and took care to shave himself at certain intervals. What would all that have to do with the offense laid to his charge? If those things were right things for him to do, he did well in doing them, but they could make no atonement for his offenses! Men will sometimes plead that, after all, it was more their misfortune than their fault that they fell into any sin at all. Yet man never considers such an excuse as that in reference to wrongs done to his fellow creatures—but the law deals with the offenses as having been willfully committed—and even so does God.

The court, after having heard these two lying witnesses, whose testimony is worth nothing, considers its verdict and the heart condemns the prisoner at the bar. Now what says the text? "If our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things." So, if any man or woman here feels self-condemned, how much more must such an one be condemned by God! If you feel uneasy even now, what cause for uneasiness must there be in prospect of the just judgment of God! If your bleary eyed conscience, which never yet half opened its eyes, has condemned you, what guilt must God see in you! If conscience has decided against you, knowing only half—no, perhaps not a millionth part of your criminality, how certainly will the unerring judge of all the earth, who knows all things, decide against you! I would like to make those four words ring again and again in your ears, "God knows all things." Then He knows the sins that you have forgotten, or that you wish you could forget! Well, even if you have done so, they are fresh in His unfailing memory. Perhaps you cry, in the bitterness of your agony, "Cursed be the day wherein I committed them! Oh, for fountains of water to wash out the damning spots! But though I should redden the Atlantic and with the crimson ocean try to remove the accursed spots of sin, they would still remain! And even though I could not see them, yet still that eye which through the murky night looks down on all and sees as through the brightest day, that eye still sees my sins."

"God knows all things." That is, He knows all about your sins of omission, the good things that you have not done, the righteous acts which you have failed to perform. He knows what your motives have been. He knows how that apparently good action of yours was based upon sheer selfishness—how your pretended religiousness was, after all, only varnished hypocrisy! O sirs, unless this blessed book is all fiction, there are some of you who are great fools, for while you are condemning yourselves, you are calmly sitting down in prospect of the eternal judgment as if you thought that God would acquit you! You have lost the case in the lower court, where the judge is partial and would give a verdict in your

favor if possible. How, then, will you dare to stand in the higher court, where the verdict must go against you if your case remains as it now is? "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" "If our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things." God grant that these words may not be forgotten, but may they be words that shall awaken some here whom God intends to bless!

II. Now I must pass on to the second point—AN INCORRECT VERDICT AGAINST OURSELVES.

Sometimes our heart condemns us, but in doing so, it gives a wrong verdict. And then we have the satisfaction of being able to take the case into a higher court, for "God is greater than our heart, and knows all things." This is giving another sense to the passage and almost all the great expositors say that there are two senses here—the legal sense and the evangelical sense. This evangelical sense was that which Luther was so bold in proclaiming. I will give you the meaning of the text in this way. The question before our heart is—are we Christians or not? Have we believed in Christ or not? Conscience takes knowledge of all our imperfections, failings, shortcomings—and says—"No, the man is not a Christian. He is guilty of such and such sins." And many a dear child of God, yes, and some of the best of God's children, have often had a verdict in the court of their own conscience which has been adverse to their hopes—the reason being that their conscience has been cognizant of only one side of the case, or they have forgotten some great and important truth which ought to have been mentioned before the court—and then its verdict would have been different.

I may have here many children of God who are condemned by their own conscience. And if I only looked within my own heart, it would condemn me. If I had to bring the evidences of my salvation from my prayers, my preaching, or my daily actions, my heart would condemn me! New evidence is sometimes brought into court which completely changes the aspect of the case. I daresay you have sometimes been a juror and you would not like to tell your brother juror how many times you have changed your mind while you have heard the evidence. But if you have listened to it attentively, I expect you have had half a dozen different opinions during the trial. You have heard the whole case against the prisoner and you have said to yourself, "He's certainly guilty." And you have thought, "Ah, Mr. Foreman, you shall have my verdict against him!" Then some evidence is brought which throws more light upon the case. And then something else is said in favor of the prisoner and you have said, "Ah, I was too much in a hurry," and before the whole case was finished, you have been quite satisfied that the man was innocent! It is just so with our heart—it condemns a man when it has only heard half the evidence. But happily, "God is greater than our heart, and knows all things."

Here is the case. This man, a believer in Jesus Christ, has been guilty of all these sins. He admits that he has. They are very many and very

black, so it is a clear case that he should be condemned. No, it is not, for there is a circumstance that has not been mentioned yet. It is true that the man was deeply in debt to the law of God, but his debt has been paid for him by his glorious surety—and there is a receipt for it signed by God, Himself! Does not that alter the case? The debt is proved, it is true—but, as soon as the debt is proved, the receipt is produced to show that the debt has been discharged! The Christian comes into court and says, "I admit my guilt, but I plead that Christ suffered in my place. I confess my sin, but I also claim that it was laid upon Christ and though my heart condemns me, God is greater than my heart and He does not condemn me, for He looks upon His dear Son and sees me in Him, "accepted in the Beloved."

A man is tried for a certain crime, but his counsel assures the court the man who committed that crime is dead and that the prisoner at the bar is not that man at all. A reliable witness is produced who testifies that he knew the other man well and that he saw him dead and buried. And another trustworthy person declares that the prisoner at the bar is a different man altogether. So it is with us today—every true believer in Christ can say, "I was verily guilty, but I died with Christ and was buried with Him and now I am a new creature in Christ Jesus! Old things have passed away and all things have become new. I am no longer what I once was, for I have been begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The case against the prisoner stands as it did before and the heart was right in condemning him—but now there is more light thrown on the subject and he can confidently ask, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." Through the death and resurrection of Christ and our union to Him, so that they are counted as *our* death and resurrection, we have passed into a state of justification! And through the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ, the sin which was laid at our door has ceased to be and we are accounted righteous through the righteousness of Christ! So that, "if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things."

Have you ever had a battle (I know you have, if you are a true child of God), with your own evidences? It is usually very poor work to turn over your own evidences. I believe that lawyers enjoy poring over musty old deeds because there are generally six and eight pence's or guineas to come to them as the result. But I cannot say that I am much interested in "rights, easements, inherited properties," and so on—and the experience of reading an old deed is very much like the experience of turning over your own evidences. You say, "I am a man of prayer." But what kind of prayer was it? Why, your thoughts were wandering all the time you were praying! "But," you say, "I do love God." "Ah," cries the devil, "and a precious kind of love it is! It needs a microscope to see it if there is any love there at all!" "Ah, but I do long after holiness." "You have nobody to bear witness to that but yourself," says the devil, "for as soon as a sin

looks attractive to you, though you do not actually go to it, you know that your heart goes after it." "But my faith is fixed on Christ." "Ah, but where does your unbelief go? You would like to trust to yourself, after all, if you dared to do so!" Satan can generally beat us in an argument and when our own conscience also condemns us, the best thing is to go straight away to the Court of the King's Bench and say, "The devil is too strong for us, so we will go where we can leave our case in the hands of our great advocate who is more than a match for Satan."

Then, beloved, God can often see in His people the good which they cannot see in themselves. And I believe He likes best those people who think least of themselves. When you look into the mirror, do you see a very lovely face? Ah, then you have never really seen yourself! But if you look into the mirror and see yourself defiled and filthy—and then see the change that Christ works in you—you are one of those whom God loves because He loves those who are contrite in spirit and broken in heart—and who think little of themselves.

"Well," says one, "I never had a doubt about my state. I have always felt sure that I was all right." Then, my friend, if you never had a doubt about yourself, allow me to doubt for you. Ah, beloved, it is not high thoughts that prove us to be Christians—it is lying humbly in the dust before the mercy seat that is one of the sure signs that we are the children of God! So although your heart condemns you, as my own heart and conscience have condemned me a thousand times, I trust that you can yet say with me—

"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."

Savior, I will trust You and I do trust You. Lost and ruined, and guilty, and all but damned, I will still trust You—and so You cannot cast me away, for You have promised, "Him that came to Me I will in no wise cast out."

So, you see, there is a blessedly comforting meaning in these words of the Apostle John as well as a meaning that should awaken us all to earnest concern about our real standing in the sight of God.

III. Now, thirdly, we have A CORRECT VERDICT OF ACQUITTAL, "If our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God."

When is it that our heart does not condemn us? Of course it always condemns us in *some* things. There may be people in the world who are perfect. I would like to have the pleasure of their acquaintance, yet I do not know whether they would like to have the pleasure of mine, for I am afraid that my imperfections and their perfections would make a quarrel, before long, and I do not know whether they would not be the people to quarrel first. Superior articles generally crack the soonest and whenever a brother has had a very high polish on him and much varnish of the very first quality, I have generally proved him to be a hypocrite before

long! Still, it is not my business to judge him—to his own Master let him stand or fall. If he is perfect, I say again that I should like to know him, for I know that I am not perfect.

But our heart does not condemn us about some things. For instance, we ask, "*Are we really sincere in our profession of religion*?" and our conscience answers, "Yes, we do not make a profession of religion in order to gain by it, nor because it makes us respectable, nor because it brings us comfort and ease. God knows that we do it because we cannot help doing it! We love Christ and we must take sides with Him and unless we are utterly deceived, we are sincere in saying that we are followers of Christ." I am putting these words into the mouths of those of you who really feel that you ought to utter them. And I trust that each one of you will join me in saying, "I am a poor lost sinner, but I do trust in Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and I do hang upon Him as the only Savior. And if that is the faith that saves the soul, I certainly have exercised it. I have no reliance on any ceremony, or any doctrine, or anything that I can do, or feel, or say, or be—nothing but the crucified, risen and glorified Christ is my confidence." Beloved, that is one thing in which our heart does not condemn us!

And then, it is the same when we can add, "With all our imperfections, we feel that *we do love God's people and we do love our fellow men.* We desire to relieve their distresses as far as we can. And as much as lies in us, we desire to promote the happiness and comfort of others." If a man cannot say this, he cannot claim to be a Christian because any man who lives for himself is no more a Christian than the devil is! The first objective of the Christian is to glorify God. And the next objective is to make other people happy. Those who never study other people in the household, but are selfish and let their narrow soul be confined within their own ribs, have nothing about them in common with a real Christian. If a man truthfully says, "I love others and I especially love the saints of God," then he may say that his conscience does not condemn him. I am not saying this on my own authority. Let me turn your attention to a few of the verses preceding our text, reading from the 14th verse—"We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loves not his brother abides in death…Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's good and sees his brother has need and shuts up his heart of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before Him." You see, this is the very evidence that God gives—that by our love to others, our hearts will be assured before Him and we shall have confidence concerning our own relationship towards God.

There is one other thing about which our hearts do not condemn us—we do feel that *we love holiness and love righteousness.* And though we do not always act as we should, and have to mourn over our sins, yet we

hate them and loathe ourselves for going into sin. We would, if we could, have perfect tempers. We would, if we could, act in perfect righteousness towards man and in perfect holiness towards God.

It is the duty of a Christian to be strictly just in all his business transactions and not to ask, "What is the custom of the trade?" The customs of many trades are dishonest—and the usual modes of carrying them on are little better than systematic roguery. I have heard of men who mark a hundred as a hundred and twenty, and who mark goods as of certain lengths when they know they are not of such lengths. And they say, "It is the custom of the trade." Well, if it is the custom of your trade to lie, remember that it is God's custom to send all liars to hell! A Christian has no right to lie even if all the world should concur in the lies! He should say, "No, I serve the God of truth and, come what may, no lie shall defile my tongue, for Christ has cleansed it and made it His own."

Our text says, "If our heart does not condemn us," and we thus know that we are God's children, "then have we confidence toward God." I wish I had an hour in which to preach upon this part of the text, though I daresay you do not! But these words are full of comfort, "then have we confidence toward God." The man who has a clear conscience, like a little bird, to sing in his heart, has confidence toward God in this way. He knows that he is the Lord's and that God loves him. He knows that God will not do him any hurt and knows that God is blessing him—and will continue to bless him. He knows that God is his Father and his friend and he, therefore, goes to God in great confidence about his troubles and tells them all to Him. He has much confidence in prayer and he may talk to God in prayer in a way which other people may think too familiar, yet it will not be so. His heart is right with God and, therefore, he has confidence toward God. He does not doubt God's faithfulness, or God's truth, or God's power, or God's veracity. He simply confides in God and lets things go as they will, for he knows that God is ruling and overruling all—and he walks through the world with a childlike, restful confidence—knowing that God will keep him and preserve him even to the end. And when he has to die, he will die in confidence. And when he rises from the grave, he will rise in confidence. And when the world is all ablaze, he will behold the last great conflagration without alarm. And when he stands before the judgment seat of Christ, he will stand there without a tremor! He has confidence toward God, for he has peace within him.

IV. Now I have very briefly to speak concerning AN INCORRECT VERDICT OF ACQUITTAL.

There are some persons whose hearts do not condemn them for this reason—*their hearts are hopelessly indifferent*. God save you, my dear hearers, from a heart which is so full of pride that it is, as David says, "as fat as grease," from a heart that is harder than a diamond and from a heart that knows it is guilty, but will not condemn itself, but whispers, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace! There are tens of thousands of men walking the streets of London who are living habitually in the worst

of sin, yet their hearts are so petrified and rendered so perverse from everything like right judgment, that they rarely, if ever, appear to condemn them!

But I take leave to tell them that *what little heart they have left does condemn them* for this reason, that when a man's heart is right and does not condemn him, he has confidence toward God. Ask these men whether they have any confidence toward God. "God!" they say, "do not let us even hear His name! How do you know that there is a God?" Such men never feel so easy in mind and never are in such an argumentative mood as when some precious philosopher attempts to prove that there is no God—that is the very thing for them! Would not the devil's children ring all the bells for many a day if they could but prove that there was no God? What a jubilation there would be among the rogues, thieves, vagabonds and skeptics if they could once feel sure that there was no God! It would be the worst thing that could possibly happen to us who love Him, but to them it would be the best thing that could happen according to their notions. And why? Because there is something within their heart that tells them, after all, that they are not right—and as they do not want to get right, they try to persuade themselves that there is no God! That is their way of getting a little sleep for their conscience.

But they are not really as quiet as they think they are. Supposing I were to ask such a man who was so quiet and at ease, whether he would mind sitting down for half an hour when he got home to look into the future and see whether there is a judgment, a heaven, and a hell—what would be the result? "Not I," he says, "I am not going to bother myself about such things as those!" It is said that you ought not to talk about the gallows if you know that there is anybody present who had a relative who was hung. And these men, in like manner, do not like us to talk about judgment, heaven, and hell. O sirs, you are like the silly ostrich that buries its head in the sand and hopes that nobody will see it! Why, if there are no such things, it will have done you good to have thought about them and to have confirmed yourself in the notions of which you boast so much!

I also ask you to do another thing. You say that your heart does not condemn you, but will you, for a little while, contemplate death? We will let judgment alone for a minute. I suppose you believe that you will die—you have not yet discovered a patent for the preservation of highly cultured intellects from the vulgar hands of the sexton, have you? You do not expect that education will keep you out of the tomb, do you? So will you think about death? "No," says the man, "I shall do nothing of the sort! It would give me the blues for a week." Ah, I see, I see! Your conscience has not acquitted you, after all, for, if it had, you would not be so unwilling to think about death! I do not object to think of death and there is no believer in Christ here who objects to thoughts of death, but rather we pray, "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." There must be something radically wrong about that supposed ease and peace of mind which will not bear meditations of

death and judgment. The fact is, you are condemned by your own heart for if you were not, you would have confidence toward God! And let me assure you that those who have once experienced confidence toward God, greatly rejoice in it! It is the joy of life and it will light up even the dark valley of death! Confidence in God is, in fact, the beginning of heaven, and I think it is a part of the very fruition of heaven itself!

God bless you, dear friends! May we all be led to faith in Jesus Christ! Remember that there is salvation in Him. Whoever trusts Jesus Christ is saved! Whoever relies upon His finished work shall never come into condemnation and even though his heart may sometimes accuse him, Christ will clear him from all guilt through His own most precious blood. May this be the happy portion of each one of you here! May each one to able to say—

"In Christ I have believed,
And through the spotless Lamb
Grace and salvation have received!
In Him complete I am."

In closing my sermon, I ask every individual here that old and personal question, "Do *you* believe on the Son of God?" Somebody says, "Yes, I do believe in Him, glory be to His holy name." I hope there are many in this place who can truly say, "With all our hearts we do believe in Jesus Christ our Savior. We have a thousand infirmities, but we do trust in Him." Just a notch lower there is one who says. "I do believe in Jesus, but not as fully as I would like to." Ah, well, dear brother, faith grows if it is true faith! That is a good prayer, "Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief." I expect you will get higher, by and by, and be able to say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

Another friend says, "I hope and trust that I do believe in Jesus." Brother, get out of that stage, I implore you! I never like to "hope and trust" in that fashion. When I get to bed at night and say to myself, "Did I lock the door?" I am not content to lie there and say, "I hope and trust that I did." There may be a thief in the garden, so it will not be safe for me to "hope and trust" that all doors and windows are properly fastened. We like to be sure about these less important matters—how much more ought we to be sure about the salvation of our souls! If a man owes you a hundred pounds and someone says to you, "Is he financially stable?" it is not very satisfactory if you can only say, "I hope he is." You will feel much easier in your mind when you *know* that he is able to pay! And it is a great deal better to know that you are saved than to go on hoping and hoping, or saying, "I hope and trust it is all right." You are either saved or you are not saved—do get to know which is true! Give no rest to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids till you really know that you are trusting in Jesus and, therefore, you are saved!

Somebody a little lower down says, "I do not know whether I believe in Jesus or not." Well, if you do not know, nobody else can tell you. And I

would recommend you to begin trusting Christ now. I always find that the shortest way to deal with doubt and fear is to say, "Well, if I am not a believer in Jesus Christ, I will believe in Him now." So I urge you, my friend, to go to Him and say—

"Just as I am—without one plea
But that Your blood was shed for me
And that You did bid me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come."

Begin tonight, dear friend! If you fancied you did begin once before, begin again, now! And if you never did begin before, begin now!

"Well," says another, "I am trying to believe in Jesus." That is another grade and it is all wrong, for a man cannot truly say that he is *trying* to believe in Jesus. What are you doing to help you to believe in Him? Are you hearing the gospel earnestly? Are you searching the Scriptures for evidence concerning Christ? Or are you just doing nothing but saying "I am trying to believe?" Suppose I read an article in the newspaper and then say, "I am trying to believe it." Well, if I am searching for evidence and questioning others as to whether it is true or not, I speak correctly—but if I merely put the paper away and sit down and say, "I will try to believe it"—that is absurd! The fact is, you do not believe in Jesus or you would not say, "I am trying to believe in Him." "Well," says one, "I do not *yet* believe in Jesus, but I wish I did." I like to hear you say those last words, for when a man wishes to believe what is certainly true, I think he will soon believe it! There is many a man who has wished to believe a lie till he has believed it—and I think that a man who wishes to believe the truth of God has the easier task of the two! May the ever blessed Spirit lead you into a solemn conviction of the truth as it is in Jesus!

If there is one here who says, "I do not believe in Jesus and I do not want to believe in Him," may God have mercy upon that poor sinner and save him tonight—and God shall have the glory both now and forever! Amen.

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

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PAUL CHEERED IN PRISON BY HIS LORD
NO. 3153

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

"And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle. And the following night the Lord stood by him and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as you have testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must you bear witness also at Rome. And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy."
Acts 23:10-13.

FROM the midnight whisper of the Lord to Paul we may draw forth sweet encouragement. Those of the Lord's children who have been engaged in His work and are called to suffer in it, have here a special word of consolation!

Paul had been in a great tumult and had been roughly rescued from the wrath of the people by the chief captain who saw that otherwise he would be pulled in pieces. Paul was like the rest of us, made of flesh and blood and, therefore, liable to be cast down. He had kept himself calm at first, but still, the strong excitement of the day had no doubt operated upon his mind and when he was lying in prison all alone, thinking upon the perils that surrounded him, he needed good cheer—and he received it. The bravest man may find his spirit sinking after the battle and so perhaps it was with the apostle.

I. In this passage, we note the good cheer that came to Paul in the dungeon. This consisted, first, in HIS MASTER'S PRESENCE—"the Lord stood by him."

If all else forsook him, Jesus was company enough! If all others despised him, the smile of Jesus was patronage enough! If the good cause seemed in danger—in the presence of his Master victory was sure! The Lord, who had stood for him at the cross, now stood by him in the prison. The Lord, who had called to him out of heaven, who had washed him in His blood, who had commissioned him to be His servant, who had often sustained him in labors and trials, now visited him in his solitary cell! It was a dungeon, but the Lord was there! It was dark, but the glory of the Lord lit it up with heaven's own splendor! Better to be in a jail with the Lord than to be in heaven without Him! The harps above could make no heavenly place without Jesus—and Jesus being there, the clanking fetters and the cold floor of the stony cell could not suggest a sorrow.

"The Lord stood by him." This shall be said of each one who diligently serves God. Dear friend, if you are a worker for the Lord Jesus, depend upon it, He will not desert you. If, in the course of your endeavors, you are brought into sadness and depression, you shall then find it sweetly true that the Lord stands by you. Did you ever forsake a friend who was spending his strength for you? If you have done so, you ought to be

ashamed of yourself, but I think I hear you say indignantly, "No, I have always been faithful to my faithful friend." Do not, therefore, suspect your Lord of treating you ungenerously, for He is faithful and true. All your former helpers may desert you—Sadducees, Pharisees and scribes may all set themselves to oppose you—but with the Lord at your right hand you shall not be moved! Cheer up, desponding brothers and sisters—

"God is near you, therefore cheer up,
Sad soul!
He'll defend you when around you
Billows roll."

II. The next comfort for Paul was the reflection that THE LORD'S STANDING BY HIM PROVED THAT HE KNEW WHERE HE WAS AND WAS AWARE OF HIS CONDITION.

The Lord had not lost sight of Paul because he was shut up in the common jail. One is reminded of the Quaker who came to see John Bunyan in prison and said to him, "Friend, the Lord sent me to you and I have been seeking you in half the prisons in England." "No, verily," said John, "that cannot be! For if the Lord had sent you to me, you would have come here at once, for He knows I have been here for years!" God has not a single jewel laid by and forgotten. "You see Me" is a great consolation to one who delights himself in the Lord. Many and diverse are the prisons of affliction in which the Lord's servants are shut up. One may be lying in the prison of pain, chained by the leg or by the hand, through accident or disease. Or perhaps he is shut up in the narrow cell of poverty, or in the dark room of bereavement, or in the dungeon of mental depression—but the Lord knows in what ward His servant is shut up and He will not leave him to pine away forgotten, "as a dead man out of mind."

The Lord stood by Paul despite doors and locks. He asked no warden's leave to enter, nor did He stir bolt or bar, but there He was—the companion of His humble servant! The Lord can visit His chosen when nobody else could be allowed to do so because of contagion, or from fear of exciting the fevered brain. If we come into such a peculiar position that no earthly friend knows our experience—none having been tempted as we are—yet the Lord Jesus can enter into our special trial and sympathize in our peculiar grief. Jesus can stand side by side with us, for He has been afflicted in all our afflictions.

What is more, that part of our circumstances which we do not ourselves know, Jesus knows, and in these He stands by us, for Paul was not aware of the danger to which he was exposed. He did not know that certain Jews, to the number of forty, had banded themselves together to kill him! But He who was his shield and his exceeding great reward had heard the cruel oath and arranged to disappoint the bloodthirsty ones. Dear friend, the Lord knows all about your troubles before they come to you—He anticipates them by His tender foresight. Before Satan can draw the bow, the preserver of men will put His beloved beyond the reach of the arrow. Before the weapon is forged in the furnace and fashioned on the anvil, He knows how to provide us with armor of proof which shall burn the edge of the sword and break the point of the spear. Let us therefore sing with holy boldness, "In the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me. He shall set me up upon a rock." How safe we are, for Jehovah has said, "No

weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment, you shall condemn." With joy, therefore, let us draw water out of these two wells of salvation—the Lord is present with us and He knows us altogether! Putting the two thoughts together, we may hear Him say to our inmost souls—

"I, the Lord, am with you,
Be you not afraid!
I will help and strengthen,
Be you not dismayed!
Yes, I will uphold you
With My own right hand.
You are called and chosen
In My sight to stand!
Onward then, and fear not,
Children of the day!
For His word shall never,
Never pass away."

III. When the Lord Jesus came to Paul, He gave him a third reason for courage. He said, "Be of good cheer, Paul: for you have testified of Me in Jerusalem. THERE WAS MUCH COMFORT IN THIS ASSURANCE THAT HIS WORK WAS ACCEPTED OF HIS MASTER.

We dare not look for much joy in anything that we have done, for our poor works are all imperfect. And yet the Lord sometimes gives His servants honey in the carcasses of lions which they have, themselves, slain, by pouring into their souls a sweet sense of having walked in integrity before Him. Before the great day of reward, the Lord whispers into the ear, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Or He says openly before all men, "She has done what she could." Herein is good cheer, for if the Lord accepts, it is a small matter if men condemn! The Lord says to Paul, "You have testified of Me in Jerusalem." The apostle had done so, but he was too humble to console himself with that fact till his Lord gave him leave to do so by acknowledging the brave deed!

Perhaps, dear friend, you also shall be made to remember that you have borne witness for Jesus and that your life has not been altogether in vain. It may be that your conscience makes you more familiar with your faults than with your services, and you rather sigh than sing as you look back upon your Christian career. Yet your loving Lord covers all your failures and commends you for what His grace has enabled you to do in the way of witness bearing. It must be sweet to you to hear Him say, "I know your works; for you have a little strength and have kept My word, and have not denied My name."

Be faithful to your Lord, dear friend, if you are now in prosperity, for thus you will be laying up a store of cheering memories for years to come. To look back upon a well spent life will not cause an atom of legal boasting to an experienced believer—but it will justly create much holy rejoicing! Paul was able to rejoice that he had not run in vain, neither labored in vain—and happy are we if we can do the same. If it is right for us to chasten our conscience on account of omissions, it must be lawful ground for thankful joy that our heart condemns us not, for then have we confidence towards God. [See Sermon #3152, Volume 55—THE LOWER COURTS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] If any of us should fall into straitened circumstances, it will be a comfort to be able to say, "When I was rich, I freely used my wealth for my Lord." If we are ill, it will be a satisfaction to re-

member that when we were in health, we used our strength for Jesus. These are reflections which give light in the shade and make music at midnight. It is not out of our own reflections that the joy arises, but out of the witness of the Holy Spirit that the Lord is not unrighteous to forget our work of faith and labor of love.

IV. A fourth comfort remained for Paul in the words, "As you have testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must you bear witness also at Rome." The Lord would have us take comfort from THE PROSPECT OF FUTURE SERVICE AND USEFULNESS. We are not done with yet—and thrown aside as vessels in which the Lord has no more pleasure. This is the chief point of comfort in our Lord's word to the apostle. Be of good courage, *there is more for you to do*, Paul. They cannot kill you at Jerusalem, for you must bear witness also at Rome.

Brace yourself up, O weary, working brother, for your day's work is not yet over and your sun cannot go down till, like Joshua, you have finished your conflict with Amalek! The old saying is true, "You are immortal till your work is done." Possibly not one half of your work is even begun and, therefore, you will rise again from sickness, you will soar above depression and you will do more for the Lord than ever! It will yet be said to you, as to the angel of the Church in Thyatira, "I know your works, and the last to be more than the first." Wycliffe could not die though the malicious monks favored him with their best wishes in that direction. "No," said the Reformer, "I shall not die, but live, and declare all the evil deeds of the friars." The sight of rogues to be exposed awakened his flickering life and revived its flame. Disease could not carry off Melancthon because he had eminent service yet to do, side by side with Luther. I have admired the way in which the great Reformer dragged his friend back to life by assuring him that the great work needed him and he must recover. "He devoutly prayed, 'We implore You, O Lord our God. We cast all our burdens on You *and will cry till You hear us*, pleading all the promises which can be found in the Holy Scriptures respecting Your hearing prayer, so that *You must indeed hear us* to preserve at all future periods our entire confidence in Your own promises. After this, he seized hold of Melanchthon's hand and said, 'Be of good courage, Philip, YOU SHALL NOT DIE.'" He prayed his friend back from the mouth of the grave and sent him on his way comforted with the truthful prediction that he had yet to bear more testimony for the truth of God! Surely there is no restorative from sickness and no insurance for continued life like the confidence that our task is not done—and our race is not ended!

Godly Whitefield, when smitten with a dangerous illness, rose again to renew his seraphic activities after his death had become matter of daily expectation. It is said, in connection with this event, that shortly after his recovery, a poor black woman insisted on having an interview with him. On being admitted, she sat down upon the ground and looking earnestly into his face, said to him in broken language, "Massa, you just go to heaven's gate, but Jesus Christ said, 'Get you down; you must not come here yet, but go first and call some more poor Negroes.'" And who would not be willing to tarry here to win more poor Negroes for Jesus? Even the bliss of heaven may be cheerfully postponed for such a gain!

Come, then, ailing and desponding one, there is no use in lying down in despair, for a life of usefulness is still in reserve for you! Up, Elijah, and no more ask to die, for God has further errands for His servant! Neither the lion nor the bear can kill you, O David, for you have yet to fight

a giant and cut off his head! Be not fearful, O Daniel, of the rage of Babylon's drunken king, for you are yet to outlive the rage of hungry lions! Courage, O you mistrustful spirit—you have only run with the footmen as of yet—you shall yet contend with horses and prove more than a match for them! Therefore lift up the hands that hang down! "You must stand before Caesar." A Divine decree ordains for you greater and more trying service than as yet you have seen. A future awaits you and no power on the earth or under the earth can rob you of it—therefore be of good cheer!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ACTS 25-26; 1 JOHN 4.

Acts 25:1. *Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem.* Porcius Festus had been appointed governor in the place of Felix who had left Paul a prisoner so as to please the Jews, though he would have been willing enough to release him if Paul or his friends would have given him a sufficiently heavy bribe. He had trembled as Paul had "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," but his conscience had not been so quickened as to make him act justly towards the apostle. Yet his unrighteous conduct was made to serve the Lord's purpose, which was that Paul should testify before one earthly ruler after another until he should ultimately appear before the cruel Nero, himself, at Rome. Paul was at Caesarea, but he was not at once brought before Festus. When the governor went up to Jerusalem, the apostle's enemies renewed their plotting against him

2, 3. *Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him, and desired favor against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him.* They had been foiled in their previous attempt to assassinate the apostle but their malice led them to try again to put him to death in that dastardly fashion.

4, 5. *But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea and that he himself would depart shortly there. Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there is any wickedness in him.* Whether Festus suspected their real reason for being so anxious for him to send for Paul, we cannot tell, but at any rate, their scheme was once more a failure.

6, 7. *And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea, and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought. And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove.* It was easy for them to lay many and grievous complaints against Paul, yet it was not only difficult but impossible for them to prove their charge against the apostle!

8, 9. *While he answered for himself, "Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended anything at all." But Festus, willing to do the Jew's pleasure,* In that respect he was just like his predecessor, Felix. No doubt he took into account the number and position of Paul's accusers and thought it would

be the wiser policy to side with them rather than with the prisoner and, therefore, "Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure."

9-11. *Answered Paul, and said, Will you go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as you very well know. For if I am an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there are none of these things of which these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.* As a freeborn Roman citizen, he had the right of appeal to the emperor—and that right he exercised. It may be that he also realized that this was the way in which the Lord's prophecy would be fulfilled—"Be of good cheer, Paul, for as you have testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must you bear witness also at Rome."

12. *Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Have you appealed unto Caesar? Unto Caesar shall you go.* The die was cast—there was no need to argue the matter any further.

13-16. *And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus. And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix: about whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him. To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.* Festus must have felt profound contempt for the chief priests and elders of the Jews who clamored for Paul's death even before he had been tried—and he made it very plain to them that this was not the Roman way even if it were the Jewish method of dealing with accused persons.

17-19. *Therefore, when they were come here, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth. Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought no accusations of such things as I supposed: but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.* [See Sermon #2016, Volume 34—JESUS AFFIRMED TO BE ALIVE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Festus may have supposed that they would have accused Paul of plotting against Rome, or of some other political crime. He would have thought such matters of far greater importance than the "certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." Paul could make that affirmation with the utmost confidence, for Christ had appeared to him on the road to Damascus, proving without doubt that, though once dead, He was again alive.

20-22. *And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters. But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar. Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. Tomorrow, said he, you shall hear him.* So Paul's witness bearing was made to spread still further! It is scarcely possible to conceive of any other circumstances in which the gospel could have been made known to such an

audience as the apostle was, on the morrow, to have the opportunity of addressing!

23. *And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth.* It was such a congregation as Paul was only too glad to address—and the gospel could not have had a nobler or worthier advocate—yet we do not read of any who were present yielding up himself or herself to the Lord Jesus Christ.

24. *And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, you see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer.* Festus took care that the Jews would not be able to forget that they had demanded the death of a man who had not even been put on trial.

25-27. *But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself has appealed to Augustus, I decided to send him. I have nothing certain to write to my lord about him. Therefore I have brought him forth before you, and especially before you, O King Agrippa, so that after the examination has taken place, I might have something to write. For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not to signify the crimes laid against him.* The governor talked like a man of sense and he even went so far as to say that the prisoner before him "had committed nothing worthy of death."

Acts 26:1. *Then Agrippa said unto Paul, You are permitted to speak for yourself. Then Paul stretched out his hand and answered for himself.* I do not suppose Agrippa imagined that Paul would take all the liberty that he did, but inasmuch as the king had said to him, "You are permitted to speak for yourself," Paul, who even when he was permitted to speak for himself, did not forget that he was the servant of God and used that liberty as the servant of God! And so he took the opportunity to seek to press the truth of God upon the conscience and heart of the king. Thus Paul answered for himself.

2, 3. *I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before you, touching all the things of which I am accused of the Jews: especially because I know you to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: therefore I beseech you to hear me patiently.* It is always well to try to be on good terms with the person whom you wish to impress with the truth of the gospel. Paul, therefore, did not begin bluntly, as some foolish people would have done, but he addressed the king most courteously and respectfully. I think I see the little man, as he doubtless was, Paul—the man with feeble eyes and with no great bodily presence to command attention—yet bravely stretching out his hand and, like a preacher, thus addressing Herod Agrippa!

4-7. *My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among my own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews, which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee. And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.* The Jews still had hope concerning the promise of the Messiah and all the promises in

God's covenant with them. And Paul says that for the sake of this hope he had been led to do that which had now brought him as a prisoner before the king.

Notice that the fiction concerning "the ten lost tribes" has no foundation in Scripture. There are no lost tribes, although several of them are mentioned by name in the New Testament. The Apostle James writes "to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad," and here Paul speaks of them as "our twelve tribes." The Jews whom we have among us at this day belong to all of the twelve tribes, as they will tell you if you ask them. There are no lost tribes yet to be discovered, neither are we, as a nation, those ten tribes that are supposed to have been lost! We are Gentiles and not Jews. The apostle speaks here concerning the hope of the whole nation of the Jews. We who have believed in Jesus are the inheritors of that grand hope, as we have understood it correctly and have realized that it is fulfilled in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only begotten Son of God!

8. *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?* [See Sermon #1067, Volume 16—THE RESURRECTION CREDIBLE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] That great fact of the resurrection of Christ is the cornerstone of the temple of truth, the keystone of the arch of the gospel. The apostles made this truth of God very prominent in their preaching and here Paul began his address with it. It was the great difficulty of the Christian religion at that period, so Paul went straight to it at once.

9, 10. *I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem.* For Paul was the kind of man who, if he thought he ought to do anything, he always did it. Even in his unregenerate state, his conscience, unenlightened as it was, swayed him. But now, with an enlightened conscience, he looked back upon that part of his life with deep regret—and he did not fail to acknowledge and mourn the wrong that he had ignorantly done to the Lord Jesus Christ and His faithful followers.

10, 11. *And many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And punished them often in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.* Paul was a wholehearted man. Whatever he did, he did intensely, so that when he did wrong, he did it with a kind of madness. Such a furious hatred of Jesus of Nazareth was upon him that all Judaea was not large enough for the indulgence of his persecuting malice against the saints! And so he "persecuted them even unto strange cities."

12-14. *Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?* [See Sermon #202, Volume 4—THE CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.* He was like a stubborn ox kicking against the goads—the harder he kicked, the more the sharp points of the goads pricked him!

15-18. *And I said. Who are You, Lord? And He said, I am Jesus whom you persecute. But rise, and stand upon your feet: for I have appeared unto you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of these things which you have seen, and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send you, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me.* [See Sermon #1774, Volume 30—GOD'S WORK UPON MINISTER AND CONVERT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Part of this address was spoken to Paul by Ananias when he came to open his eyes, hence some have thought that Paul here mixed up what was said to him by Christ and what was said by Ananias, yet all the while recognizing it as being virtually all one message from Christ—but I do not think so. I believe that Paul would have us understand that the Lord Jesus Christ actually said to him, on the road to Damascus, all that we have recorded here—and that when Ananias came to him, he, without having heard what the Lord had said to Paul, said the same thing to him—and this would be a kind of sign and token to the apostle that what was said to him was really a message from God. How often this happens under every true gospel ministry! The very thing that you were talking about while on your way to the service will be spoken to you by God's servant in the house of prayer. That which you were reading before you came here may be the very subject selected for our present consideration, for God has a wondrous way of making one of His calls tally with another, so that the two meeting without any collusion on our part shall confirm and establish one another—and the more deeply impress the heart of the hearer!

19-23. *Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other thing than those which the prophet and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.* Paul stuck to the Scriptures and to the gospel revealed in them—and was not speaking his own thoughts, ideas and notions—he was a herald proclaiming what his King bade him say and telling what the grace of his Master made him only too glad to say!

24, 25. *And as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, you are beside yourself. Much learning is making you mad! But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.* He had been "mad" once, as he had just confessed, but he had recovered from that madness. Now how calmly he replies to the taunt of Festus—there is nothing of anger or resentment about his dignified answer, "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness."

26, 27. *For the king knows of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him;*

for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa—Now the apostle comes to close grips with the king.

27, 28. *Believe you the prophet? I know that you believe. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian."* [See Sermon #871, Volume 15—TO THOSE WHO ARE "ALMOST PERSUADED"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] A great deal of effort has been put forth to prove that Agrippa did not say anything of the kind, but that he was only laughing at Paul when he ironically said, "Are you going to make me a Christian so easily as this?" If so, the reply of Paul was singularly inappropriate, but taking Agrippa's words to be as they appear here, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian," Paul's answer can be well understood.

29. *And Paul said, I would to God that not only you, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds*. And in so speaking he skillfully hinted how unfairly he was chained before his judges—and yet how he wished ill to none, but only wished good to all!

30, 31. *And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them: and when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man has done nothing worthy of death or of bonds*. He had impressed Agrippa most favorably and it is quite clear that the king was not jesting with him—he was at least convinced that Paul had done "nothing worthy of death or of bonds."

32. *Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed unto Caesar*. But it was not God's purpose that Paul should be set at liberty—he must go to Rome and must there, before the emperor, himself, bear witness which he could not bear as a free man, but which the emperor must hear when Paul was brought before him as a prisoner who had appealed to him—and must therefore be heard in person!

1 John 4:1. *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.* This is an injunction of which there is great need in the present day when so many accept anything that they hear from a "priest" or from a pastor without *searching the Scriptures* to see whether what they hear is in accordance with the inspired Word of God!

2. *Hereby know you the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God*. Some say that Jesus Christ was not God. Others say that He was not man, while some talk as if everything about Him was a mystery! But they who are truly sent by God declare plainly that Jesus Christ did literally come in the flesh—and such teachers are "of God."

3. *And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, of which you have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world*. That was the form that antichrist took in John's day. It is constantly taking different forms, but it is always antichrist—against Christ.

4. *You are of God, little children, and have overcome them.* If you have a childlike spirit. If God has made you teachable as little children and His Spirit dwells within you, you will not be overcome by these false prophets, but you will overcome them!

4. *Because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.* They may dupe the world, but they shall not dupe you. If it were possible, they would deceive the very elect, but that is not possible.

5. *They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world hears them.* They are the world's prophets—they preach the world's doctrines, they flatter the world and the world likes that—so "the world hears them."

6. *We are of God: he that knows God hears us, he that is not of God hears us not. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.* They who accept the apostolic teaching prove that they are "of God." There are some, nowadays, who say, "We accept the teaching of the gospels, but we will have nothing to do with the apostles and their epistles"—thus they clearly show that they are not of God, for John says, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit—"He that knows God hears us; he that is not of God hears us not."

7. *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God.* He who has the spirit of love within him "is born of God," "for love is of God"; he who constantly seeks the good of others, he whose heart beats with love to those who are not within the narrow confines of His own ribs, and he whose love goes forth to God and His people—and to the sons of men in general—this is the man who "is born of God, and knows God."

8. *He that loves not knows not God; for God is love.* He may be very orthodox, but if he does not love, he does not know God. And if he does not know God, what does he know? There is such a thing as holding the truth of God in bitterness, but those who know God and are truly his children, hold the truth of God in love.

9. *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him.* That was the highest possible proof of love that even God could give us!

10, 11. *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.* [See Sermons #1707, Volume 29—"HEREIN IS LOVE"; #2447, Volume 42—(same title) and #2394, Volume 41—LOVE'S CLIMAX—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] As God "so loved us" when there was nothing lovable about us, and so loved us as to give His only begotten Son to save us, "we ought also to love one another."

12-14. *No man has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.* [See Sermon #2383, Volume 40—SEEING AND TESTIFYING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] John could testify as an eyewitness to the sufferings and death of Christ, for he stood at the foot of the Cross and saw the Savior die—and he had before laid his head upon his Master's breast. He knew that Christ was real flesh and blood and he knew that Christ really died, so he could truly say, "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world."

15, 16. *Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has to us. God is love, and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God*

in him. This is a deep book. The words are very simple and plain—mainly monosyllables, yet who among us can ever fathom the depth of this epistle? May we fathom it so far as to plunge into its wondrous depths!

17, 18. *Wherein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love*. Questioning, mistrust, unbelief, doubt—all these die when we come truly and heartily to love our Lord! And in proportion as our love to Him burns like a flame of fire, it burns up all this wood, hay and stubble of trembling, slavish fear.

19. *We love Him because He first loved us*. [See Sermons #229, Volume 5—LOVE; #1008, Volume 17—LOVE'S LOGIC and #2730, Volume 47—THE SECRET OF LOVE TO GOD—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] We would never have loved Him unless He had "first loved us." His love to us begat our love to Him!

20. *If man says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar.* John is very emphatic in his condemnation of such a man as that! Some of the most tenderhearted men in the world are the most blunt in their mode of speaking. And some of the most fawning flatterers are the most cruel in their hearts. We love John all the better because he writes so plainly, "If a man says I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar."

20. *For he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?* Why, sir, if you could see God, it is clear that you would not love Him. If you talk about your love to Him whom you have not seen, it is utterly false if you do not love men like yourself whom you have seen!

21. *And this commandment have we from Him*. That is, from the Lord Jesus, who again and again gave this commandment to His disciples.

21. *That he who loves God love his brother also*. O lovers of God, prove the reality of your affection for Him by the genuineness of your love to your fellow men!

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CONCERNING THE FORBEARANCE OF GOD
NO. 3154

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 22, 1909,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 20, 1873.

"Or do you despise the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?"
Romans 2:4.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same verse, are as follows—
Sermons #1714, Volume 29—
EARNEST EXPOSTULATION and #2857, Volume 49—
GOD'S GOODNESS LEADING TO REPENTANCE—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

IT is a great sign of love on God's part that He condescends to reason with men. When they had offended against Him, He might have said to them, "I will punish you for your offenses," and He might have gone His way until the day for carrying out His threat arrived. But instead of doing so, He is unwilling that any should perish. According to His own declaration, He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but would rather that he should turn unto Him and live. And, therefore, He pauses and reasons. When a man has been greatly offended by another and is very angry with him, he does not usually stay to reason with his opponent—his anger is too hot for that. But if he is of a meek and gentle spirit, and anxious that the quarrel should be ended, he begins to reason with the other man and says to him, "Why did you act so unkindly towards me? Why did you treat me thus? You have acted most unjustly—have you no sense of right? I have not deserved this at your hands—why, then, did you thus deal with me? Come now, do you utterly hate or despise me, or why do you thus continue to annoy and provoke me?" In such a fashion as this, but with infinite tenderness, the Lord reasons with sinners. So, dear friend, if you are still unconverted, regard it as a clear proof of God's loving-kindness toward you that He again sends to you the word of expostulation! Take it for granted that he desires your good and wishes you well, otherwise He would not have bid His servant say to you, "Do you despise the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?"

From the connection of our text, it would appear that there were some, in Paul's day, as there are in ours, who, seeing the great wickedness of mankind and observing that God did not at once destroy the ungodly, gathered from that fact that they, themselves, might sin with impunity. Seeing that God did not launch His thunderbolts at even the most gross sinners—and strike them with immediate and total destruction by pestilence, famine, or sword—these people wickedly said, "What does it matter

what sins or crimes we commit? Evidently God is asleep, or winks at such deeds as these. Or perhaps there is no God at all! Anyhow, let us live in sin and take pleasure therein, for there will be no evil consequences to us if we do so. We may eat the fat, drink the sweet and enjoy ourselves to our hearts' content and there will be no one to call us to account." So that from the very fact that God was merciful and gracious, they inferred that they might be sinful and rebellious! And because God's foot was slow to come in vengeance, they imagined that God's hand would not be heavy when He did come, and they said, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!" It was to a sinner of this sort that Paul put the question, "Do you despise the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering?" I am going to put that question to you who are here—and I pray that the Holy Spirit may put it to the conscience of every unconverted man and woman!

I. Now first LET US HONOR THE GOODNESS, FORBEARANCE AND LONGSUFFERING OF GOD.

The description given by the apostle is threefold. "The riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering." I shall probably not be wrong in saying that God's "goodness" may refer to the way in which He has overlooked all our past sins, so that He has not yet dealt with us in justice concerning them. His forbearance may refer to our present sins, the transgressions of this day and hour, and His long-suffering may refer to our future sins, for He knows that we shall continue to sin, yet He does not destroy us, but still bears with us. What a heavy weight is upon my mind and heart as I think of the forbearance of God towards the impenitent with regard to their past sins! Why, there are some of you who have committed sins that you would be ashamed to have mentioned—sins against light and knowledge, too, which you knew to be sins, not merely one or two, but very many! It would have been the easiest possible thing in the world for God to have destroyed you, yet He has not done so. How long can you keep your temper when you are provoked? Five minutes? Half an hour? "That is a long time," you say. Suppose you were insulted to your face, how long would you hold your peace and bear it? An hour? I fear there are not many of you who would do that, but that you would soon give an answer to the man who had dared thus to challenge you. What, then, shall I say of God, who has borne with some here thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, perhaps 80 years, in which the mere fact of their living has been an insult to Him, for they have lived in opposition to His will and His law and have often defied Him to His face? And in their provoking blasphemy have even invited Him to damn their bodies and souls! Oh, the amazing mercy of a God who can bear with a sinner for 12 months, who can even bear with him for 50 times 12 months and can still stand—and in tones of pity and entreaty say, "Come now, come even *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."

Then, next, it is no small mercy that God bears with your present sins, so despise not the riches of His forbearance to you now. Most of you have long been hearers of the gospel. You are sitting in the place where you

have sat and heard the gospel preached hundreds of times—and the very pew you are sitting in might witness against you that although you have so long heard it, you have refused to obey it! You have promised better things, but you have never performed them. You have lied, not to men, but to God! You have lulled your conscience to sleep when God has spoken to you through it and you have even quenched His Holy Spirit when He has striven with you—yet up to this moment, God who, without uttering a word could send your guilty soul to hell, forbears to do so! He cries, "How can I give you up?" He looks the rebel in the face and says to him, "How can I damn you? How can I cast you into hell? My compassions are moved towards you. My repentings are kindled together." It is indeed great grace for God to do this—and He is doing it now! Every moment that an unconverted man is out of hell, God is manifesting towards him the riches of His forbearance. And it is no small strain upon divine mercy when men continue to sin notwithstanding this forbearance. The Roman magistrates used to carry on their shoulders the rods with which prisoners were condemned to be beaten—and in the center of the rods was the axe for the final punishment of death. Those rods were bound with cords having many knots, and the magistrates would slowly untie the knots while the judge waited to see if the prisoner would say something that would prevent him from being beaten—but when the last knot was untied, they bared his back to scourge him. The judge still looked at him to see if there was any sign of repentance—and if there was not any, then came the axe! So, with regard to some of you, God has been undoing the knots one by one—yes, and He has beaten you with more than one of His rods—you have suffered from sickness, poverty, and many other tribulations. God's rods are smiting you now, but He is slow to take up the axe. He is stern in His judgment upon the impenitent, but He is full of pity and compassionate—and unwilling to deal the deathblow if it can be prevented! "Turn you," He says, "turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?" And with all the eloquence of words, He cries to men that they would turn unto Him and live!

Then there is the long-suffering of God with regard to sins that are yet to be committed. O sinner, you cannot promise that you will not sin in the future! You may foolishly say, "I will not," but the Ethiopian might sooner change his skin and the leopard his spots as that you, who are accustomed to do evil, might begin in your own strength to do well! The fountain of your heart is foul—so polluted streams must continue to flow from it. You are born of such a race and you have so added to your natural depravity by your constant sinfulness that you will still go on to sin until grace changes and renews you! How is it that God, who knows this, does not strike you out of existence? Is He going to spare you for another year to still set your hard heart against His love? Sinner, does God mean to spare you for another seven years' fornication and lust? Will He permit you to live another 10 years to still be a thief? Shall you have another 20 years in which every Sabbath shall be spent in sin and in which almost every night shall see you reeling as a drunkard through the streets? Oh, if God knows that you will sin like this, how is it that He bears with you?

If the destroying angel is told what you will be, he will stand with his sword drawn, or with his hand upon its hilt and say, "Commission me, dread Sovereign, to cleanse the earth of those who blaspheme Your name and break Your law, and it shall be done!" But God says, "Put your sword into its sheath and wait a little longer! They shall have another appeal, another invitation and another entreaty." Oh, that these might be of use to them and that they might turn unto God, and live!

Beside this threefold appeal in the text, *God's goodness is manifested in great abundance*. "Do you despise *the riches of His goodness* and forbearance and long-suffering?" Truly God's mercy to us has been like a mine of riches. What has God not done for some of us? If I were not, at this moment, a believer, I would be, of all here present, one of the most ungrateful. I will state my own case knowing it to be similar to that of many others who are present. Cradled in the home of piety, nurtured with the most tender care, taught the gospel from my youth up, with the holiest example of my parents, the best possible checks all around to prevent me running into sin—yet, notwithstanding all that, sinning and revolting more and more but checked by conscience, as when a steed tries to leap forth, but its rider reins it in—yet still resolved to sin—determined to go further and yet further into it and even being angry with God for checking sin, trying to get the bit between one's teeth and to run away from God and sin worse than before! Then struck down by the hand of God in sickness, alarmed, terrified, resolving to live differently—but being raised up to health again, shaking off serious impressions—and with a laugh going back to the follies of sin. Then once more rebuked, made to tremble, thunderstruck and awed before God—hearing of the precious Savior, yet putting Him off and saying that another day would be soon enough to be a Christian! That is my sad story until sovereign grace met with me. And that is also the story of many others present here!

Yet all the while, God has kept you supplied with the blessings of providence so that you have never suffered want. He has preserved you from the dangers and trials and troubles which a great many others have had to endure. He has placed you where an earnest gospel ministry never lets you rest in your sin. He has put you where faithful friends plead with you with tears to care about your immortal soul. He has raised you up from sickness, perhaps preserved you in the day of battle, delivering you when many others died all around you. Has God done all this for you and are there in your mind no tender thoughts toward Him, no grateful memories of His great mercy? Oh think of where you might have been long ago! Might they not have said over your dead body, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust?" Yes, long ago there might have been a portion for you in that dread place where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched! Think of the gracious promises that are still proclaimed in your hearing, that if you return unto the Lord, He will have mercy upon you and will forgive you all your trespasses! Think of the Christ of God who died for sinners on the cross. Think of the Spirit of God who has come down to earth to strive and plead with sinners. Think of the Father's almighty love which is bestowed upon all those who put their trust

in Jesus Christ, His Son. Oh, there have indeed been riches of mercy, riches of goodness, riches of forbearance, riches of long-suffering and, man, do you *despise* all this? Woman, away yonder, do *you* despise all this? All this mercy has passed before you in one long panorama for many years—what do you say about it? Do you not say, "My God, forgive me that I have so long slighted You?" Or will you still despise the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering?

I might, if I had time, try to measure the long-suffering of God. And if I did, I should need four lines. *The excellence of God's goodness is manifested by four considerations*. First consider the divine person who manifests it. Remember who God is! Think how great He is. No one likes to be insulted by his inferiors, then how can God bear to be insulted by the creatures whom He has made, the creatures who owe Him their very breath? How can God endure to be opposed and defied by one so utterly insignificant and unworthy as man is? Yet He does not crush His rebellious creatures as He well might.

Think next of His omniscience. We sometimes bear with people because we forget much of what they have said or done, but what would it be to have before your mind's eye all the evil speaking of 20 years ago and all the hard sayings and unkind acts of a long life of enmity against you? Yet, though God has all our sins always before Him and our most secret sins in the light of His countenance, He still forbears to smite and destroy us!

Think, too, how powerful He is—none can escape from Him when He pursues them. Moses could run away from Pharaoh and hide in the land of Midian, but where could we flee to escape from the vengeance of God if He had resolved at once to punish all those who had rebelled against Him? How could we have stood up against Him? Where are the bars of brass that could resist the omnipotence of the besieging God? None of His creatures can stand against Him anymore than the stubble can stand against the flame, or the straw against the fire. And yet He has such forbearance that He has put up with us all these years! O blessed God I love You for Your wondrous patience to me and to my fellow sinners that You still spare us though we have so sorely provoked You!

Then take another measuring line and consider the being to whom God's goodness is manifested—that is, *man*. Think of what man is and then ask yourself if such a little insignificant creature dares to proclaim war against God! Has he the audacity to defy God and to say, "I will not do what You have bid me do?" Why, the ant that crosses your path on a summer evening is not half as insignificant in comparison with you as you are when compared with the Almighty God! And it is man who has received so much from God—man, who could not live an instant without God's permission and support—who stands up and says that he will not be God's servant and that he will not accept the Savior whom God has appointed! O you heavens, how is it that you do not fall and crush the reprobate? Great God, it is only because You are God that You put up with sinful men so long!

Another measuring line is this—consider the conduct to which God's goodness is a reply. In other words, consider what *sin* is. There is not a person here who has ever seen sin as it really is in God's sight. In the least sin there is more evil than there is even in hell, for hell is at least the vindication of divine justice, but sin defies that justice. Sin is an unlimited and unmitigated evil. There are sins that are so wanton, so aggravating, so willful and men go so much out of their way to commit them! There are sins that are repeated over and over—even in spite of chastisement. There are some sins that are so polluting, so defiling in which a man degrades and ruins others as well as himself. And there are some sins so infamous that it is marvelous that God still bears with the men who commit them and that while He holds back the thunderbolts of justice, He holds out the silver scepter of mercy and says even to the chief of sinners, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

Then if we needed one other measuring line, it would be the consideration of the gifts which God's goodness brings. Our common mercies—daily bread, raiment to put on, health for necessary labor, rescue from peril, preservation from death, the institution of the Sabbath, the gift of the Bible, the gospel of salvation—these are immeasurable blessings! Who, then, can calculate the riches of the goodness and forbearance and long-suffering of God?

I cannot help feeling ashamed of myself while I am talking to you upon this theme, for I have a case to plead for God that I think I ought to plead much better than I do. And if I knew how to do it, I would do it, my gracious, blessed God! Alas, alas, there are some of you who treat God so ill, yet He has never done you any harm and He is always doing you good! If His service were slavery, I would not wonder if you did not serve Him. If to be His children were to be tortured and made unhappy, I could not so much blame you. But as His service is perfect freedom. As His love is ineffable bliss. As His presence is heaven begun below, why do you flee from that which is for your own highest happiness and run away from that which is all of God's mercy to you? O sin, you have made men insane! You have given them over to a madness which makes them see no beauty in God, no charms in the person of the Redeemer and no attraction in the salvation which He has bought with His own most precious blood! O divine Spirit, I cannot plead as I would—You come and make men value as they ought, the riches of the goodness and forbearance and long-suffering of God!

II. Now let me briefly try to show you HOW MEN MAY DESPISE THE GOODNESS, FORBEARANCE AND LONGSUFFERING OF GOD.

First, many persons do it *by never considering that they do receive goodness from God*. They take all that God gives them as a matter of course and never think about it. If you have been very generous to some poor man and have relieved his needs for several years, I think you must sometimes feel grieved if you find that he takes it quite as a matter of course and never shows any gratitude to you, but *expects* you to still do just as you have so long done. You think to yourself, "I am not bound to help him. It is entirely an act of favor on my part." You do not like to say,

"I will not give him anymore," but you are strongly tempted to say so. Now if you have been ungrateful to your God for all His goodness to you, I pray you not to continue so. The swine walk under the oak and eat up the acorns that fall from it, but never spoke out their thanks for them—will you be such swine as that? Oh, be not so! Rather imitate the little chicken which drinks out of the stream and then raises its head as if to thank God. I know that there are many here who would not like to be considered ungrateful, neither are they so to their fellow men. I know you would scorn such a character, yet you are ungrateful to your best friend who has done far more for you than all the rest of your friends put together! Do not despise His goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering by allowing it to remain unnoticed.

Some despise the long-suffering of God *by opposing His design in it*. The design of God's goodness is to make bad men into good men. The design of God's mercy to impenitent sinners is to make them penitent. You say to God, "I will not have You for my God" and He replies, "I will prolong your life. I will prosper you in business. I will multiply My favors to you." Yet you still say, "But I am not going to be moved by all this." God comes to your bedside when you are lying there very ill—the cold sweat of death is standing on your brow and He draws the fever from your system and again prolongs your life—and gives you another 10 years here, yet you say to Him, "I love You none the better even after doing all this for me." Is that right? God has been gently leading you, not driving you, but drawing you towards Himself out of love towards you—do not despise His loving-kindness by pulling the other way.

There are some who do even worse than this, for *they pervert the long-suffering and forbearance of God into a reason for being unbelieving*. They say to themselves, "We have got on very well in this world although we have never been religious. We have had a good time of it though we have never prayed. We have been raised up from sickness, though afterwards we never thought about religion anymore, so we may do as we like. God will not be angry with us, He will not stretch out His hand and smite us." Ah, I know nothing that is more perilous to an ungodly man than to go on prospering! But whenever I meet with an ungodly man who is in great trouble, I have a hope that God has chosen that man unto eternal life and that, therefore, He will not let him go to hell, but puts bars and posts across the road to block the way to perdition. But as for the man who is prosperous though ungodly, in regard to whom every wind seems to be favorable to his ships and every season gives him better crops than his neighbors have—and whose children are multiplied, and so on—do you know why God acts thus towards him? I can tell you.

I have heard of a Christian woman who had a very wicked husband. He was a dreadful swearer and always opposed her in every good thing, yet she was the kindest wife that a man ever had. One night, or rather, early in the morning, as he sat drinking with his companions, he told them that he had a splendid wife and that if they were all to go home with him, even though it was two o'clock in the morning, if she had gone to bed, she would get up and prepare supper for them without showing

the slightest sign of displeasure, but would, for his sake, wait upon them as if they were lords in the land! They went to the house and the husband called for his wife, as she had gone to bed. She put on her clothes, came down and got ready such things as she had—and made them all welcome. They asked her why she was so kind to one who was so brutal to her, but she would not answer. Another day she said to her husband, when *he* asked a similar question, "I have prayed for you thousands of times and I have done all I can to bring you to the Savior. Yet there is a dreadful fear in my mind that you will be lost. I am afraid you will continue to sin against God and that you will be sent to hell, so I have made up my mind that I will make you as happy as you can be while you are here, for I fear that you will never have any happiness hereafter."

And I believe it is for the same reason that God lets wicked men get rich. "There," says the Lord, "they shall enjoy themselves while they can. I will give them these things while they are here, for the time will come when I can show them no pity, but My inexorable justice must drive them from all pleasure forever." I think if there had been any true manhood in that man whom I have mentioned, he would have said to his wife, "Woman, do you feel like that towards me? Have you loved me so much and prayed for me so long, and have you put up with any inconvenience so that you may do me good? Then, at any rate, I will be unkind to you no longer and I will hear what these things are that you say will make for my peace." A sane man would talk like that—and if you are sane, I pray you now to heed what your God says to you! This is how He put the case long ago and He might put it to you in the same way—"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner and the donkey his master's crib, but Israel does not know. My people do not consider." Which of you would keep an ox or a donkey if it never served you in any way? Which of you would suffer even a dog to be in your house if it always flew at you when you came near it? Yet God has put up with you, His ungrateful creatures, for these many years. Will you never kiss the hand that feeds you? Are you more asinine than a donkey? Are you more of a beast than the ox, itself, is? Oh, may God deliver sinners from continuing such injustice to Him and such cruelty to themselves!

III. Now, lastly, LET US FEEL THE FORCE OF THE LEADING OF GOD'S GOODNESS—"the goodness of God leads you to repentance."

It ought to be reason enough for our not despising God's goodness that *it is a very unjust thing to despise it.* I looked in classic history to see if I could find any parallel case to this between man and God—and I found one something like it. In Alexander's day, a soldier who had been shipwrecked, was hospitably received by a certain person who took him to his house and fed and clothed him. But as soon as the soldier was able to get back to Alexander, he misrepresented the case with many lies, and asked the great commander to give him the house of the man who had entertained him. When Alexander afterwards found out the ingratitude of the wretch who thus tried to deprive his host of his own house in order to get it for himself, he ordered him to be branded on the forehead

so that he might be known everywhere as the ungrateful guest! But what branding iron and what coals of juniper shall ever be hot enough to brand the ungrateful being who was created by God, fed by God, put in the way of mercy, invited by grace—and yet remained ungrateful?

Seldom is man so ungenerous to his fellow man as man is to his God. The very men who would scorn to rob their fellow men of a farthing, go on robbing God without compunction all their lives! Men who are scrupulously just in their dealings with their fellow merchants will persist in injustice to the God who created them! Why is this base conduct? Oh, I pray you, continue it not! I would, with tears in my eyes, entreat you to continue it no longer. Are you not under great obligation to God? You know that He made you. Deep down in your soul there is a voice that says to you, "It is God who keeps you alive." You know that it is so! Then how can you imagine that the Creator and Preserver of all can be forgotten with impunity? Let me give you a text that will remind you how dangerous a thing it is to live in the neglect of God's goodness—"The wicked shall be turned into hell," (especially notice the next words), "and all the nations that *forget* God." When I began to quote that text, you may have said to yourself, "I am not wicked. I do not do anything outrageous." But listen again to the rest of the verse, "and all the nations that *forget"*—not the nations that swear, or blaspheme, or rebel against God—but "all the nations that *forget God*." "That is only one text," you say. Ah, but here is another and there are many like it—"How shall we escape if we"—what? "If we *neglect"*—that is all—it is only a matter of neglect—"if we *neglect* so great a salvation?" Despising God by neglecting Him—despising Him by forgetting Him—this is a grievous kind of despising that will bring eternal ruin upon men!—

"Lord, do You the sinner turn!
Rouse him from his senseless state.
Let him not Your counsel spurn,
Rue his fatal choice too late!"

It may seem to some of you, child's play to face this congregation and to speak as I am now doing. But the Lord knows it is no child's play to me! I feel that I am accountable to God for all of you who, within a short time, will have to stand before my Master's judgment seat. And if at the last tremendous day I were summoned to give an account of how I employed this opportunity of speaking to you. And if I should have to confess that I did not tell you plainly that the neglect of God would ruin you forever. If I should have to confess that I was cold and indifferent—as cold and indifferent as you now are—then *my* soul would be crimsoned with *your* soul's blood! But it cannot be, it shall not be so, for I do entreat you, by the living God and by the Christ who died to save sinners—by the certainty of death, by the certainty of judgment, by the splendors of heaven and by the terrors of hell—I do beseech you to consider the goodness and forbearance and long-suffering of God! Turn to Him with weeping and with supplication and, above all, turn to the gospel as it is here declared, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Or,

to put it in Christ's own full way, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned."

The Lord bring you all to simple faith in Jesus Christ, His Son, then to obedience to Christ in the matter of baptism—and then may He preserve you by His grace until life's last hour, never again to despise, but forever to adore the goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering of God, for His dear name's sake!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ROMANS 4; 5:1, 2.

Romans 4:1. *What shall we say, then, that Abraham our father as pertaining to the flesh, has found?* What blessings did really come to Abraham, the father of the faithful? What is the nature of that covenant of grace which God made with him?

2. *For if Abraham were justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.* Certainly, before God Abraham neither gloried nor yet was justified by his works!

3. *For what says the Scripture*? That is the question for us always to ask, "What says the Scripture?"

3. *Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness.* There is no doubt about that point, for in Genesis 15:6 we read, "He believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness."

4. *Now to him that works is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.* He gets what he earns, what he deserves to have! What he receives is "not reckoned of grace, but of debt."

5-8. *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.* So then it seems that the blessings of salvation come to men through faith and not through their own efforts—not as the reward of merit, but as the simple gift of God's grace!

9. *Comes this blessedness, then, upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also*? Is this blessing entailed upon the natural seed of Abraham, alone, or is it for others besides the Jews?

9, 10. *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!* If you turn again to Genesis 15:6 and then to 17:10, you will find that Abraham was justified by faith *before* the rite of circumcision was instituted! The blessing came to him "not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision."

11, 12. *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 be 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 un-*

circumcised. The vital question is not, "How were we born?" Or, "What rites and ceremonies have been practiced upon us?" But, "Do we believe in God? Have we true faith in God's word? Are we trusting our souls to the keeping of God's Son?"

13. *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.* The law was promulgated on Mount Sinai 400 years after the covenant of grace was made with Abraham, the father of believers, and so made with all believers, for they are his true seed—and God has entered into a covenant of grace and salvation with them.

14, 15. *For if they which are of the law are heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of no effect because the law works wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.* So that the law is not for justification, but for condemnation. It is the law that reveals sin and that shows sin to be sin—so men can never become right with God by the law.

16. *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace,* [See Sermons #1347, Volume 23—HOW IS SALVATION RECEIVED? and #2159, Volume 36—THE HOLDFASTS OF FAITH—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed.* That is, to all believers who are the true seed of Abraham. He is the father of the faithful and if you are one of the faithful, he is your father! And the covenant which God made with Abraham and his seed was made with you and on your account if you are, indeed, a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ!

16-22. *Not to those only who are of the law, but also to those who are 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) before Him whom he believed, even God, who quickens the dead and calls those things which are not, as though they were. 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* [See Sermons #733, Volume 13—UNSTAGGERING FAITH and #1367, Volume 23—STRONG FAITH—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *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 also able to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.* O soul, if you are like one who is dead. If you are devoid of all strength, grace and savor—if you can but believe in God who can quicken the dead, if you will but trust your soul in the hands of Him who is able even to raise dry bones out of their graves and make them live—your faith shall be imputed unto you for righteousness! Your faith is that which shall justify you in the sight of God and you shall be "accepted in the Beloved." Oh, what marvels faith works! This is the root grace—all manner of good things spring from faith—but there must be faith as the root if there are to be other graces as the fruit. Do your God the honor to believe Him—to believe that He cannot lie—to believe that He has never promised what He is not able

to perform. If you will do that, it is clear that you are one of Abraham's seed and the covenant made with Abraham was made with you also!

23-25. *Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us, also, to whom it shall be imputed if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification.* [See Sermon #2357, Volume 40—THE TWO PILLARS OF SALVATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] See the great object of saving faith? Christ, once dead, has been raised from the dead—and if you would be saved—you must rely upon the crucified and risen Savior! If you thus believe that Jesus the crucified is the Christ of God, the anointed Messiah and Redeemer, you prove that you are born of God! And if you trust yourself to the risen and glorified Christ, you have risen in Him and you shall rise to be with Him forever and ever.

Romans 5:1. *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* [See Sermon #1456, Volume 25—PEACE—A FACT AND A FEELING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] My friend, are these words true concerning you? Can you put your finger on this verse and say, "this is true of me, 'Therefore being justified by faith, we have—*I have*—peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ'"? We who have believed in Jesus enjoy that peace—a deep, profound calm is upon our spirit whenever we think of God! We are not afraid of Him, We are not afraid to meet Him even on His judgment seat! "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Have you peace with God? Are you sure that you have it? If not, perhaps you are not justified by faith, for that is the root of it! "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. *By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* This is a golden staircase—justification brings peace and peace brings access into this grace wherein we are established! And then comes the joy of *hope*—and that hope fixes its eyes on nothing less than the glory of God. Grace is the steppingstone to glory—and they who are justified by faith shall in due time be glorified by love!

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THE BEATITUDES
NO. 3155

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 29, 1909.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT,
IN THE YEAR 1873.

"And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain: and when He was seated, His disciples came to Him. And He opened His mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 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." Matthew 5:1-12.

[In the year 1873, Mr. Spurgeon delivered what he called "a series of sententious homilies" on the Beatitudes. After an introductory discourse upon the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes as a whole, he intended to preach upon each one separately, but either illness or some other special reason prevented him from fully carrying out this purpose. There are now, however, four Sermons upon the Beatitudes, three of which have already been published—See Sermons #422, Volume 7—THE PEACEMAKER; #2103, Volume 35—THE HUNGER AND THIRST WHICH ARE BLESSED and #3065, Volume 53—THE THIRD BEATITUDE—and this one. Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

ONE enjoys a sermon all the better for knowing something of *the preacher*. It is natural that, like John in Patmos, we should turn to see the voice which spoke with us. Turn here, then, and learn that the Christ of God is the preacher of the Sermon on the Mount! He who delivered the Beatitudes was not only the Prince of Preachers, but He was, beyond all others, qualified to discourse upon *the subject* which He had chosen. Jesus the Savior was best able to answer the question, "Who are the saved?" Being Himself the ever-blessed Son of God, and the channel of blessings, He was best able to inform us who are, indeed, the blessed of the Father. As judge, it will be His office to divide the blessed from the accursed at the last and, therefore, it is most meet that in gospel majesty He should declare the principle of that judgment, that all men may be forewarned.

Do not fall into the mistake of supposing that the opening verses of the Sermon on the Mount set forth how we are to be saved, or you may cause your soul to stumble. You will find the fullest light upon that matter in other parts of our Lord's teaching, but here He discourses upon the question, "*Who* are the saved?" or, "What are the marks and evidences of a work of grace in the soul?" Who should know the saved as well as the Savior does? The shepherd best discerns his own sheep, and the Lord,

Himself alone knows infallibly them who are His. We may regard the marks of the blessed ones here given as being the sure witness of truth, for they are given by Him who cannot err, who cannot be deceived and who, as their Redeemer, knows His own. The Beatitudes derive much of their weight from the wisdom and glory of Him who pronounced them and, therefore, at the outset your attention is called thereto. Lange says that "man is the mouth of creation, and Jesus is the mouth of humanity." But we prefer, in this place, to think of Jesus as the mouth of deity and to receive His every word as girt with infinite power!

The occasion of this sermon is noteworthy. It was delivered when our Lord is described as "seeing the multitudes." He waited until the congregation around Him had reached its largest size and was most impressed with His miracles—and then He took the tide at its flood, as every wise man should. The sight of a vast concourse of people ought always to move us to pity, for it represents a mass of ignorance, sorrow, sin and necessity far too great for us to estimate. The Savior looked upon the people with omniscient eyes which saw all their sad condition. He *saw* the multitudes in an emphatic sense and His soul was stirred within Him at the sight. His was not the transient tear of Xerxes when he thought on the death of his armed myriads, but it was practical sympathy with the hosts of mankind! No one cared for them—they were like sheep without a shepherd, or like shocks of wheat ready to shale out for lack of harvesters to gather them in. Jesus therefore hastened to the rescue. He notices, no doubt, with pleasure, the eagerness of the crowd to hear—and this drew Him on to speak. A writer quoted in the "Catena, Aurea" has well said, "Every man in his own trade or profession rejoices when he sees an opportunity of exercising it. The carpenter, if he sees a goodly tree, desires to have it felled, that he may employ his skill on it. And even so the preacher, when he sees a great congregation, his heart rejoices and he is glad of the occasion to teach." If men become negligent of hearing and our audience dwindles down to a handful, it will be a great distress to us if we have to remember that when the many were anxious to hear, we were not diligent to preach to them. He who will not reap when the fields are white unto the harvest, will have only himself to blame if in other seasons he is unable to fill his arms with sheaves! Opportunities should be promptly used whenever the Lord puts them in our way. It is good fishing where there are plenty of fish and when the birds flock around the fowler it is time for him to spread his nets!

The place from which these blessings were delivered is next worthy of notice. "Seeing the multitudes, He went up *into a mountain*." Whether or not the chosen mountain was that which is now known as the Horns of Hattin, is not a point which it falls in our way to contest—that He ascended an elevation is enough for our purpose. Of course this would be mainly because of the accommodation which the open hillside would afford to the people. And the readiness with which, upon some jutting crag, the preacher might sit down and be both heard and seen. But we believe the chosen place of meeting had also its instruction. Exalted doctrine might well be symbolized by an ascent to the mount—at any rate, let every minister feel that he should ascend in spirit when he is about to descant upon the lofty themes of the gospel! A doctrine which could not be

hidden and which would produce a church comparable to a city set on a hill, fitly began to be proclaimed from a conspicuous place! A crypt or cavern would have been out of all character for a message which is to be published upon the housetops and preached to every creature under heaven!

Besides, mountains have always been associated with distinct eras in the history of the people of God. Mount Sinai is sacred to the law of God and Mount Zion symbolical of the church. Calvary was also, in due time, to be connected with redemption and the Mount of Olives with the ascension of our risen Lord. It was meet, therefore, that the opening of the Redeemer's ministry should be connected with a mountain such as "the hill of the Beatitudes." It was from a mountain that God proclaimed the law. It is on a mountain that Jesus expounds it! Thank God it was not a mountain around which bounds had to be placed—it was not the mountain which burned with fire from which Israel retired in fear! It was, doubtless, a mountain all carpeted with grass and dainty with fair flowers—upon whose side the olive and fig flourished in abundance except where the rocks pushed upward through the sod and eagerly invited their Lord to honor them by making them His pulpit and throne! May I not add that Jesus was in deep sympathy with nature and, therefore, delighted in an audience chamber whose floor was grass and whose roof was the blue sky? The open space was in keeping with His large heart! The breezes were akin to His free spirit and the world around was full of symbols and parables in accord with the truths of God He taught. Better than long drawn aisle, or tier on tier of crowded gallery, was that grassed hillside meeting place! Would God we more often heard sermons amid soul-inspiring scenery! Surely preacher and hearer would be equally benefited by the change from the house made with hands to the God made temple of nature!

There was instruction in *the posture* of the preacher. "*When He was seated*," He commenced to speak. We do not think that either weariness or the length of the discourse suggested His sitting down. He frequently stood when He preached at considerable length. We incline to the belief that when He became a pleader with the sons of men, He stood with uplifted hands, eloquent from head to foot—entreating, beseeching and exhorting with every member of His body, as well as every faculty of His mind. But now that He was, as it were, a judge awarding the blessings of the kingdom, or a King on His throne separating His true subjects from aliens and foreigners, He sat down. As an authoritative teacher, He officially occupied the chair of doctrine and spoke *ex cathedral*, as men say, as a Solomon acting as the master of assemblies or a Daniel come to judgment! He sat as a refiner and His word was as a fire. His posture is not accounted for by the fact that it was the Oriental custom for the teacher to sit and the pupil to stand, for our Lord was something more than a didactic teacher—He was a preacher, a prophet, a pleader—and, consequently, He adopted other attitudes when fulfilling those offices. But on this occasion He sat in His place as Rabbi of the church, the authoritative legislator of the kingdom of heaven, the monarch in the midst of His people. Come here, then, and listen to the King in Jeshurun, the

divine lawgiver, delivering not the ten commands, but the seven, or, if you will, the nine Beatitudes of His blessed kingdom!

It is then added, to indicate the *style* of His delivery, that "*He opened His mouth*." And certain cavilers of shallow wit have asked, "How could He teach without opening His mouth?" To which the reply is that He very frequently taught, and taught much without saying a word since His whole life was teaching and His miracles and deeds of love were the lessons of a master instructor. It is not superfluous to say that "He opened His mouth, and taught them," for He had taught them often when His mouth was closed. Besides that, teachers are to be frequently met with who seldom open their mouths—they hiss the everlasting gospel through their teeth, or mumble it within their mouths as if they had never been commanded to—"cry aloud, and spare not." Jesus Christ spoke like a man in earnest. He enunciated clearly and spoke loudly. He lifted up His voice like a trumpet and published salvation far and wide—like a man who had something to say which He desired His audience to hear and feel! Oh, that the very manner and voice of those who preach the gospel were such as to bespeak their zeal for God and their love for souls! So should it be, but it is not so in all cases. When a man grows terribly in earnest while speaking, his mouth appears to be enlarged in sympathy with his hearers—this characteristic has been observed in vehement political orators—and the messengers of God should blush if no such characteristic can be laid at their door!

"He opened His mouth, and taught them"—have we not here a further hint that as He had from the earliest days opened the mouths of His holy prophets, so now He opens His own mouth to inaugurate a yet fuller revelation of God? If Moses spoke, who made Moses' mouth? If David sang, who opened David's lips that he might show forth the praises of God? Who opened the mouths of the prophets? Was it not the Lord, by His Spirit? Is it not, therefore, well said that now He opened His own mouth and spoke directly as the incarnate God to the children of men? Now, by His own inherent power and inspiration, He began to speak, not through the mouth of Isaiah, or of Jeremiah, but by His own mouth! Now was a spring of wisdom to be unsealed from which all generations should drink rejoicing! Now would the most majestic and yet most simple of all discourses be heard by mankind! The opening of the fountain which flowed from the desert rock was not one half as full of joy to men! Let our prayer be, "Lord, as You have opened Your mouth, open our hearts," for when the Redeemer's mouth is open with blessings—and our hearts are open with desires—a glorious filling with all the fullness of God will be the result! And then our mouths shall also be opened to show forth our Redeemer's praise!

Let us now consider the Beatitudes, themselves, trusting that by the help of God's Spirit, we may perceive their wealth of holy meaning. No words in the compass of sacred writ are more precious or more freighted with solemn meaning.

The first word of our Lord's great standard sermon is, "Blessed." You have not failed to notice that the last word of the Old Testament is, "*curse*," and it is suggestive that the opening sermon of our Lord's ministry commences with the word, "Blessed." Nor did He begin in that man-

ner and then immediately change His strain, for nine times did that charming word fall from His lips in rapid succession. It has been well said that Christ's teaching might be summed up in two words, "Believe," and, "Blessed." Mark tells us that He preached, saying, "Repent, and believe the gospel." And Matthew in this passage informs us that He came saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." All His teaching was meant to bless the sons of men, for "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."—

"His hand no thunder bears,
No terror clothes His brow!
No bolts to drive our guilty souls
To fiercer flames below."

His lips, like a honeycomb, drop sweetness. Promises and blessings are flowing out of His mouth. "Grace is poured into Your lips," said the psalmist, and consequently grace poured *from* His lips! He was blessed forever and He continued to distribute blessings throughout the whole of His life, till, "as He blessed them, He was taken up into heaven." The law had two mountains, Ebal and Gerizim—one for blessing and another for cursing—but the Lord Jesus blesses evermore—and curses not.

The Beatitudes before us, which relate to character, are seven. The eighth is a benediction upon the persons described in the seven Beatitudes when their excellence has provoked the hostility of the wicked and, therefore, it may be regarded as a confirming and summing up of the seven blessings which precede it. Setting that aside, then, as a summary, we regard the Beatitudes as seven and will speak of them as such. *The whole seven describe a perfect character and make up a perfect benediction*. Each blessing is separately precious, yes, more precious than much fine gold. But we do well to regard them as a whole, for as a whole they were spoken, and from that point of view they are a wonderfully perfect chain of seven priceless links put together with such consummate art as only our heavenly Bezaleel, the Lord Jesus, ever possessed! No such instruction in the art of blessedness can be found anywhere else. The learned have collected 288 different opinions of the ancients with regard to happiness—and there is not one which hits the mark! But our Lord has, in a few telling sentences, told us all about it without using a solitary redundant word, or allowing the slightest omission! The seven golden sentences are perfect as a whole and each one occupies its appropriate place. Together they are a ladder of light—and each one is a step of purest sunshine!

Observe carefully and you will see that *each one rises above those which precede it*. The first Beatitude is by no means so elevated as the third, nor the third as the seventh. There is a great advance from the poor in spirit to the pure in heart and the peacemaker. I have said that they rise, but it would be quite as correct to say that *they descend*, for from the human point of view they do so—to mourn is a step below and yet above being poor in spirit. And the peacemaker, while the highest form of Christian, will find himself often called upon to take the lowest place for peace's sake. "The seven Beatitudes mark deepening *humiliation* and growing *exaltation*." In proportion as men rise in the reception of the

divine blessing, they sink in their own esteem—and count it their honor to do the humblest works.

Not only do the Beatitudes rise, one above another, but *they spring out of each other* as if each one depended upon all that went before. Each growth feeds a higher growth and the seventh is the product of all the other six! The two blessings which we shall have first to consider have this relation. "Blessed are they that mourn" grows out of, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Why do they mourn? They mourn because they are "poor in spirit." "Blessed are the meek" is a benediction which no man reaches till he has felt his spiritual poverty, and mourned over it. "Blessed are the merciful" follows upon the blessing of the meek because men do not acquire the forgiving, sympathetic, merciful spirit until they have been made meek by the experience of the first two benedictions. This same rising and outgrowth may be seen in the whole seven. The stones are laid, one upon the other, in fair colors and polished after the similitude of a palace—they are the natural sequel and completion of each other—even as were the seven days of the world's first week.

Mark, also, in this ladder of light, that though each step is above the other and each step springs out of the other, yet *each one is perfect in itself* and contains within itself a priceless and complete blessing. The very lowest of the blessed, namely, the poor in spirit, have their peculiar benediction and, indeed, it is one of such an order that it is used in the summing up of all the rest! "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven" is both the first and the eighth benediction. The highest characters, namely, the peacemakers, who are called the children of God, are not said to be more than blessed—they doubtless enjoy more of the blessedness, but they do not, in the covenant provision, possess more.

Note, also, with delight, that *the blessing is, in every case, in the present tense*—a happiness to be enjoyed and delighted in now! It is not "Blessed *shall* be," but, "Blessed *are*." There is not one step in the whole divine experience of the believer—not one link in the wonderful chain of divine grace—in which there is a withdrawal of the divine smile or an absence of real happiness! Blessed is the first moment of the Christian life on earth—and blessed is the last! Blessed is the spark which trembles in the flax and blessed is the flame which ascends to heaven in a holy ecstasy! Blessed is the bruised reed and blessed is that tree of the Lord which is full of sap, the cedar of Lebanon, which the Lord has planted! Blessed is the babe in grace and blessed is the perfect man in Christ Jesus! As the Lord's mercy endures forever, even so shall our blessedness!

We must not fail to notice that in the seven Beatitudes, *the blessing of each one is appropriate to the character*. "Blessed are the poor in spirit" is appropriately connected with enrichment in the possession of a kingdom more glorious than all the thrones of earth! It is also most appropriate that those who mourn should be comforted. That the meek, who renounce all self-aggrandizement, should enjoy most of life and so should inherit the earth. It is divinely fit that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness should be filled—and that those who show mercy to others should obtain it themselves! Who but the pure in heart should see the infinitely pure and holy God? And who but the peacemakers should be called the children of the God of peace?

Yet the careful eye perceives that *each benediction*, though appropriate, is worded *paradoxically*. Jeremy Taylor says, "They are so many paradoxes and impossibilities reduced to reason." This is clearly seen in the first Beatitude, for the poor in spirit are said to possess a kingdom. And it is equally vivid in the collection as a whole, for it treats of happiness—and yet poverty leads the van and persecution brings up the rear! Poverty is the opposite of riches and yet how rich are those who possess a kingdom! And persecution is supposed to destroy enjoyment and yet it is here made a subject of rejoicing! See the sacred art of Him who spoke as never man spoke! He can, at the same time, make His words both simple and paradoxical—and thereby win our attention and instruct our intellects. Such a preacher deserves the most thoughtful of hearers.

The whole of the seven Beatitudes composing this celestial ascent to the house of the Lord conducts believers to an elevated table-land upon which they dwell alone and are not reckoned among the people. Their holy separation from the world brings upon them persecution for righteousness' sake, but in this they do not lose their happiness, but rather have it increased to them and confirmed by the double repetition of the benediction! The hatred of man does not deprive the saint of the love of God—even revilers contribute to his blessedness! Who among us will be ashamed of the cross which must attend such a crown of loving-kindness and tender mercies? Whatever the curses of man may involve, they are so small a drawback to the consciousness of being blessed in a sevenfold manner by the Lord, that they are not worthy to be compared with the grace which is already revealed in us!

Here we pause for now and shall, by God's help, consider one of the Beatitudes in our next homily.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 5:1-30.

Verses 1, 2. *And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain: and when He was seated, His disciples came to Him: and He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying.* Our Savior soon gathered a congregation. The multitudes perceived in Him a love to them and a willingness to impart blessing to them. And, therefore, they gathered about Him. He chose the mountain and the open air for the delivery of this great discourse—and we would be glad to find such a place for our assemblies—but in this variable climate we cannot often do so. "And when He was seated." The preacher sat and the people stood. We might make a helpful change if we were sometimes to adopt a similar plan now. I am afraid that ease of posture may contribute to the creation of slumber of heart in the hearers. There Christ sat and "His disciples came to Him." They formed the inner circle that was ever nearest to Him—and to them He imparted His choicest secrets. But He also spoke to the multitude and therefore it is said that, "He opened His mouth," as well He might when there were such great truths of God to proceed from it and so vast a crowd to hear them! "He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying."

3. *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* This is a gracious beginning to our Savior's discourse, "Blessed are the poor." None ever considered the poor as Jesus did, but here He is speaking of a poverty of spirit, a lowliness of heart, an absence of self-esteem. Where that kind of spirit is found, it is sweet poverty! "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

4. *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.* There is a blessing which often goes with mourning, itself, but when the sorrow is of a *spiritual* sort—mourning for sin—then is it blest, indeed!—

"Lord, let me weep for nothing but sin
And after none but Thee.
And then I would—oh, that I might—
A constant mourner be!"

5. *Blessed are the meek.* The quiet-spirited, the gentle, the self-sacrificing.

5. *For they shall inherit the earth.* It looks as if they would be pushed out of the world but they shall not be, "for they shall inherit the earth." The wolves devour the sheep, yet there are more sheep in the world than there are wolves. And the sheep continue to multiply and to feed in green pastures.

6. *Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness.* Pining to be holy, longing to serve God, anxious to spread every righteous principle—blessed are they!

6, 7. *For they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful*—those who are kind, generous, sympathetic, ready to forgive those who have wronged them—blessed are they.

7, 8. *For they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart.* It is a most blessed attainment to have such a longing for purity as to love everything that is chaste and holy—and to abhor everything that is questionable and unhallowed. Blessed are the pure in heart.

8. *For they shall see God.* There is a wonderful connection between hearts and eyes! A man who has the stains of filth on his soul cannot see God. But they who are purified in heart are purified in vision, too—"they shall see God."

9. *Blessed are the peacemakers.* Those who always end a quarrel if they can. Those who lay themselves out to prevent discord.

9-10. *For they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* They share the kingdom of heaven with the poor in spirit! They are often evilly spoken of. They have sometimes to suffer the spoiling of their goods—many of them have laid down their lives for Christ's sake. But they are truly blessed, for "theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

11. *Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake.* Mind, it must be said *falsely*, and it must be *for Christ's sake*, if you are to be blessed. There is no blessing in having evil spoken of you truthfully, or in having it spoken of you falsely because of some bitterness in your own spirit.

12. *Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.* You are in

the true prophetic succession if you cheerfully bear reproach of this kind for Christ's sake—you prove that you have the stamp and seal of those who are in the service of God!

13. *You are the salt of the earth.* Followers of Christ, "you are the salt of the earth." You help to preserve it and to subdue the corruption that is in it!

13. *But if the salt has lost its savor, with what shall it be salted*? A professing Christian with no grace in him—a religious man whose very religion is dead—what is the good of him? And he is in a hopeless condition. You can salt meat, but you cannot salt salt!

13. *It is, therefore, good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.* There are people who believe that you can be children of God, today, and children of the devil tomorrow—then again children of God the next day and children of the devil again the day after. But believe me, it is not so! If the work of grace is really worked of God in your soul, it will last through your whole life! And if it does not so last, that proves that it is not the work of God! God does not put His hand to this work a second time! There is no regeneration twice over—you can be born-again—but you cannot be born again, and again, and again as some teach! There is no note in Scripture of that kind. Hence I do rejoice that regeneration once truly worked of the Spirit of God is an incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever! But beware, professor, lest you should be like salt that has lost its savor and, therefore, is good for nothing.

14. *You are the light of the world.* [See Sermon #1109, Volume 19—THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Christ never contemplated the production of secret Christians—Christians whose virtues would never be displayed—pilgrims who would travel to heaven by night and never be seen by their fellow pilgrims or anyone else.

14, 15. *A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle* [See Sermon #1594, Volume 27—THE CANDLE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it gives light unto all that are in the house.* Christians ought to be seen and they ought to let their light be seen! They should never even attempt to conceal it. If you are a lamp, you have no right to be under a bushel, or under a bed—your place is on the lamp stand where your light can be seen.

16. *Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.* Not that they may glorify *you*—but that they may glorify your Father who is in heaven.

17, 18. *Think not that I have come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I have not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all is fulfilled.* No cross of a "T" and no dot of an "I" shall be taken from God's law! Its requirements will always be the same—immutably fixed and never to be abated by so little as "one jot or one tittle."

19, 20. *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. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. Who seemed to have reached the very highest degree of it—indeed, they thought they went rather over the mark than under it—but Christ says to His disciples, "Unless your righteousness goes beyond that."

20. *You shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.* These are solemn words of warning! God grant that we may have a righteousness which exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, a righteousness worked by the Spirit of God, a righteousness of the heart and of the life!

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.* Antiquity is often pleaded as an authority, but our King makes short work of "them of old time." He begins with one of their alterations of His Father's law. They added to the saved oracles. The first part of the saying which our Lord quoted was divine, but it was dragged down to a low level by the addition about the human court and the murderer's liability to appear there. It thus became rather a proverb among men than an inspired utterance from the mouth of God. Its meaning, as God spoke it, had a far wider range than when the offense was restrained to actual killing, such as could be brought before a human judgment seat. To narrow a command is measurably to annul it. We may not do this even with antiquity for our warrant. Better the whole truth newly stated than an old lie in an ancient language.

22. *But I say unto you, 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*. Murder lies within anger, for we wish harm to the object of our wrath, or even wish that he did not exist—and this is to kill him in desire. Anger "*without a cause"* is forbidden by the commandment which says, "You shall not kill," for unjust anger is killing in *intent*. Such anger without cause brings us under higher judgment than that of Jewish police courts. God takes cognizance of the emotions from which acts of hate may spring and calls us to account as much for the angry feeling as for the murderous deed! Words also come under the same condemnation—a man shall be judged for what he "*shall say to his brother*." To call a man, *Raca*, or a worthless fellow, is to kill him in his reputation. And to say to him, "*You fool*," is to kill him as to the noblest characteristics of a man. Hence all this comes under such censure as men distribute in their councils. Yes, and what is far worse—the punishment awarded by the highest court of the universe which dooms men to "hell fire." Thus our Lord and King restores the law of God to its true force and warns us that it denounces not only the overt act of killing, but every thought, feeling and word which would tend to injure a brother, or annihilate him by contempt.

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*. The Pharisee would urge as a cover for his malice that he brought a sacrifice to make atonement, but our Lord will have for-

giveness rendered to our brother, *first*, and then the offering presented. We ought to worship God thoughtfully and if, in the course of that thought, we remember that our brother has anything against us, we must stop. If we have wronged another, we are to pause, cease from the worship and hasten to seek reconciliation. We easily remember if we have anything against our brother, but now the memory is to be turned the other way! Only when we have remembered *our* wrong doing and made reconciliation can we hope for acceptance with the Lord. The rule is—first peace with man and then acceptance with God. The holy must be traversed to reach the holiest of all. Peace being made with our brother, then let us conclude our service towards our Father—and we shall do so with lighter heart and truer zeal. I would anxiously desire to be at peace with all men before I attempt to worship God, lest I present to God the sacrifice of fools.

25, 26. *Agree with your adversary quickly, 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.* In all disagreements be eager for peace. Leave off strife before you begin. In law-suits, seek speedy and peaceful settlements. Often in our Lord's days, this was the most gainful way and usually it is so now. Better lose your rights than get into the hands of those who with will only fleece you in the name of justice and hold you fast so long as a semblance of a demand can stand against you, or another penny can be extracted from you! In a country where "just fee" meant robbery, it was wisdom to be robbed and to make no complaint. Even in our own country, a lean settlement is better than a fat law-suit. Many go into the court to get wool, but come out closely shorn. Carry on no angry suits in courts, but make peace with the utmost promptness!

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.* In this case our King again sets aside the glosses of men upon the commands of God and makes the Law to be seen in its vast spiritual breadth. Whereas tradition had confined the prohibition to an overt act of unchastity, the King shows that it forbade the unclean *desires of the heart*. Here the divine law is shown to refer not only to the act of criminal activity, but even to the desire, imagination, or passion which would suggest such an infamy! What a King is ours who stretches His scepter over the realm of our inward lusts! How sovereignly He puts it—"*But I say unto you*"! Who but a divine being has authority to speak in this fashion? His word is law. So it ought to be, seeing He touches vice at the fountainhead and forbids uncleanness in the heart. If sin were not allowed in the mind, it would never be made manifest in the body! This, therefore, is a very effectual way of dealing with the evil. But how searching! How condemning! Irregular looks, unchaste desires and strong passions are of the very essence of adultery—and who can claim a lifelong freedom from them? Yet these are the things which defile a man. Lord, purge them out of my nature and make me pure within!

29. *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.* That which is the cause of sin is to be given up as well as the sin itself. It is not sinful to have an eye, or to cultivate keen perception—but if the eye of speculative knowledge leads us to offend by intellectual sin, it becomes the cause of evil and must be mortified. Anything, however harmless, which leads me to do, or think, or feel wrongly, I am to get rid of as much as if it were in itself an evil! Though to have done with it would involve deprivation, yet must it is dispensed with, since even a serious loss in one direction is far better than the losing of the whole man! Better a blind saint than a quick-sighted sinner! If abstaining from alcohol caused weakness of body, it would be better to be weak than to be strong and fall into drunkenness. Since vain speculations and reasoning land men in unbelief, we will have none of them! To "be cast into hell" is too great a risk to run to merely indulge the evil eye of lust or curiosity.

30. *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.* The cause of offense may be rather active as the hand than intellectual as the eye, but we had better be hindered in our work than drawn aside into temptation. The most dexterous hand must not be spared if it encourages us in doing evil! It is not because a certain thing may make us clever and successful that we are to allow it—if it should prove to be the frequent cause of our falling into sin—we must have done with it and place ourselves at a disadvantage for our life-work rather than ruin our whole being by sin. Holiness is to be our first objective—everything else must take a very secondary place. Right eyes and right hands are no longer right if they lead us wrong. Even hands and eyes must go that we may not offend our God by them. Yet, let no man read this *literally* and, therefore, mutilate his body as some foolish fanatics have done! The real meaning is clear enough.

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THE FIRST BEATITUDE
NO. 3156

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 5, 1909,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1873.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:3.

[In the year 1873, Mr. Spurgeon delivered what he called "a series of sententious homilies" on the Beatitudes. After an introductory discourse upon the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes as a whole, he intended to preach upon each one separately, but either illness or some other special reason prevented him from fully carrying out this purpose. There are, however, five Sermons upon the Beatitudes, four of which have already been published—See Sermons #422, Volume 7—THE PEACEMAKER; #2103, Volume 35—THE HUNGER AND THIRST WHICH ARE BLESSED; #3155, Volume 55—THE BEATITUDES—#3065, Volume 53—THE THIRD BEATITUDE—and this one—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

BEARING in mind the objective of our Savior's discourse, which was to describe the saved, and not to declare the plan of salvation, we now come to consider the first of the Beatitudes—

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

A ladder, if it is to be of any use, must have its first step near the ground, or feeble climbers will never be able to mount. It would have been a grievous discouragement to struggling faith if the first blessing had been given to the pure in heart—to that excellence the young beginner makes no claim—while to poverty of spirit he can reach without going beyond his line! Had the Savior said, "Blessed are the rich in divine grace," he would have spoken a great truth of God, but very few of us could have derived consolation from there. Our divine instructor begins at the beginning—with the very A B C of experience—and so enables the babes in grace to learn of Him. Had He commenced with higher attainments, He would have had to leave the little ones behind. A gigantic step at the bottom of these sacred stairs would have effectually prevented many from beginning to ascend—but tempted by the lowly step, which bears the inscription, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," thousands are encouraged to attempt the heavenly way!

It is worthy of grateful note that *this gospel blessing reaches down to the exact spot where the law leaves us when it has done for us the very best within its power or design.* The utmost the law can accomplish for our fallen humanity is to lay bare our spiritual poverty and convince us of it. It cannot by any possibility enrich a man—its greatest service is to tear him away from his fancied wealth of self-righteousness, show him his overwhelming indebtedness to God and bow him to the earth in self-despair. Like Moses, it leads away from Goshen, conducts into the wilderness and brings to the verge of an impassable stream—but it can do

no more! Joshua Jesus is needed to divide the Jordan and conduct into the Promised Land. The law rends the goodly Babylonian garment of our imaginary merits into ten pieces and proves our wedge of gold to be mere dross. And thus it leaves us, "naked, and poor, and miserable." To this point Jesus descends—His full line of blessing comes up to the verge of destruction, rescues the lost and enriches the poor! The gospel is as full as it is free!

This first Beatitude, though thus placed at a suitably low point where it may be reached by those who are in the earliest stages of grace is, however, none the less rich in blessing. The same word is used in the same sense at the beginning as at the end of the chain of Beatitudes—the poor in spirit are as truly and emphatically blessed as the meek, or the peacemakers. No hint is given as to lower degree, or inferior measure, but on the contrary, the very highest blessing, which is used in the 10th verse as the gathering up of all the seven Beatitudes, is ascribed to the first and lowest order of the blessed—"theirs is the kingdom of heaven." What more is said even of the co-heirs with prophets and martyrs? What more, indeed, could be said than this? The poor in spirit are lifted from the dunghill and set, not among hired servants in the field, but among princes in the kingdom of God! Blessed is that soul poverty of which the Lord Himself utters such good things! He sets much store by that which the world holds in small esteem, for His judgment is the reverse of the foolish verdict of the proud. As Watson well observes, "How poor are they that think themselves rich! How rich are they that see themselves to be poor! I call it *the jewel of poverty*. There are some paradoxes in religion which the world cannot understand—for a man to become a fool that he may be wise, to save his life by losing it, and to be made rich by being poor. Yet this poverty is to be sought for more than riches—under these rags is hid cloth of gold and out of this carcass came honey."

The cause for placing this Beatitude first is found in the fact that *it is first as a matter of experience.* It is essential to the succeeding characters. It underlies each one of them and is the soil in which alone they can be produced. No man ever mourns before God until he is poor in spirit! Neither does he become meek towards others till he has humble views of himself. Hungering and thirsting after righteousness are not possible to those who have high views of their own excellence—and mercy to those who offend is also a grace, difficult for those who are unconscious of their own spiritual need. Poverty in spirit is the porch of the temple of blessedness. As a wise man never thinks of building up the walls of his house till he has first dug out the foundation, so no person skillful in divine things will hope to see any of the higher virtues where poverty of spirit is absent. Till we are emptied of self we cannot be filled with God. Stripping must be worked upon us before we can be clothed with the righteousness which is from heaven. Christ is never precious till we are poor in spirit—we must see our own needs before we can perceive His wealth. Pride blinds the eyes and sincere humility must open them or the beauties of Jesus will be forever hidden from us. The strait gate is not wide enough to allow that man to enter who is great in his own esteem. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a man

conceited of his own spiritual riches to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Hence it is clear that the character described in connection with the first Beatitude is essential to the production of those which follow—and unless a man possesses it, he may look in vain for favor at the hands of the Lord! The proud are cursed, their pride alone secures them the curse and shuts them out from divine regard! "The proud He knows afar off." The lowly in heart are blessed, for to them and to their prayers Jehovah always has a tender regard.

It is worthy of double mention that *this first blessing is given rather to the absence than to the presence of praiseworthy qualities*—it is a blessing not upon the man who is distinguished for this virtue or remarkable for that excellence—but upon him whose chief characteristic is that he confesses his own sad deficiencies! This is intentional, in order that grace may be all the more manifestly seen to be grace, indeed, casting its eyes first, not upon purity, but upon poverty. Not upon showers of mercy, but upon those who need mercy. Not upon those who are called the children of God, but upon those who cry, "We are not worthy to be called Your sons." God wants nothing of us except our needs and these furnish Him with room to display His bounty when He freely supplies them! It is from the worse and not from the better side of fallen man that the Lord wins glory for Himself. Not what I have, but what I have not, is the first point of contact between my soul and God. The good may bring their goodness, but He declares that "there is none righteous, no, not one." The pious may offer their ceremonies, but He takes no delight in all their oblations. The wise may present their inventions, but He counts their wisdom to be folly. But when the poor in spirit come to Him with their utter destitution and distress, He accepts them at once! Yes, He bows the heavens to bless them and opens the storehouses of the covenant to satisfy them. As the surgeon seeks for the sick and as the alms giver looks after the poor, even so the Savior seeks out such as need Him—and upon them He exercises His divine office. Let every needy sinner drink comfort from this well!

Nor ought we to forget that this lowest note upon the octave of Beatitude, *this keynote of the whole music gives forth a certain sound as to the spirituality of the Christian dispensation.* Its first blessing is allotted to a characteristic, not of the outer, but of the inner man—to a state of soul and not to a posture of body—to the poor in spirit and not to the exact in ritual. That word, spirit, is one of the watchwords of the gospel dispensation. Garments, genuflections, rituals, oblations and the like are ignored—the Lord's eyes of favor rest only upon broken hearts and humbled spirits before Him. Even mental endowments are left in the cold shade and the spirit is made to lead the van—the soul, the true man, is regarded and all besides left as of comparatively little worth! This teaches us to mind, above all things, those matters which concern our spirits. We must not be satisfied with external religion. If, in any ordinance, our spirit does not come into contact with the great Father of Spirits, we must not rest satisfied. Everything about our religion which is not heart work must be unsatisfactory to us. As men cannot live upon the chaff

and the bran, but need the flour of the wheat, so do we need something more than the form of godliness and the letter of truth—we require the secret meaning, the grafting in of the word into our spirit, the bringing of the truth of God into our inmost soul—all short of this is short of the blessing!

The highest grade of outward religiousness is not blessed, but the very lowest form of spiritual grace is endowed with the kingdom of heaven! Better to be spiritual, even though our highest attainment is to be poor in spirit, than to remain carnal, even though in that carnality we should brag of perfection in the flesh. The least in grace is higher than the greatest in nature! Poverty of spirit in the publican was better than fullness of external excellence in the Pharisee. As the weakest and poorest man is nobler than the strongest of all the beasts of the field, so is the meanest spiritual man more precious in the sight of the Lord than the most eminent of the self-sufficient children of men. The smallest diamond is worth more than the largest pebble, the lowest degree of grace excels the loftiest attainment of nature! What do you say to this, beloved friend? Are you spiritual? At least, are you enough so to be poor in spirit? Does there exist for you a spiritual realm, or are you locked up in the narrow region of things seen and heard? If the Holy Spirit has broken a door for you into the spiritual and unseen, then you are blessed even though your only perception as yet is the painful discovery that you are poor in spirit! Jesus on the mountain blesses you, and blessed you are!

Drawing still nearer to our text, we observe, first, that THE PERSON DESCRIBED HAS DISCOVERED A FACT—he has ascertained his own spiritual poverty. And secondly, BY A FACT HE IS COMFORTED—for he possesses "the kingdom of heaven."

I. The fact which he has ascertained is an old truth of God, for the man was always spiritually poor. From his birth he was a pauper and at his best estate he is only a beggar. "Naked, and poor, and miserable" is a fair summary of man's condition by nature. He lies covered with sores at the gates of mercy, having nothing of his own but sin, unable to dig and unwilling to beg—and therefore perishing in a penury of the direst kind.

This truth is also universal, for all men are by nature thus poor. In a clan, or a family, there will usually be at least one person of substance. And in the poorest nation there will be some few possessors of wealth. But alas for our humanity! Its whole store of excellence is spent and its riches are utterly gone. Among us all there remains no remnant of good! The oil is spent from the cruse and the meal is exhausted from the barrel—a famine is upon us, direr than that which desolated Samaria of old! We owe ten thousand talents and have nothing with which to pay—even so much as a single penny of goodness we cannot find in all the treasuries of the nations!

This fact is deeply humiliating. A man may have no money and yet it may involve no fault and, therefore, no shame. But our estate of poverty has this sting in it—it is moral and spiritual—and sinks us in blame and sin. To be poor in holiness, truth, faith and love to God is disgraceful to us. Often does the poor man hide his face as one greatly ashamed, but far more cause have we to do so who have spent our living riotously,

wasted our Father's substance and brought ourselves to want and dishonor. Descriptions of our state which describe us as miserable are not complete unless they also declare us to be guilty! True, we are objects of pity, but much more of censure. A poor man may be none the less worthy of esteem because of the meanness of his apparel and the scantiness of his provision, but spiritual poverty means fault, blameworthiness, shame and sin. He who is poor in spirit is therefore a humbled man and is on the way to be numbered with those that mourn, of whom the second benediction says that, "they shall be comforted."

The fact discovered by the blessed one in the text is but little known. The mass of mankind are utterly ignorant upon the matter. Though the truth as to man's lost condition is daily taught in our streets, yet few understand it. They are not anxious to know the meaning of a statement so uncomfortable, so alarming—and the bulk of those who are aware of the doctrine and acknowledge that it is scriptural, yet do not believe it, but put it out of their thoughts and practically ignore it! "We see," is the universal boast of the world's blind men! So far from realizing that they are destitute, the sons of men are, in their own esteem, so richly endowed that they thank God that they are not as other men! No slavery is so degrading as that which makes a man content with his servility. The poverty which never aspires, but is content to continue in its rags and filth, is poverty of the deepest dye—and such is the spiritual condition of mankind.

Wherever the truth as to our condition is truly known, it has been spiritually revealed. We may say of everyone who knows his soul poverty, "Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonas, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you." To be spiritually poor is the condition of all men—to be poor in spirit, or to know our spiritual poverty is an attainment especially granted to the called and chosen! An omnipotent hand created us out of nothing and the same omnipotence is needed to bring us to feel that we are nothing! We can never be saved unless we are made alive by infinite power, nor can we be made alive at all unless that same power shall first slay us. It is amazing how much is needed to strip a man and lay him in his true place! One would think that so penniless a beggar must be aware of his penury, but he is not and never will be unless the eternal God shall convince him of it! Our imaginary goodness is more difficult to conquer than our actual sin. Man can sooner be cured of his sicknesses than be made to forego his bouts of health. Human weakness is a small obstacle to salvation compared with human strength—there lies the work and the difficulty! Hence it is a sign of grace to know one's need of grace. He has some light of God in his soul who knows and feels that he is in darkness. The Lord Himself has worked a work of grace upon the spirit which is poor and needy, and trembles at His word. And it is such a work that it bears within it the promise, yes, *the assurance of salvation*—for the poor in spirit already possess the kingdom of heaven—and none have that but those who have eternal life!

One thing is certainly true of the man whose spirit knows its own poverty—he is in possession of at least one truth of God, whereas before he

breathed the atmosphere of falsehood and knew nothing which he ought to know. However painful the result of poverty of spirit may be, it is the result of the truth of God—and a foundation of truth being laid, other truths will be added and the man will abide in the truth. All that others think they know concerning their own spiritual excellence is but a lie—and to be rich in lies is to be awfully poor. Carnal security, natural merit and self-confidence—however much of false peace they may produce—are only forms of falsehood, deceiving the soul. But when a man finds out that he is by nature and practice, "lost," he is no longer utterly a pauper as to the truth of God—he possesses one precious thing at any rate—one coin minted by truth is in his hand! For my own part, my constant prayer is that I may know the worst of my case, whatever the knowledge may cost me. I know that an accurate estimate of my own heart can never be otherwise than lowering to my self-esteem, but God forbid that I should be spared the humiliation which springs from His truth! The sweet apples of self-esteem are deadly poison—who would wish to be destroyed by them? The bitter fruits of self-knowledge are always healthful, especially if washed down with the waters of repentance and sweetened with a draught from the wells of salvation! He who loves his own soul will not despise them. Blessed, according to our text, is the poor cast-down one who knows his lost condition and is suitably impressed thereby—he is but a beginner in wisdom's school, yet he is a disciple and his Master encourages him with a benediction, yes, He pronounces him one of those to whom the kingdom of heaven is given!

The position into which a clear knowledge of this one truth has brought the soul is one peculiarly advantageous for obtaining every gospel blessing. Poverty of spirit empties a man and so makes him ready to be filled! It exposes his wounds to the oil and wine of the good Physician. It lays the guilty sinner at the gate of mercy or among those dying ones around the pool of Bethesda to whom Jesus is known to come. Such a man opens his mouth and the Lord fills it—he hungers and the Lord satisfies him with good things! Above all other evils we have most cause to dread our own fullness! The greatest unfitness for Christ is our own imaginary fitness! When we are utterly undone, we are near to being enriched with the riches of divine grace. Out of ourselves is next door to being in Christ. Where we end, mercy begins, or rather, mercy has begun and mercy has already done much for us when we are at the end of our merit, our power, our wisdom and our hope! The deeper the destitution the better—

"'Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large—
While we can call one mite our own
We get no full discharge."

If the heart is distressed because it cannot sufficiently feel its own need, so much the better—the poverty of spirit is just so much the greater and the appeal to free grace all the more powerful! If the need of a broken heart is felt, we may come to Jesus *for* a broken heart if we cannot come *with* a broken heart. If no kind or degree of good is perceptible, this also is but a clear proof of utter poverty—and in that condition we may dare to believe in the Lord Jesus! Though we are nothing, Christ is all. All that

we need to begin with we must find in Him, just as surely as we must look for our ultimate perfecting to the same source!

A man may be so misled as to make a merit out of his sense of sin and may dream of coming to Jesus clothed in a fitness of despair and unbelief! This is, however, the very reverse of the conduct of one who is poor in spirit, for he is poor in feelings as well as in everything else and dares no more commend himself on account of his humility and despair than on account of his sins. He thinks himself to be a hard-hearted sinner as he acknowledges the deep repentance which his offenses call for. He fears that he is a stranger to that saved quickening which makes the conscience tender and he dreads lest he should, in any measure, be a hypocrite in the desires which he perceives to be in his soul. In fact, he does not dare to think himself to be any other than poor, grievously poor, in whatever light he may be viewed in his relation to God and His righteous law. He hears of the humiliations of true penitents and wishes he had them. He reads the descriptions of repentance given in the Word of God and prays that he may realize them, but he sees nothing in himself upon which he can put his finger and say, "This, at least, is good. In me there dwells at least some one good thing." He is poor in spirit and from him all boasting is cut off, once and for all. It is better to be in this condition than falsely to account one's self a saint and sit in the chief places of the synagogue. Yes, it is so sweetly safe a position to occupy, that he who is fullest of faith in God and joy in the Holy Spirit finds it adds to his peace to retain a full consciousness of the poverty of his natural state and to let it run parallel with his persuasion of security and blessedness in Christ Jesus! Lord, keep me low! Empty me more and more! Lay me in the dust! Let me be dead and buried as to all that is of self—then shall Jesus live in me, reign in me and be truly my all in all!

It may seem to some to be a small matter to be poor in spirit. Let such persons remember that *our Lord so places this gracious condition of heart that it is the foundation stone of the celestial ascent of the Beatitudes*—and who can deny that the steps which rise from it are sublime beyond measure? It is something inexpressibly desirable to be poor in spirit if this is the road to purity of heart and to the godlike character of the peacemaker! Who would not lay his head on Jacob's stone to enjoy Jacobs dream? Who would scorn the staff with which in poverty he crossed the Jordan if he might but see the kingdom of heaven opened as the Patriarch did? Welcome the poverty of Israel if it is a part of the conditions upon which we shall receive the blessing of Israel's God! Instead of despising the poor in spirit, we shall do well to regard them as possessing the dawn of spiritual life, the germ of all the graces, the initiative of perfection, the evidence of blessedness!

II. Having spoken thus much upon the character of those who are poor in spirit as being formed by the knowledge of a fact, we have now to note that IT IS BY A FACT THAT THEY ARE CHEERED AND RENDERED BLESSED—"For theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

It is not a promise as to the future, but a declaration as to the present—not theirs *shall be*, but "theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven." This

truth is clearly revealed in many Scriptures by necessary inference, for first, *the King of the heavenly kingdom is constantly represented as reigning over the poor*. David says in the 72nd psalm, "He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy...He shall spare the poor and needy and shall save the souls of the needy." As His virgin mother sang, "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." Those who enlist beneath the banner of the Son of David are like those who of old came to the son of Jesse in the cave of Adullam—"Everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them." "This man receives sinners and eats with them." His title was "A friend of publicans and sinners." "Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor," and it is therefore right that the poor should be gathered unto Him. Since Jesus has chosen the poor in spirit to be His subjects and said, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," we see how true it is that they are blessed.

The rule of the kingdom is such as only the poor in spirit will endure. To them it is an easy yoke from which they have no wish to be released. To give God all the glory is no burden to them. To cease from self is no hard command. The place of lowliness suits them, the service of humiliation they count an honor! They can say with the psalmist (Psa 131:2), "Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child." Self-denial and humility, which are main duties of Christ's kingdom, are easy only to those who are poor in spirit. A humble mind loves humble duties and is willing to kiss the least flower which grows in the Valley of Humiliation. But to others, a fair show in the flesh is a great attraction and self-exaltation the main object of life. Our Savior's declaration, "Except you are converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," is an iron rule which shuts out all but the poor in spirit! But, at the same time it is a gate of pearl which admits all who are of that character.

The privileges of the kingdom are such as only the spiritually poor will value. To others, they are as pearls cast before swine. The self-righteous care nothing for pardon, though it cost the Redeemer His life's blood. They have no care for regeneration, though it is the greatest work of the Holy Spirit. And they set no store by sanctification, though it is the Father, Himself, who has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light! Evidently the blessings of the covenant were meant for the poor in spirit—there is not one of them which would be valued by the Pharisee. A robe of righteousness implies our nakedness. Manna from heaven implies the lack of earthly bread. Salvation is vanity if men are in no danger. Mercy is a mockery if they are not sinful. The charter of the church is written upon the supposition that it is formed of the poor and needy and is without meaning if it is not so. Poverty of spirit opens the eyes to see the preciousness of covenant blessings. As an old Puritan said, "He that is poor in spirit is an admirer of Christ. He has high thoughts of Christ, he sets a high value and appreciation upon Christ, he

hides himself in Christ's wounds, he bathes himself in His blood, he wraps himself in His robe. He sees a spiritual dearth and famine at home, but he looks out to Christ and cries, 'Lord, show me Yourself, and it suffices.'" Now, inasmuch as the Lord has made nothing in vain and since we find that the privileges of the gospel kingdom are only suitable to the poor in spirit, we may rest assured that for such they were prepared and to such they belong!

Moreover, *it is clear that only those who are poor in spirit do actually reign as kings unto God*. The crown of this kingdom will not fit every head. In fact, it fits the brow of none but the poor in spirit! No proud man reigns—he is the slave of his boasting, the serf of his own loftiness. The ambitious worldling grasps after a kingdom, but he does not possess one. The humble in heart are content and in that contentment they are made to reign! High spirits have no rest—only the lowly heart has peace. To know one's self is the way to self-conquest—and self-conquest is the grandest of all victories! The world looks out for a lofty, ambitious, stern, self-sufficient man and says he bears himself like a king and yet, in very truth, the real kings among their fellows are meek and lowly like the Lord of all—and in their unconsciousness of self lies the secret of their power! The kings among mankind, the happiest, the most powerful, the most honorable, will one day be seen to be not the Alexanders, Caesars and Napoleons, but the men akin to Him who washed the disciples' feet—those who in quietness lived for God and their fellow men, unpretentious because conscious of their failures, unselfish because self was held in low esteem, humble and devout because their own spiritual poverty drove them out of themselves and led them to rest alone upon the Lord! The time shall come when glitter and novelty will go for what they are worth and then shall the poor in spirit be seen to have had the kingdom!

The dominion awarded by this Beatitude to the poor in spirit is no common one. It is the kingdom of heaven, a heavenly dominion far excelling anything which can be obtained this side of the stars. An ungodly world may reckon the poor in spirit to be contemptible, but God writes them down among His peers and princes. And His judgment is true and far more to be esteemed than the opinions of men or even of angels! Only as we are poor in spirit have we any evidence that heaven is ours. But having that mark of blessedness, all things are ours, whether things present or things to come. To the poor in spirit belong all the security, honor and happiness which the gospel kingdom is calculated to give upon earth! Even here below they may eat of its dainties without question and revel in its delights without fear. Theirs are also the things not seen as yet, reserved for future revelation. Theirs the second advent, theirs the glory, theirs the fifth great monarchy, theirs the resurrection, theirs the beatific vision, theirs the eternal ecstasy!

"Poor in spirit." The words sound as if they described the owners of nothing, and yet they describe the inheritors of all things! Happy poverty! Millionaires sink into insignificance! The treasures of the Indies evaporate in smoke while to the poor in spirit remains a boundless, endless, faultless kingdom which renders them blessed in the esteem of Him who

is God over all, blessed forever! And all this is for the present life in which they mourn and need to be comforted, hunger and thirst and need to be filled. All this is for them while yet they are persecuted for righteousness' sake. What, then, must be their blessedness when they shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father and in them shall be fulfilled the promise of their Master and Lord, "to him that overcomes will I grant to sit with Me on My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father on His throne"?

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *MATTHEW 5:31-42.*

[Continued from Sermon #3155, Volume 55.]

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, causes her to commit adultery: and whoever shall marry her that is divorced commits adultery.* This time our King quotes and condemns a permissive enactment of the Jewish State. Men were known to bid their wives, "Begone," and a hasty word was thought sufficient as an act of divorce. Moses insisted upon "*a writing of divorcement*," that angry passions might have time to cool and that the separation, if it must come, might be performed with deliberation and legal formality. The requirement of a writing was to a certain degree a check upon an evil habit which was so ingrained in the people that to refuse it altogether would have been useless—and would only have created another crime. The law of Moses went as far as it could practically be enforced. It was because of the hardness of their hearts that divorce was tolerated—it was never approved.

But our Lord is more heroic in his legislation. He forbids divorce except for the one crime of infidelity to the marriage vow. She who commits adultery does, by that act and deed, in effect break the marriage bond—and it ought then to be formally recognized by the State as being broken. But for nothing else should a man be divorced from his wife. Marriage is for life and cannot be loosed except by the one great crime which severs its bond, *whichever of the two is guilty of it.* Our Lord would never have tolerated the wicked laws of certain of the American States which allow married men and women to separate on the merest pretext. A woman divorced for any cause but adultery, and marrying again, is committing adultery before God, whatever the laws of man may call it! This is very plain and positive—and thus a sanctity is given to marriage which human legislation ought not to violate. Let us not be among those who take up novel ideas of wedlock and seek to deform the marriage laws under the pretense of reforming them. Our Lord knows better than our modern social reformers. We had better let the laws of God alone, for we shall never discover any better.

33-37. *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; neither of 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. False swearing was forbidden of old, but every kind of swearing is forbidden now by the word of our Lord Jesus. He mentions several forms of oath and forbids them all—and then prescribes simple forms of affirmation or denial as all that His followers should employ. Notwithstanding much that may be advanced to the contrary, there is no evading the plain sense of this passage—that every sort of oath, however solemn or true, is forbidden to a follower of Jesus! Whether in court of law, or out of it, the rule is, "Swear not at all." Yet, in this Christian country we have swearing everywhere—and *especially* among law-makers! Our legislators begin their official existence by swearing. By those who obey the law of the Savior's kingdom, all swearing is set aside so that the simple word of affirmation or denial, calmly repeated, may remain as a sufficient bond of truth. A bad man cannot be believed on his oath and a good man speaks the truth without an oath—to what purpose is the superfluous custom of legal swearing preserved? Christians should not yield to an evil custom, however great the pressure put upon them! They should abide by the plain and unmistakable command of their Lord and King.

38. *You have heard that it has been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.* The law of an eye for an eye, as administered in the proper courts of law was founded in justice and worked far more equitably than the more modern system of fines, for that method allows rich men to offend with comparative impunity. But when the *lex talionis* (an eye for an eye) came to be the rule of daily life, it fostered revenge—and our Savior would not tolerate it as a principle carried out by individuals. Good law in court may be very bad custom in common society. He spoke against what had become a proverb and was heard and said among the people, "*You have heard that it has been said.*" Our loving King would have private dealings ruled by the spirit of love and not by the rule of law.

39. *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.* Non-resistance and forbearance are to be the rule among Christians. They are to endure personal ill-usage without coming to blows. They are to be as the anvil when bad men are the hammers, and thus they are to overcome by patient forgiveness. The rule of the judgment seat is not for common life, but the rule of the cross and the all enduring sufferer is for us all. Yet how many regard all this as fanatical, Utopian and even cowardly? The Lord, our King, would have us bear and forbear, and conquer by mighty patience. Can we do it? How are we the servants of Christ if we have not His spirit?

40. *And if any man will sue you at the law, and take away your coat, let him have your cloak, also.* Let him have all he asks and more. Better lose a suit of clothes than be drawn into a suit in law. The courts of our Lord's Day were vicious and His disciples were advised to suffer wrong sooner than appeal to them. Our own courts often furnish the surest method of solving a difficulty by authority, and we have known them re-

sorted to with the view of preventing strife. Yet even in a country where justice can be had, we are not to resort to law for every personal wrong. We should rather endure to be put upon than be forever crying out, "I'll bring an action." At times this very rule of self-sacrifice may require us to take steps in the way of legal appeal, to stop injuries which would fall heavily upon others. But we ought often to forego our own advantage, yes, always when the main motive would be a proud desire for self-vindication. Lord, give me a patient spirit, so that I may not seek to avenge myself, even when I might righteously do so!

41. *And whoever shall compel you to go a mile, go with him two.* Governments in those days demanded forced service through their petty officers. Christians were to be of a yielding temper and bear a double exaction rather than provoke ill words and anger. We ought not to evade taxation, but stand ready to render to Caesar his due. "Yield" is our watchword! To stand up against force is not exactly our part—we may leave that to others. How few believe the long-suffering, non-resistant doctrines of our King!

42. *Give to him that asks you, and from him that would borrow of you turn not you away.* Be generous. A miser is no follower of Jesus. Discretion is to be used in our giving, lest we encourage idleness and beggary. But the general rule is, "*Give to him that asks you.*" Sometimes a loan may be more useful than a gift, do not refuse it to those who will make right use of it. These precepts are not meant for fools—they are set before us as our general rule—but each rule is balanced by other Scriptural commands and there is the teaching of a philanthropic commonsense to guide us. Our spirit is to be one of readiness to help the needy by gift or loan—and we are not exceedingly likely to err by excess in this direction—hence the boldness of the command.

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THE FOURTH BEATITUDE
NO. 3157

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 12, 1909,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 14, 1873

"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."
Matthew 5:6.

[In the year 1873, Mr. Spurgeon delivered what he called "a series of sententious homilies" on the Beatitudes. After an introductory discourse upon the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes as a whole, he intended to preach upon each one separately, but either illness or some other special reason prevented him from fully carrying out this purpose. There are, however, six Sermons upon the Beatitudes, five of which have already been published—See Sermons #422, Volume 7—THE PEACEMAKER; #2103, Volume 35—THE HUNGER AND THIRST WHICH ARE BLESSED; #3155, Volume 55—THE BEATITUDES;#3156, Volume 55—THE FIRST BEATITUDE ; #3065, Volume 53—THE THIRD BEATITUDE—and this one—
Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

I REMARKED, on a former occasion, that each of the seven Beatitudes rises above the one which precedes it, and rises out of it. It is a higher thing to hunger and thirst after righteousness than to be meek, or to mourn, or to be poor in spirit. But no man ever becomes hungry and thirsty after righteousness unless he has first passed through the three preliminary stages—has been convinced of his soul poverty, has been made to mourn for sin and has been rendered humble in the sight of God. I have already shown that the meek man is one who is contented with what God has given him in this world, that he is one whose ambition is at an end and whose aspirations are not for things beneath the moon. Very well then, having ceased to hunger and thirst after this world, he is the man to hunger and thirst after another and a better one! Having said farewell to these gross and perishing things, he is the man to throw the whole intensity of his nature into the pursuit of that which is heavenly and eternal—which is here described as "righteousness." Man must first of all be cured of his ardor for earthly pursuits before he can feel fervor for heavenly ones. "No man can serve two masters." And until the old selfish principle has been driven out and the man has become humble and meek, he will not begin to hunger and thirst after righteousness.

I. Proceeding at once to consider our text, we notice here, first, THE OBJECTIVE WHICH THE BLESSED MAN DESIRES. He hungers and thirsts after righteousness.

As soon as the Spirit of God quickens him and really makes him a blessed man, *he begins to long after righteousness before God.* He knows that he is a sinner and that as a sinner he is unrighteous and, therefore,

is condemned at the bar of the Most High. But he wants to be righteous. He desires to have his iniquity removed and the defilement of the past blotted out. How can this be done? The question which he asks again and again is, "How can I be made righteous in the sight of God?" And he is never satisfied until he is told that Jesus Christ is made of God unto us "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption." Then when he sees that Christ died in the sinner's place, he understands how the sinner's sins are put away—and when he comprehends that Christ has worked out a perfect righteousness, not for Himself, but for the unrighteous—he comprehends how, by imputation, he is made righteous in the sight of God through the righteousness of Jesus Christ! But until he knows that, he hungers and thirsts after righteousness—and he is blessed in thus hungering and thirsting.

After he has found Christ to be his righteousness as far as justification is concerned, this man then *longs to have a righteous nature*. "Alas," he says, "it is not enough for me to know that my sin is forgiven. I have a fountain of sin within my heart and bitter waters continually flow from it. Oh, that my *nature* could be changed so that I, the lover of sin, could be made a lover of that which is good! That I, now full of evil, could become full of holiness!" He begins to cry out for this and he is blessed in the crying—but he never rests until the Spirit of God makes him a new creature in Christ Jesus. Then is he renewed in the spirit of his mind and God has given him, at least in measure, that which he hungers and thirsts after, namely, righteousness of nature. He has passed from death unto life, from darkness to light! The things he formerly loved, he now hates, and the things he then hated he now loves!

After he is regenerated and justified, he still pants after righteousness in another sense—*he wants to be sanctified*. The new birth is the commencement of sanctification and sanctification is the carrying on of the work commenced in regeneration—so the blessed man cries, "Lord, help me to be righteous in my character. You desire truth in the inward parts—keep my whole nature pure. Let no temptation get the mastery over me. Subdue my pride. Correct my judgment. Keep my will in check. Make me to be a holy man in the innermost temple of my being and then let my conduct toward my fellow men be in all respects all that it should be. Let me speak so that they can always believe my word. Let me act so that none can truly charge me with injustice. Let my life be a transparent one—let it be, as far as is possible, the life of Christ written over again." Thus, you see, the truly blessed man hungers and thirsts for justification, for regeneration, and for sanctification!

When he has all of these, *he longs for perseverance in grace*. He thirsts to be *kept* right. If he has overcome one bad habit, he thirsts to put down all others. If he has acquired one virtue, he thirsts to acquire more. If God has given him much grace, he thirsts for more. And if he is, in some respects, like his Master, he perceives his defects and mourns over them—and goes on to thirst to be still more like Jesus. He is always hungering and thirsting to be made right and to be kept right. So he prays for final perseverance and for perfection. He feels that he has such

a hunger and thirst after righteousness that he will never be satisfied until he wakes up in the image of his Lord that he will never be content until the last sin within him is subdued and he shall have no more propensities to evil, but be out of gunshot of temptation!

And such a man, beloved, *honestly desires to see righteousness promoted among his fellow men*. He wishes that all men would do as they would be done by, and he tries, by his own example, to teach them to do so. He wishes that there were no fraud, no false witness, no perjury, no theft, no lasciviousness. He wishes that right ruled in the whole world. He would account it a happy day if every person could be blessed and if there were no need of punishment for offenses because they had ceased. He longs to hear that oppression has come to an end. He wants to see right government in every land. He longs for wars to cease and that the rules and principles of right, and not force and the sharp edge of the sword, may govern all mankind. His daily prayer is, "Lord, let Your kingdom come, for Your kingdom is righteousness and peace." When he sees any wrong done, he grieves over it. If he cannot alter it, he grieves all the more! And he labors as much as lies in him to bear a protest against wrong of every sort. He hungers and thirsts after righteousness. He does not hunger and thirst that his own political party may get into power, but he does hunger and thirst that righteousness may be done in the land. He does not hunger and thirst that his own opinions may come to the front, and that his own sect or denomination may increase in numbers and influence, but he does desire that righteousness may come to the fore. He does not crave for himself that he may be able to sway his fellow men according to his own desires, but he does wish that he could influence his fellow men for that which is right and true, for his soul is all on fire with this one desire—righteousness—righteousness for himself, righteousness before God, righteousness between man and man! This he longs to see and for this he hungers and thirsts—and therein Jesus says that he is blessed.

II. Now NOTICE THE DESIRE ITSELF.

It is said that he hungers and thirsts after righteousness—a double description of his ardent desire for it. Surely it would have been enough for the man to hunger for it, but he thirsts as well. All the appetites, desires and cravings of his spiritual nature go out towards what he wants above everything else, namely, righteousness. He feels that he has not attained to it himself, and therefore he hungers and thirsts for it. And he also laments that others have not attained to it and, therefore, he hungers and thirsts for them—that they, too, may have it.

We may say of this passion, first, *that, it is real*. Hungering and thirsting are matters of fact, not fancy. Suppose that you meet a man who tells you that he is so hungry that he is almost starving, and you say to him, "Nonsense, my dear fellow, just forget all about it! It is a mere whim of yours, for you can live very well without food if you like"? Why, he knows that you are mocking him! And if you could surprise some poor wretch who had been floating in a boat cast away at sea, and had not been able

for days to moisten his mouth except with the briny water which had only increased his thirst—and if you were to say to him, "Thirst? It is only your fancy, you are nervous, that is all, and you need no drink"—the man would soon tell you that he knows better than that, for he must drink or die! There is nothing in this world that is more real than hunger and thirst—and the truly blessed man has such a real passion, desire and craving after righteousness that it can only be likened to hunger and thirst. He *must* have his sins pardoned, he *must* be clothed in the righteousness of Christ, and he *must* be sanctified! And he feels that it will break his heart if he cannot get rid of sin. He pines, he longs, and he prays to be made holy! He cannot be satisfied without this righteousness—and his hungering and thirsting for it is a very real thing.

And not only is it real, *it is also most natural*. It is natural to men who need bread to hunger. You do not have to tell them when to hunger or when to thirst. If they have not bread and water, they hunger and thirst naturally. So, when the Spirit of God has changed our nature, that new nature hungers and thirsts after righteousness. The old nature never did, never could, and never would—it hungers after the husks that the swine eat—but the new nature hungers after righteousness. It must do so, it cannot help itself. You do not need to say to the quickened man, "Desire holiness." Why, he would give his eyes to possess it! You need not say to a man who is under conviction of sin, "Desire the righteousness of Christ." He would be willing to lay down his life if he could but obtain it! He hungers and thirsts after righteousness from the very necessities of his nature.

And this desire is described in such terms that we perceive that *it is intense*. What is more intense than hunger? When a man cannot find any nourishment, his hunger seems to eat him up—his yearnings after bread are terrible. I have heard it said that in the bread riots, the cry of the men and women for bread was something far more terrible to hear than the cry of, "Fire!" when some great city has been on a blaze. "Bread! Bread!" He that has it not feels that he must have it—but the cravings of thirst are even more intense. It is said that you may palliate the pangs of hunger, but that thirst makes life, itself, a burden—the man must drink or die. Well now, such is the intense longing after righteousness of a man whom God has blessed! He wants it so urgently that he says in the anguish of his heart that he cannot live without it. The psalmist, says, "My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning."

There is no other desire that is quite like the desire of a quickened man after righteousness and, therefore, *this desire often becomes very painful*. Hunger and thirst endured up to a certain point, involve the very keenest of pangs, and a man who is seeking the righteousness of Christ is full of unutterable woe until he finds it. And the Christian warring against his corruptions is led to cry, "O wretched man that I am!" until he learns that Christ has won the victory for him. And the servant of Christ desiring to reclaim the nations, and to bring his fellow men to follow that which is right and good, is often the subject of unutterable

pangs. He bears the burden of the Lord and goes about his work like a man who has too heavy a burden to carry! Painful, indeed, is it to the soul to be made to hunger and thirst after righteousness.

The expressions in our text also indicate that *this is a most energetic desire*. What will not a man who is hungry be driven to do? We have an old proverb that "hunger breaks through stone walls" and, certainly, a man hungry and thirsty after righteousness will break through anything to get it! Have we not known the sincere penitent traveling many miles in order to get where he could hear the gospel? Has he not often lost his night's rest and brought himself almost to death's door by his determination in pleading with God for pardon? And as to the man who is saved and who desires to see others saved, how often, in his desire to lead them in the right way, will he surrender home comforts to go to a distant land? How often will he bring upon himself the scorn and contempt of the ungodly because zeal for righteousness works mightily within his spirit? I would like to see many of these hungry and thirsty ones as members of our churches, preaching in our pulpits, toiling in our Sunday schools and mission stations—men and women who feel that they *must* see Christ's kingdom come or they will hardly be able to live! This holy craving after righteousness, which the Holy Spirit implants in a Christian's soul, becomes domineering—it is not merely energetic, but it dominates his entire being! For this he puts all other wishes and desires aside. He can be a loser, but he must be righteous! He can be ridiculed, but he must hold fast his integrity! He can endure scorn, but he must declare the truth of God! "Righteousness" he must have! His spirit demands it by an appetite that lords it over all other passions and propensities! And truly "blessed" is the man in whom this is the case.

For, mark you, *to hunger after righteousness is a sign of spiritual life*. Nobody who was spiritually dead ever did this. In all the catacombs there has never yet been found a dead man hungering or thirsting—and there never will be. If you hunger and thirst after righteousness, you are spiritually alive! And *it is also a proof of spiritual health*. Physicians will tell you that they regard a good appetite as being one of the signs that a man's body is in a healthy state—and it is the same with the soul. Oh, to have a ravenous appetite after Christ! Oh, to be greedy after the best things! Oh, to be covetous after holiness—in fact, to hunger and thirst after everything that is right, good, pure, lovely and of good repute. May the Lord send us more of this intense hunger and thirst! It is the very opposite condition to that of the self-satisfied and the self-righteous. Pharisees never hunger and thirst after righteousness—they have all the righteousness they need and they even think that they have some to spare for that poor publican over yonder who cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" If a man thinks that he is perfect, what can he know about hungering and thirsting? He is already filled with all that he needs and he, too, thinks that he could give of his redundant riches to his poor brother who is sighing over his imperfections! For my part, I am quite content to still have the blessing of hungering and thirsting, for that

blessing stands side by side with another experience, namely, that of being filled—and when one is in one sense filled, yet in another sense one still hungers for more—this makes up the complete Beatitude! "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

III. Having thus described the objective and the desire of the truly blessed man, I must now proceed, in the third place, to speak of THE BLESSING ITSELF, the benediction which Christ pronounces over those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. "They shall be filled."

This *is a unique blessing*. No one else ever gets "filled." A man desires meat—he eats it and is filled for a little while—but he is soon hungry again. A man desires drink. And he has it, but he is soon thirsty again. But a man who hungers and thirsts after righteousness shall be so "filled" that he shall never again thirst as he thirsted before! Many hunger and thirst after gold, but nobody ever yet filled his soul with gold—it cannot be done. The richest man who ever lived was never quite as rich as he would have liked to be. Men have tried to fill their souls with worldly possessions. They have added field to field, farm to farm, and street to street and town to town till it seemed as if they would be left alone in the land—but no man ever yet could fill his soul with an estate, however vast it might be! A few more acres were needed to round off that corner or to join that farm to the main body of his territory—or if he could only have had a little more upland he might have been satisfied—but he did not get it, so he was still discontented. Alexander conquered the world, but it would not fill his soul—he wanted more worlds to conquer! And if you and I could own a dozen worlds, were we possessors of all the stars and if we could call all space our own, we would not find enough to fill our immortal spirits. We would only be magnificently poor, a company of imperial paupers! God has so made man's heart that nothing can ever fill it but God, Himself. There is such a hungering and thirsting put into the quickened man that he discerns his necessity and he knows that only Christ can supply that necessity. When a man is saved, he has obtained all that he needs. When he gets Christ, he is satisfied. I recollect a foolish woman asking me, some years ago, to let her tell my fortune. I said to her, "I can tell you yours, but I don't want to know mine—mine is already made, for I have everything that I need." "But," she said, "can't I promise you something for years to come?" "No," I answered, "I don't need anything. I have everything that I need—I am perfectly satisfied and perfectly contented." And I can say the same tonight! I do not know anything that anybody could offer to me that would increase my satisfaction. If God will but bless the souls of men and save them, and get to Himself glory, I am filled with contentment—I need nothing more. I do not believe that any man can honestly say as much as that unless he has found Christ. If he has by faith laid hold upon the Savior, then he has grasped that which always brings the blessing with it. "He shall be filled." It is a unique blessing!

And *the blessing is most appropriate* as well as unique. A man is hungry and thirsty. How can you take away his hunger without filling him

with food? And how can you remove his thirst without filling him with drink, at least in sufficient quantity to satisfy him? So Christ's promise concerning the man who hungers and thirsts after righteousness is, "He shall be filled." He wants righteousness—he shall have righteousness! He wants God—he shall have God! He wants a new heart—he shall have a new heart. He wants to be kept from sin—he shall be kept from sin. He wants to be made perfect—he shall be made perfect. He wants to live where there are none that sin—he shall be taken away to dwell where there shall be no sinners forever and ever!

In addition to being unique and appropriate, *this blessing is very large and abundant*. Christ said, "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall"—have a sup by the way? Oh, no! "For they shall"—have a little comfort every now and then? Oh, no! "For they shall be filled"—*filled*. And the Greek word might even better be rendered, "they shall be satiated." "They shall have all they need, enough and to spare! They who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled—filled to the brim. How true this is! Here is a man who says, "I am condemned in the sight of God. I feel and know that no actions of mine can ever make me righteous before Him. I have given up all hope of self-justification." Listen, O man, will you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and take Him to stand before God as your substitute and representative? "I will," he says, "I do trust in Him, and in Him alone." Well, then, O man, know that you have received from Christ a righteousness which may well satisfy you! All that God could rightly ask of you was the perfect righteousness of a man, for being a man that is all the righteousness that you could be expected to present to God. But in the righteousness of Christ you have perfect righteousness of a man and more than that—you also have the righteousness of God! Think of that! Father Adam, in his perfection, wore the righteousness of man and it was lovely to look upon as long as it lasted. But if you trust in Jesus, you are wearing the righteousness of God, for Christ was God as well as man. Now, when a man attains to that experience, and knows that having believed in Jesus, God looks upon him as if the righteousness of Jesus were his own righteousness—and in fact imputes to him the divine righteousness which is Christ's—that man is filled! Yes, he is more than filled, he is satiated! All that his soul could possibly desire, he already possesses in Christ Jesus!

I told you that the man also wanted a new nature. He said, "O God, I long to get rid of these evil propensities. I need to have this defiled body of mine made to be a temple meet for You. I want to be made like my Lord and Savior, so that I may be able to walk with Him in heaven forever and ever." Listen, O man! If you believe in Jesus Christ, this is what has been done to you! You have received into your nature, by the Word of God, an incorruptible seed, "which lives and abides forever." That is already in you if you are a believer in Jesus and it can no more die than God, Himself, can die, for it is a divine nature. "The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away; but the word of the Lord"—that word which

you have received if you have believed in Jesus—"endures forever." The water which Christ has given you shall be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life! In the moment of our regeneration, a new nature is imparted to us, of which the apostle Peter says, "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away." And the same apostle also says that believers are "partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Is not that a blessed beginning for those who hunger and thirst after righteousness?

But listen further. God the Holy Spirit, the third person of the blessed Trinity, condescends to come and dwell in all believers! Paul writes to the church of God at Corinth, "Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?" God dwells in you, my brother or sister in Christ! Does not this truth astonish you? Sin dwells in you, but the Holy Spirit has also come to dwell in you and to drive sin out of you. The devil assails you and tries to capture your spirit and to make it like those in his own infernal den—but lo, the eternal has Himself come down and enshrined Himself within you! The Holy Spirit is dwelling within your heart if you are a believer in Jesus! Christ Himself is "in you the hope of glory." If you really want righteousness, dear soul, surely you have it *here*—the nature changed and made like the nature of God. The ruling principle altered, sin dethroned and the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit dwelling within you as your Lord and Master! Why, I think that however much you may hunger and thirst after righteousness, you must count yourself well filled since you have these immeasurable blessings!

And listen yet again, my brother or sister in Christ. You shall be kept and preserved even to the end! He who has begun to cleanse you will never leave the work until He has made you without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. He never begins a work which He cannot or will not complete! He never failed in anything that He has undertaken and He never will fail! Your corruptions have their heads already broken and though your sins still rebel, it is but a struggling gasp for life. The weapons of victorious grace shall slay them all and end the strife forever. The sins that trouble you today shall be like those Egyptians that pursued the children of Israel into the Red Sea—you shall see them no more forever. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." And as surely as you have believed in Christ, poor imperfect worm of the dust as you are, you shall walk with Him in white on yonder golden streets in that city within whose gates there shall never enter anything that defiles, "but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." Yes, believer, you shall be near and like your God! Do you hear this? You hunger and thirsts after righteousness—you shall have it without stint, for you shall be one of the "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." You shall be able to gaze upon God in His ineffable glory and to dwell with the devouring fire and the everlasting burnings of His unsullied purity! You shall be able to see the God who is a consuming fire and yet not be

afraid, for there shall be nothing in you to be consumed! You shall be spotless, innocent, pure, and immortal as your God Himself—will not this satisfy you?

"Ah," you say, "it satisfies me for myself, but I would like to see my children righteous too." Then commend them to that God who loves their father and their mother and ask Him to bless your children as He blessed Isaac for Abraham's sake, and blessed Jacob for Isaac's sake. "Oh," you say, "but I also want to see my neighbors saved." Then hunger after their souls! Thirst after their souls as you have hungered and thirsted after your own! And God will teach you how to talk to them and probably, as you are hungering and thirsting for their souls, He will make you the means of their conversion!

There is also this truth of God to solace you—there will be righteousness all over this world one day. Millions still reject Christ, but He has a people who will not reject Him. The masses of mankind at present fly from Him, but "the Lord knows them that are His." As many as the Father gave to Christ shall surely come to Him; Christ shall not be disappointed—His cross shall not have been set up in vain. "He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Well may you groan because of the idols that do not fall, the oppressions that do not come to an end, the wailing of the widows, the weeping of the orphans and the sighing of those that sit in darkness, and see no light. But there will be an end of all this. Brighter days than these are coming—either the gospel will cover the earth, or else Christ Himself will personally come. Whichever it is, it is not for me to decide, but somehow or other, the day shall come when God shall reign without a rival over all the earth, you can be sure of that! The hour shall come when the great multitude, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thundering, shall say, "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigns!"

If we are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, we are on the winning side! The battle may go against us just now. Priestcraft may be pushing us sorely and evils which our forefathers routed may come back with superior strength and cunning and, for a little while, the courage of the saints may be dampened and their armies may waver—but the Lord still lives and as the Lord lives, righteousness alone shall triumph—and all iniquity and every false way must be trampled underfoot! Fight on, for you must ultimately be victors. You cannot be beaten unless the eternal, Himself, should be overthrown—and that can never be. Blessed is the man who knows that the cause that he has espoused is a righteous one, for he may know that in the final chapter of the world's history, its triumph must be recorded! He may be dead and gone. He may only sow the seed, but his sons shall reap the harvest and men shall speak of him with grave respect as of a man who lived before his time and who deserves honor of those that follow him! Stand up for the right! Hold fast to your principles, my brothers and sisters in Christ! Follow after holiness

and righteousness in every shape and form. Let no one bribe or turn you away from this blessed Book and its immortal tenets! Follow after that which is true, not that which is patronized by the great. That which is just, not that which sits in the seat of human authority. And follow after this with a hunger and a thirst that are insatiable and you shall yet be "filled."

Would you like to be up there in the day when the Prince of truth and right shall review His armies? Would you like to be up there when the jubilant shout shall rend the heavens, "The King of kings and Lord of lords has conquered all His foes and the devil and all his hosts are put to flight"? Would you like to be up there, I say, when all His trophies of victory are displayed and the Lamb that was slain shall be the reigning monarch of all the nations, gathering sheaves of scepters beneath His arms and treading on the crowns of princes as worn out and worthless? Would you like to be *there* then? Then be *here* now—*here* where the fight rages! Here where the King's standard is unfurled—and say unto your God, "O Lord, since I have found righteousness in Christ, and am myself saved, I am pledged to stand for the right and for the truth so long as I live! So keep me faithful even unto death."

As I close my discourse, I pronounce over all of you who are trusting in Jesus the fourth benediction spoken by Christ on the Mount of Beatitude, "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 5:43-48; 6:1-4.

Matthew 5:43. *You have heard that it has been said, You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.* In this case a command of Scripture had a human antithesis fitted on to it by depraved minds—and this human addition was mischievous. This is a common method—to append to the teaching of Scripture, something which seems to grow out of it or to be a natural inference from it—which something may be false and wicked. This is a sad crime against the word of the Lord. The Holy Spirit will only father His own words. He owns the precept, "*You shall love your neighbor*," but He hates the parasitical growth of, "*hate your enemy*." This last sentence is destructive of that out of which it appears legitimately to grow, since those who are here styled enemies are, in fact, neighbors! Love is now the universal law of God and our King, who has commanded it, is Himself the pattern of it. He will not see it narrowed down and placed in a setting of hate. May grace prevent any of us from falling into this error!

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.* [See Sermon #1414, Volume 24—NO DIFFERENCE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Ours it is to persist in loving, even if men persist in enmity. We are to render blessing for cursing, prayers for persecutions. Even in the cases of cruel enemies, we are to "*do good to them, and pray for them.*" We are no longer enemies to any, but friends to all. We do not merely cease to hate and then abide in a cold neutrality, but we love where hatred seemed inevitable. We bless where our old nature bids us curse and we are active in doing good to those who deserve to receive evil from us. Where this is practically carried out, men wonder, respect, and admire the followers of Jesus! The *theory* may be ridiculed, but the *practice* is reverenced and is counted so surprising that men attribute it to some Godlike quality in Christians, and admit that they are *the children of the Father who is in heaven.* Indeed, he is a child of God who can bless the unthankful and the evil, for in daily providence the Lord is doing this on a great scale—and none but His children will imitate Him. To do good for the sake of the good done, and not because of the character of the person benefited, is a noble imitation of God. If the Lord only sent the fertilizing shower upon the land of the saintly, drought would deprive whole leagues of land of all hope of a harvest. We also must do good to the evil, or we shall have a narrow sphere—our hearts will grow contracted and our sonship towards the good God will be rendered doubtful.

46. *For if you love them which love you, what reward have you, do not even the publicans do the same?* Any common sort of man will love those who love him. Even tax gatherers and the scum of the earth can rise to this poor, starveling virtue. Saints cannot be content with such a groveling style of things. "Love for love is manlike," but "love for hate" is Christ like. Shall we not desire to act up to our high calling?

47. *And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more than others*? [See Sermon #1029, Volume 18—A CALL TO HOLY LIVING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *Do not even the publicans do so*? On a journey, or in the streets, or in the house, we are not to confine our friendly greetings to those who are near and dear to us. Courtesy should be wide and none the less sincere because general. We should speak kindly to all and treat every man as a brother. Anyone will shake hands with an old friend, but we are to be cordially courteous towards every being in the form of man. If not, we shall reach no higher level than mere outcasts. Even a dog will salute a dog.

48. *Be you, therefore, perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.* Or, "*You shall be perfect.*" We should reach after completeness in love—fullness of love to all around us. Love is the bond of perfectness and if we have perfect love, it will form in us a perfect character. Here is that which we aim at—perfection like that of God. Here is the manner of obtaining it—namely, by abounding in love. And this suggests the question of how far we have proceeded in this heavenly direction, and also the reason why we should persevere in it even to the end—because as children we ought to resemble our Father. Scriptural perfection is attainable; it dies rather in proportion than in degree. A man's character may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing—and yet such a man will be the very

first to admit that the Grace which is in him is, at best, in its infancy—and though perfect as a child in all its parts, it has not yet attained to the perfection of full-grown manhood. What a mark is set before us by our perfect King who, speaking from His mountain throne, said, "*Be you perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*"! Lord, give what You command—then both the grace and the glory will be Yours alone.

Matthew 6:1. *Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen of them: otherwise you have no reward from your Father which is in heaven.* "You cannot expect to be paid twice. If, therefore, you take your reward in the applause of men, who give you a high character for generosity, you cannot expect to have any reward from God." We ought to have a single eye to God's accepting what we give and to have little or no thought of what man may say concerning our charitable gifts!

2. *Therefore when you do your charitable deeds, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.* And they will have no more! There is, in their case, no laying up of any store of good works before God. Whatever they may have done, they have taken full credit for it in the praise of men.

3. *But when you do charitable deeds, let not your left hand know what your right hand does.* "Do it so by stealth as scarcely to know it yourself—think so little of it with regard to yourself that you shall scarcely know that you have done it. Do it unto God—let Him know it."

4. *That your charitable deeds may be in secret: and your Father which sees in secret, Himself, shall reward you openly.* There is a blessed emphasis upon that word, "Himself," for if God shall reward us, what a reward it will be! Any praise from His lips, any reward from His hands will be of priceless value! Oh, to live with an eye to that alone!

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THE FIFTH BEATITUDE
NO. 3158

A SERMON
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"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."
Matthew 5:7.

[In the year 1873, Mr. Spurgeon delivered what he called "a series of sententious homilies" on the Beatitudes. After an introductory discourse upon the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes as a whole, he intended to preach upon each one separately, but either illness or some other special reason prevented him from fully carrying out this purpose. There are, however, seven Sermons upon the Beatitudes which have already been published—See Sermons #422, Volume 7—THE PEACEMAKER; #2103, Volume 35—THE HUNGER AND THIRST WHICH ARE BLESSED; #3155, Volume 55—THE BEATITUDES; #3156, Volume 55—THE FIRST BEATITUDE and #3065, Volume 53—THE THIRD BEATITUDE; #3157, Volume 55—THE FOURTH BEATITUDE—and this one—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

I MUST take for granted the fact that you have heard the previous discourses upon the Beatitudes. If you have not done so, I cannot now repeat all that I have said, but I may remind you that I have compared the Beatitudes to a ladder of light, and I have remarked that every one of them rises above and out of those which preceded it. So you will notice that the character mentioned here is higher than those which had been given before—higher than that of the man who is poor in spirit, or who mourns. Those things concern himself. He is yet feeble and out of that weakness grows meekness of spirit which makes him endure wrongs from others. But to be merciful is more than that, for the man now not merely endures wrongs, but he confers benefits. The Beatitude before this one concerns hungering and thirsting after righteousness, but here the man has got beyond mere righteousness—he has risen beyond the seeking of that which is right into the seeking of that which is good, kind, generous and the doing of kindly things towards his fellow man. The whole ladder rests upon divine grace, and grace puts every stave into its place. And it is grace which, in this place, has taught the man to be merciful, has blessed him and given him the promise that he shall obtain mercy. It would be wrong to take any one of these benedictions by itself and to say that every merciful man shall obtain mercy, or to misquote any other one in the same way, for that would be to wrest the Savior's words and to give them a meaning which He never intended them to convey. Reading these Beatitudes as a whole, we see that this mercifulness, of which I am about to speak, is a characteristic which has grown out of the rest—it has sprung from all the previous works of grace. And the man is not merely merciful in the human sense—with a humanity which

ought to be common to all mankind—but he is merciful in a higher and better sense with a mercy which only the Spirit of God can ever teach to the soul of man!

Having noticed the rising of this Beatitude above the rest, we will now come to look at it more closely. It is necessary that we should be very guarded while speaking upon it and in order to be so, we will ask, first, *who are these blessed people*? Secondly, *what is their peculiar virtue*? And thirdly, *what is their special blessing*?

I. WHO ARE THESE BLESSED PEOPLE—THE MERCIFUL THAT OBTAIN MERCY?

You remember that at the commencement of our homilies upon this Sermon on the Mount, we noticed that our Lord's subject was not *how* we are to be saved, but *who* are saved. He is not here describing the way of salvation at all. That He does in many other places, but He here gives us the signs and evidences of the work of grace in the soul. We would greatly err if we should say that we must be merciful in order to obtain mercy and that we must only hope to get the mercy of God through first of all being merciful ourselves. Now, in order to put aside any such legal notion—which would be clean contrary to the entire current of Scripture and directly opposed to the fundamental doctrine of justification by faith in Christ—I ask you to notice that these persons are already blessed and have obtained mercy! Long before they became merciful, God was merciful to them. And before the full promise was given them, as in our text, that they should obtain yet further mercy, they had already obtained the great mercy of a renewed heart which had made them merciful! That is clear from the context of the text.

For, first, *they were poor in spirit*, and it is no mean mercy to be emptied of our pride, to be brought to see how undeserving we are in the sight of God and to be made to feel our personal weakness and need of everything that might make us fit for the presence of God! I could ask for some men whom I know no greater mercy than that they might be blessed with spiritual poverty—that they might be made to feel how poor they are—for they will never know Christ and they will never rise to be practically merciful till first they have seen their own true condition and have obtained mercy enough to lie down at the foot of the cross—and there, with a broken heart, to confess that they are empty and poor!

The connection also shows that these persons *had obtained mercy enough to mourn*. They had mourned over their past sins with bitter repentance. They had mourned over the condition of practical alienation from God into which sin had brought them—and they had mourned over the fact of their ingratitude to their Redeemer and their rebellion against His Holy Spirit. They mourned because they could not mourn more. And they wept because their eyes could not weep as they ought concerning sin. They had—

"Learned to weep for nothing but sin,
And after none but Christ."

And it is no small blessing to have the mourning, the broken, the contrite heart, for this the Lord will not despise.

They had also obtained the grace of meekness and had become gentle, humble, contented, weaned from the world, submissive to the Lord's will, ready to overlook the offenses of others, having learned to pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors"—no small blessing this! They had indeed obtained mercy when their proud heart was brought low, their haughty spirit was bowed down and they had become meek and lowly, in measure like their Lord.

They had obtained yet further grace, for *they had been taught to hunger and thirst after righteousness*. They had a spiritual appetite for the righteousness which is of God by faith. They had also a sad hunger for the practical inherited righteousness which is the work of the Spirit of God. They loved that which was right and they hungered to do it. They hungered to see others do right, they hungered to see the kingdom of righteousness established and the truth of God prevailing over all the earth. Was not this, indeed, to obtain mercy? And if out of this grew the character of being merciful, it was not to be ascribed to anything in themselves, or regarded as a natural outgrowth of their own disposition, but as another gift of divine grace, another fruit which grew out of special fruits which had already been given! Was it not already said of these people, "There's is the kingdom of heaven"? Had they not obtained mercy? Was it not said of them, "They shall be comforted"? Who dares say they had not obtained mercy? Had it not been said of them, "They shall inherit the earth"? What do you call this but mercy? Had not the voice of Christ declared, "They shall be filled"? Was not this mercy to the fullest? And therefore I say that the people our text speaks of were a people who had *already obtained mercy*, who were themselves singular trophies of mercy! And the fact that they displayed mercy to others was inevitable as a result of what had been done for them and worked in them by the ever blessed Spirit of God! They were not merciful because they were naturally tenderhearted, but merciful because God had made them poor in spirit! They were not merciful because they had generous ancestors, but merciful because they themselves had mourned and been comforted! They were not merciful because they sought the esteem of their fellow men but because they were themselves meek and lowly and were inheriting the earth—and wished that others could enjoy, as they did, the blessing of heaven! They were not merciful because they could not help it and felt bound to be so from some constraint from which they would gladly escape—but they were joyfully merciful—for they had hungered and thirsted after righteousness and they had been filled!

II. Now, secondly, WHAT IS THE PECULIAR VIRTUE WHICH IS HERE ASCRIBED TO THESE BLESSED ONES? They were merciful.

To be merciful would include, first of all, *kindness to the sons of need and the daughters of poverty*. No merciful man could forget the poor. He who passed by their ills without sympathy and saw their suffering without relieving them, might prate as he would about inward grace, but divine grace in his heart there could not be! The Lord does not acknowledge as of His family one who can see his brother has needs and

shuts up "his heart of compassion from him." The apostle John rightly asks, "How dwells the love of God in him?" No, the truly merciful are considerate of those who are poor. They think of them. Their own comforts make them think of them. At other times, their own discomforts will. When they are sick and they are surrounded with many comforts, they wonder how those fare who are sick and in poverty. When the cold is keen about them and their garments are warm, they think with pity of those who shiver in the same cold, but are scantily covered with rags. Their sufferings and their joys alike help them to consider the poor. And they consider them practically. They do not merely say that they sympathize and hope others will help, but they give of their substance according to their ability, joyfully and cheerfully, that the poor may not lack—and in dealing with them, they are not harsh. They will remit, as far as they can justly do so, anything they may have demanded of them and will not persecute them to the utmost extremity, and pinch and cheat them, as those do who seek to skin a flint and to obtain the last morsel and the uttermost farthing from the poorest of the poor. No, where God has given a man a new heart and a right spirit, there is great tenderness to all the poor—and especially great love to the poor saints—for, while every saint is an image of Christ, the poor saint is a picture of Christ set in the same frame in which Christ's picture must always be set—the frame of humble poverty. I see in a rich saint much that is like his Master, but I do not see how he could truthfully say, "I have not where to lay my head." Nor do I wish him to say it. But when I see poverty, as well as everything else that is like Christ, I think I am bound to feel my heart specially going forth there. This is how we can still wash Christ's feet by caring for the poorest of His people. This is how honorable women can still minister to Him of their substance. This is how we can still make a great feast to which we may invite Him, when we call together the poor, the lame, the halt and the blind who cannot recompense us—and we are content to do it for Jesus Christ's sake. It is said of Chrysostom that he so continually preached the doctrine of alms-giving in the Christian church that they called him the Preacher of Alms—and I think it was not a bad title for a man to wear.

In these days, it has almost become a crime to relieve the poor. In fact, I do not know whether there are not some statutes which might almost render us liable to prosecution for it. I can only say that the spirit of the times may be wise under some aspects, but it does not seem to me to be very clearly the spirit of the New Testament. The poor will never cease out of the land and the poor will never cease out of the church of Christ. They are Christ's legacy to us! It is quite certain that the Good Samaritan got more out of the poor man whom he found between Jerusalem and Jericho than the poor man got out of him! He had a little oil and wine, and two pence, the expenses at the inn—but the Samaritan got his name in the Bible and there it has been handed down to posterity—a wonderfully cheap investment! And in everything that we give, the blessing comes to those who give it, for you know the words of the Lord Jesus,

how He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Blessed are they who are merciful to the poor!

Next, *the merciful man has an eager eye, a weeping eye for mourners who are round about him.* The worst ill in the world is not poverty—the worst of ills is a depressed spirit. At least I scarcely know anything that can be worse than this, and there are even among the excellent of the earth some who seldom have a bright day in the whole year. December seems to rule the whole twelve months. By reason of heaviness, they are, all their life, subject to bondage! If they march to heaven, it is on crutches as Mr. Ready-to-Halt did. And they water the way with tears as Miss Much-Afraid did. They are sometimes afraid that they were never converted. At another time, that they have fallen from grace. At another time, that they have sinned the unpardonable sin! At another time, that Christ has gone from them and they will never see His face again. They are full of all manner of troubles—"they reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are often at their wit's end." There are many Christian people who always get out of the way of such folks as these—or if they come across them, they say, "It is enough to give anybody the miserables. Who wants to talk with such people? They ought not to be so sad. They really ought to be more cheerful, but they are giving way to nervousness," and so on. That may be quite true, but it is always a pity to say it! You might as well tell a man when he has a headache that he is giving way to headache, or when he has the chills or the fever that he is giving way to the chills or the fever! The fact is, there is nothing more real than some of those diseases which are traceable to the imagination, for they are real in their pain, though perhaps as to their causes we could not reason about them.

The merciful man is always merciful to these people. He puts up with their whims. He knows very often that they are very foolish, but he understands that he would be foolish, too, if he were to tell them so, for it would make them more foolish than they are! He does not consult his own comfort and say, "I want to get comfort from this person"—he desires to *impart* comfort. He remembers that it is written, "Strengthen you the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees," and he knows that command, "Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem." He understands that as His Lord and Master sought after that which was wounded, bound up that which was broken, healed that which was sick and brought again that which was driven away, even so ought all His servants to imitate their Master by looking with the greatest interest after those who are in the saddest plight. O children of God, if ever you are hardhearted towards any sorrowful persons, you are not what you ought to be! You are not like your Master! You are not like yourselves when you are in your right state, for when you are in your right state, you are tender, full of pity and full of compassion, for you have learned from the Lord Jesus that the merciful are blessed, and that they shall obtain mercy! Possibly when you, too, come to be depressed, as you may—you may remember those jeering words

and those unkind expressions which you used concerning others. When we get very big, it may be that the Lord will take us down and we shall be glad of any little mouse hole to hide our head. Some of us have known what it is to be glad of the very least promise if we could but get a hold of it. And we have run with eagerness to the very texts we used to point poor sinners to—and felt they were the very texts we needed. Dr. Guthrie, when he was very ill and about to die, said he liked to hear children's hymns, the little children's hymns. And the strongest men in the family of Christ often want the children's texts and the children's promises. Even the little children's promises suit big men when they are in that sad state. Be you merciful, even as your heavenly Father is merciful towards those who are cast down.

This mercy extends itself, next, to the full forgiveness of all personal offenses against ourselves. "Blessed are the merciful," that is, those persons who do not take to heart any injuries that are done them, any insults, intended or unintended. A certain governor of Georgia, in Mr. Wesley's day, said that he would have his servant on board his vessel flogged for drinking his wine. And when Mr. Wesley pleaded that the man might be pardoned on that occasion, the governor said, "It is no use, Mr. Wesley, you know, sir, I never forgive." "Well, then, sir," said Mr. Wesley, "I hope you know that you will never be forgiven, or else I hope that you have never sinned." So, until we leave off sinning, we must never talk of not forgiving other people, for we shall need forgiveness for ourselves! You will notice in many families that quarrels arise even between brothers and sisters, but let us always be ready to put aside anything that will make a scene or cause ill-feeling, for a Christian is the last person who should harbor unkind thoughts. I have occasionally noticed great severity towards servants who are sometimes thrown out of situations and exposed to many temptations, for a fault that might be cured if it were forgiven and if some kindly word were used. It is not right for any of us to say, "I will have everybody acting straight towards me, and I will let all know it. I am determined to tolerate no nonsense, not I—I mean to have the right thing done by all men towards me—and if not, I will set them straight."

Ah, dear friends, God never talked so to you! And let me also say, if that is the way you talk, it is not the language of a child of God at all! A child of God feels that he is imperfect and that he lives with imperfect people. When they act improperly towards him, he feels it, but at the same time he also feels, "I have been far worse to my God than they have been to me, so I will let it go." I recommend you, dear brothers and sisters, always to have one blind eye and one deaf ear. I have always tried to have them and my blind eye is the best eye I have, and my deaf ear is the best ear I have! There is many a speech that you may hear even from your best friends that would cause you much grief and produce much ill—so do not listen to it. They will probably be sorry that they spoke so unkindly if you never mention it, and let the whole thing die. But if you say something about it and bring it up again and again, and fret and

worry over it, and magnify it, and tell somebody else about it, and bring half a dozen people into the quarrel—that is the way family disagreements have been made, Christian churches broken up, the devil magnified and God dishonored! Oh, do not let it be so with us, but let us feel if there is any offense against us, "Blessed are the merciful," and such we mean to be.

But this mercifulness goes much further. *There must and will be great mercy in the Christian's heart towards those who are outwardly sinful.* The Pharisee had no mercy upon the man who was a publican. "Well," he said, "if he has gone down so low as to collect the Roman tax from his fellow subjects, he is a disgraceful fellow! He may get as far as ever he can from my dignified self." And as for the harlot, it mattered not though she might be ready to shed enough tears to wash her Savior's feet, yet she was a polluted thing! And Christ, Himself, was looked upon as being polluted because He allowed a woman who had been a sinner to thus show her repentance and her love. Simon and the other Pharisees felt, "Such people have put themselves out of the pale of society, and there let them stay. If they have gone astray like that, let them suffer for it." There is still much of that spirit in this hypocritical world, for a great part of the world is a mass of the most awful hypocrisy that one can imagine! There are men that are living in vile sin, they know they are, and yet they go into society and are received as if they were the most respectable persons in the world! But should it so happen that some poor woman is led astray, oh dear, dear, dear! She is much too vile for these gentlemen to know anything about her existence! The scoundrels—to have an pretense of virtue while they are themselves indulging in the grossest vice! Yet so it is and there is a prudishness about society which says at once, "Oh, we hold up our hands in horror at anybody who has done anything at all wrong against society, or the laws of the land."

Now a Christian thinks far harsher things of sin than the worldling does. He judges sin by a much sterner rule than other men do, but he always thinks kindly of the sinner. And if he could, he would lay down his life to reclaim him, as his Master did before him! He does not say, "Stand by yourself! Come not near me, for I am holier than you!" But he reckons it to be his chief concern on earth to cry to sinners, "Behold the Lamb of God which took away the sin of the world." So the merciful Christian is not one who shuts anybody out. He is not one who thinks anyone beneath his notice. He would be glad if he could bring to Jesus the most fallen and the most depraved! And those dear brothers and sisters who are the most completely occupied in this holy work we honor, for the lower they have to go, the greater is their honor, in the sight of God, in being permitted thus to rake the very kennels of sin to find jewels for Christ, for surely, the brightest gems in His crown will come out of the darkest and foulest places where they have been lost! "Blessed are the merciful" who care for the fallen, for those that have gone astray—"for they shall obtain mercy."

But *a genuine Christian has mercy on the souls of all men*. He cares not merely for the extremely fallen class, so called by the men of the world, but he regards the whole race as fallen! He knows that all men have gone astray from God and that all are shut up in sin and unbelief till eternal mercy comes to their deliverance. Therefore his pity goes forth towards the respectable, the rich, the great and he often pities princes and kings because they have so few to tell them the truth of God. He pities the poor rich, for while there are efforts made for the reclaiming of the working classes, how few efforts are ever made for the reclaiming of peers and duchesses—and bringing such big sinners as the "Right Honorables" to know Jesus Christ? He feels pity for them and he feels pity for all nations—the nations that sit in heathen darkness and those that are locked up in Popery. He longs that grace should come to all and that the truths of the Gospel should be proclaimed in every street, and Jesus made known to every son and daughter of Adam! He has a love for them all. And I pray you, brothers and sisters, never to trifle with this true instinct of the newborn nature!

The great doctrine of election is very precious to us and we hold it most firmly. But there are some, (and it must not be denied), who allow that doctrine to chill their love towards their fellow men. They do not seem to have much zeal for their conversion and are quite content to sit down, or stand idle and believe that the decrees and purposes of God will be fulfilled. So they will, brothers and sisters, but it will be through warmhearted Christians who bring others to Jesus! The Lord Jesus will see of the travail of His soul, but it will be by one who is saved telling of salvation to another, and that other to a third, and so on till the sacred fire spreads until the earth shall be girdled with its flame! The Christian is merciful to all and anxiously longs that they may be brought to know the Savior! And he makes efforts to reach them—to the utmost of his ability, he tries to win souls to Jesus! He also prays for them. If he is really a child of God, he takes time to plead with God for sinners and he gives what he can to help others to spend their time in telling sinners the way of salvation and pleading with them as ambassadors for Christ. The Christian makes this one of his great delights, if by any means he may turn a sinner, by the power of the Spirit, from the error of his ways and so may save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins!

I have many more things to say about this mercifulness. It is so wide a subject that I cannot give all its details. It certainly means a love to God at bottom, which shows itself by *merciful desires for the good of God's creatures*. The merciful man is merciful to his beast. I do not believe in the piety of a man who is cruel to a horse. There is sometimes need of the whip, but the man who uses it cruelly surely cannot be a converted man! There are sometimes sights to be seen in our streets which may well provoke the God of heaven to come down in indignation and punish the cruelty of brutal persons to brute beasts. But where the grace of God is in our heart, we would not cause unnecessary pain to a fly! And if, in the course of the necessities of mankind, pain must be given to the infe-

rior animals, the Christian heart is pained and will try to devise all possible means to prevent any unnecessary pain from being endured by a single creature that God's hands have made. There is some truth of God in that saying of the ancient mariner, "He prays well who loves well both man and bird and beast." There is a touch, if it is not always of grace, of something like grace in the kindness of heart which every Christian should feel towards all the living things that God has made.

Further, the merciful man shows his mercy to his fellow men in many ways of this kind. *He is merciful to their characters*, merciful in not believing a great many reports he hears about reputed good men! He is told some astonishing story very derogatory to the character of a Christian brother and he says, "Now, if that brother were told this story about me, I would not like him to believe it of me unless he searched it out and was quite sure of it. And I won't believe it of him unless I am forced to do so." It is a delightful thing for Christians to have confidence in one another's characters. Wherever that rules in a church, it will prevent a world of sorrow. Brother, I have more confidence in you than I can ever have in myself! And as I can truly say that, you should be able to say the same of your fellow Christians, too. Do not be ready to receive such reports—there is as much wickedness in believing a lie as in telling it, if we are always ready to believe it. There would be no slanderers if there were no receivers and believers of slander, for when there is no demand for an article, there are no producers of it! And if we will not believe evil reports, the talebearer will be discouraged and leave off his evil trade. But suppose we are compelled to believe it? Then the merciful man shows his mercy by not repeating it. "Alas!" he says, "it is true and I am very sorry, but why should I publish it abroad?" If there happened to be a traitor in a regiment, I do not think the other soldiers would go and publish it everywhere and say, "Our regiment has been dishonored by one of our comrades." "It is an ill bird that fouls its own nest," and it is an ill professor who uses his tongue to tell the faults and failures of his brethren! Then suppose we have heard of such a thing—the merciful man feels it his duty not to repeat it! Many a man has been ruined for life through some fault which he committed when young, which has been severely dealt with. A young man has misappropriated a sum of money and has been brought before the magistrates and put in jail—and so made a thief for life. Forgiveness for the first action, with prayer and kindly rebuke, might have won him to a life of virtue, or (who knows?) to a life of piety. It is for the Christian, at any rate, not to expose, unless it is absolutely necessary, as sometimes it is—but to always deal towards the erring in the gentlest manner possible.

And, brothers and sisters, we should be merciful to one another in seeking never to look at the worst side of a brother's character. Oh, how quick some are to spy out other people's faults! They hear that Mr. So and So is very useful in the church, and they say, "Yes, he is, but he has a very curious way of going to work, has he not? And he is so eccentric." Well, did you ever know a good man who was very successful, who was

not a little eccentric? Some people are a deal too smooth to ever do much—it is the odd knots about us that are the force of our character! But why be so quick to point out all our flaws? No, you go out, when the sun is shining brightly, and say, "Yes, this sun is a very good illuminator, but I remark that it has spots." If you do, you had better keep your remark to yourself, for it gives more light than you do, whatever spots you may have or may not have! And many excellent persons in the world have spots, but yet they do good service to God and to their age, so let us not always be the spot finders, but let us look at the bright side of the brother's or sister's character rather than the dark one, and feel that we rise in repute when other Christians rise in repute and that as they have honor through their holiness, our Lord is the glory of it, and we share in some of the comfort of it. And let us never join in the loud outcries that are sometimes raised against men who may have committed very small offenses. Many and many a time we have heard men cry, their voices sounding like the baying of a pack of hounds against some man for a mistaken judgment, or what was little more, "Down with him, down with him!" And if he happens to get into some pecuniary trouble at the same time, then he must surely be a worthless fellow—for lack of gold is with some men a clear proof of the lack of virtue, and lack of success in business is regarded by some as the most damning of all vices! From such outcries against good men who make mistakes, may we be delivered! And may our mercy always take the shape of being willing to restore to our love and to our society any who may have erred, but who, nevertheless, show hearty and true repentance and a desire to henceforth adorn the doctrine of God their Savior in all things! You who are merciful will be ready to receive your prodigal Brother when he comes back to his Father's house. Do not be like the elder brother and when you hear the music and the dancing, ask, "What do these things mean?" but count it right that all should be glad when he who was lost is found, he who was dead is made alive again!

I can only throw out hints that may suit one or another of you. My brothers and sisters, we ought to be merciful in the sense of *not allowing others to be tempted beyond what they are able to bear*. You know that there is such a thing as exposing our young people to temptation. Parents will sometimes allow their boys to start in life in houses where there is a chance of rising, but where there is a greater chance of falling into great sin. They do not esteem the moral risks which they sometimes run in putting their sons into large houses where there is no regard to morals and where there are a thousand nets of Satan spread to take unwary birds. Be merciful to your children—let them not be exposed to evils which were, perhaps, too strong for you in *your* youth, and which will be too powerful for them! Let your mercy consider them and do not put them in that position.

And as to your clerks, and servants, we sometimes, when we have dishonest people about us, are about as guilty as they are! We did not lock up our money and take proper care of it. If we had done so, they

could not have stolen it. We sometimes leave things about and through our carelessness the suggestion may often come, "May I not take this and take that?" And so we may be partakers in their sins through our own lack of care. Remember, they are but men and women—sometimes they are but boys and girls—so do not put baits before them, do not play cat's paw for Satan, but keep temptation from them as much as lies in you.

And let us be merciful, too, to people *in not expecting too much from them*. I believe there are persons who expect those who work for them to toil 24 hours a day, or thereabouts. No matter how hard the task, it never strikes them that their servants' heads ache, or that their legs grow weary. "What were they made for but to slave for us?" That is the kind of notion some have, but that is not the notion of a true Christian! He feels that he desires his servants and his dependents to do their duty and he is grieved to find that many of them cannot, but when he sees them diligently trying, he often feels for them even more than they feel for themselves, for he is considerate and gentle. Who likes to drive a horse that extra mile that makes him feel ready to drop? Who would wish to get out of his fellow man that extra hour of work which is just that which makes him wretched? Putting all that I have said into one sentence, let us, dear friends, be tender, considerate, kind and gentle to all.

"Oh," says one, "if we were to go about the world acting like that, we would get imposed upon, we would be badly treated," and so on. Well, try it, brother! Try it, sister! And you shall find that any misery that comes to you through being too tenderhearted, too gentle and too merciful, will be so light an affliction that it will not be worthy to be compared with the peace of mind that it will bring you, and the constant wellspring of joy which it will put into your own bosom as well as into the bosoms of others!

III. I shall close by briefly noticing THE BLESSING WHICH IS PROMISED TO THOSE WHO ARE MERCIFUL.

It is said of them that "they shall obtain mercy." I cannot help believing that this means in this present life as well as in the life to come. Surely this is David's meaning in the 41st Psalm—"Blessed is he that considers the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble…He shall be blessed upon the earth." Is that text gone altogether under the new dispensation? Are those promises only meant for the old legal times? Ah, brothers and sisters, we have the sun, but remember that when the sun shines, the stars are also shining—we do not see them by reason of the greater brightness, but every star is shining in the day as well as in the night—and increasing the light! And so, though the greater promises of the gospel do sometimes make us forget the promises of the old dispensation, yet they are not canceled! They are still there and they are confirmed—and they are made yes and Amen in Christ Jesus, unto the glory of God by us! I firmly believe that when a man is in trouble, if he has been enabled, through divine grace, to be kind and generous towards others, he may look to God in prayer and say, "Lord, there is Your promise. I claim no merit for it, but Your grace has enabled me, when I saw

others in the same condition as I am, to help them. Lord, raise me up a helper!" Job seemed to get some comfort out of that fact. It is not our grandest comfort or our best. As I have said, it is not the sun, it is only one of the stars. At the same time, we do not despise the starlight. I believe that God will full often help and bless in temporal matters those persons whom He has blessed with a merciful spirit towards others.

And often it is true in another sense that those who have been merciful obtain mercy, for *they obtain mercy from others*. Our Savior said, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you mete withal it shall be measured to you again." There will be this sort of general feeling. If a man was sternly just and no more, when he comes down in the world, few pity him. But that other man, whose earnest endeavor it was to be the helper of others, when he is found in trouble, all say, "We are so sorry for him."

But the full meaning of the text, no doubt, relates to that day of which Paul wrote concerning his friend, Onesiphorus, "The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord *in that day*." Do not think that I am preaching up mercy as a meritorious work—I did my best at the outset to put all that aside. But, as an *evidence of grace*, mercifulness is a very prominent and distinguishing mark. And if you need proof of that, let me remind you that our Savior's own description of the day of judgment runs thus, "Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and you gave Me food: I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and you took Me in; naked, and you clothed Me: I was sick, and you visited Me: I was in prison, and you came unto Me." This, therefore, is *evidence* that they were blessed of the Father!

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THE SIXTH BEATITUDE
NO. 3159

A SERMON
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"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."
Matthew 5:8.

[In the year 1873, Mr. Spurgeon delivered what he called "a series of sententious homilies" on the Beatitudes. After an introductory discourse upon the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes as a whole, he intended to preach upon each one separately, but either illness or some other special reason prevented him from fully carrying out this purpose. There are, however, eight Sermons upon the Beatitudes—See Sermons #422, Volume 7—THE PEACE-MAKER; #2103, Volume 35—THE HUNGER AND THIRST WHICH ARE BLESSED; #3155, Volume 55—THE BEATITUDES; #3156, Volume 55—THE FIRST BEATITUDE; #3065, Volume 53—THE THIRD BEATITUDE; #3157, Volume 55—THE FOURTH BEATITUDE; #3158, Volume 55—THE FIFTH BEATITUDE—and this one—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

IT was a peculiarity of the great Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, that His teaching was continually aimed at the hearts of men. Other teachers had been content with outward moral reformation, but He sought the source of all the evil, that He might cleanse the spring from which all sinful thoughts, words and actions come. He insisted over and over again that until the heart was pure, the life would never be clean. The memorable sermon upon the Mount, from which our text is taken, begins with the benediction, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," for Christ was dealing with men's spirits—with their inner and spiritual nature. He did this more or less in all the Beatitudes and this one strikes the very center of the target as He says not, "Blessed are the pure in language, or the pure in action," much less, "Blessed are the pure in ceremonies, or in raiment, or in food," but "Blessed are the pure *in heart*." O beloved, whatever so called "religion" may recognize as its adherent, a man whose heart is impure, the religion of Jesus Christ will not do so! His message to all men is still, "You must be born again." That is to say, the inner nature must be divinely renewed or else you cannot enter or even *see* that kingdom of God which Christ came to set up in this world. If your actions should appear to be pure, yet if the motive at the back of those actions should be impure, that will nullify them all! If your language should be chaste, yet if your heart is reveling in fowl imaginations, you stand before God not according to your words, but according to your desires—according to the set of the current of your affections, your real inward likes and dislikes—you shall be judged by Him. *External* purity is all that man asks at our hands, "for

man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart"—and the promises and blessings of the covenant of grace belong to those who are made pure in *heart*—and to no one else.

In speaking upon our text, I want to slow you, first, that *impurity of heart is the cause of spiritual blindness.* And secondly, that *the purification of the heart admits us to a most glorious sight*—"the pure in heart shall *see God.*" Then I shall have to show you, in the third place, that *the purification of the heart is a divine operation* which cannot be performed by ourselves, or by any human method—it must be worked by Him who is the thrice holy Lord God of Sabaoth!

I. First, then, I have to remark that IMPURITY OF HEART IS THE CAUSE OF SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS—the cause of a very large part, if not of all of it.

A man who is intoxicated cannot see clearly. His vision is often distorted or doubled. But there are other cups, besides those which intoxicate, which prevent the mental eyes from having clear sight. And he who has once drunk deeply of those cups will become spiritually blind, and others, in proportion as they imbibe the noxious draughts, will be unable to see afar off.

There are moral beauties and immoral horrors which certain men cannot see because they are impure in heart. Take, for instance, the covetous man, and you will soon see that there is no other dust that blinds so completely as gold dust. There is a trade which many regard as bad from top to bottom, but if it pays the man who is engaged in it, and he is of a grasping disposition, it will be almost impossible to convince him that it is an evil trade! You will usually find that the covetous man sees no charm in generosity. He thinks that the liberal man, if he is not actually a fool, is so near akin to one that he might very easily be mistaken for one. He himself admires that which can be most easily grasped—and the more of it that he can secure, the better is he pleased. The skinning of flints and the oppression of the poor are occupations in which he takes delight! If he has performed a dirty trick in which he has sacrificed every principle of honor, yet if it has turned out to his own advantage, he says to himself, "That was a clever stroke!" And if he should meet with another of his own kind, he and his fellow would chuckle over the transaction and say how beautifully they had done it. It would be useless for me to attempt to reason with an avaricious man—to show him the beauty of liberality—but, on the other hand, I would not think of wasting my time in trying to get a fair opinion from him as to the justice of anything which he knew to be remunerative. You know that some years ago there was a great fight in the United States over the question of slavery. Who were the gentlemen in England who took the side of the slave-owners? Why, mostly Liverpool men who did so because slavery paid them! If it had not done so, they would have condemned it. And I daresay that those of us who condemned it, did so the more readily because it did not pay us! Men can see very clearly where there is nothing to be lost either way, but if it comes to the a matter of *gain*, the heart being impure, the eyes can-

not see straight! There are innumerable things that a man cannot see if he holds a sovereign over each of his eyes—he cannot even see the sun then—and if he keeps the gold over his eyes, he will become blind. The pure in heart can see. But when covetousness gets into the heart, it makes the eyes dim or blind.

Take another sin—the sin of oppression. There are men who tell us that in their opinion, the persons who are in the highest positions in life are the very beauty and glory of the nation—and that poor people ought to be kept in their proper places because they were created on purpose so that "the nobility" might be sustained in their exalted position, and that other highly respectable persons might also gather to themselves any quantity of wealth. As to the idea of men needing more money for their services, it ought not to be encouraged for a single moment, so these gentlemen say! And if the poor needlewoman toils and starves on the few pence she can earn, you must not say a word about it—there are "the laws of political economy" that govern all such cases—so she must be ground between the wheels that abound in this age of machinery and nobody ought to interfere in the matter. Of course, an oppressor cannot or will not see the evil of oppression. If you put before him a case of injustice which is as plain as the nose on his face, he cannot see it because he has always been under the delusion that he was sent into the world with a whip in his hand to drive other people about, for he is the one great somebody and other people are poor nobodies, only fit to creep under his huge legs and humbly ask his leave to live. In this way, oppression, if it gets into the heart, completely blinds the eyes and perverts the judgment of the oppressor.

The same remark is true concerning lasciviousness. I have often noticed, when men have railed at religion and reviled the holy Word of God, that their lives have been impure. Seldom, if ever, have I met with a case in which my judgment has deceived me with regard to the lives of men who have spoken against holy things. I remember preaching, once, in a country town just about harvest time—and in commenting on the fact that some farmers would not let the poor have any gleanings from their fields—I said I thought there were some who were so mean that if they could rake their fields with a small tooth comb they would do so. Thereupon a farmer marched noisily out of the place in anger—and when he was asked why he was so wrathful, he answered, with the greatest simplicity, "Because I always rake my fields twice." Of course, he could not perceive any particular pleasure in caring for the poor and neither could he submit with a good conscience to the rebuke that came home to him so pointedly! And when men speak against the gospel, it is almost always because the gospel speaks against them. The gospel has found them out—it has charged them with the guilt of their sins and has arrested them! It has come to them like a policeman with his dark lantern and turned the bull's eye full upon their iniquity and, therefore, it is that they are so indignant. They would not be living as they are if they could see

themselves as God sees them—they would not be able to continue in their filthiness, corrupting others as well as ruining themselves if they could really see! And as these evil things get into the heart, they are certain to blind the eyes.

The same thing may be said with regard to spiritual truth as well as moral truth. We frequently meet with persons who say that they cannot understand the gospel of Christ. At the bottom, in nine cases out of ten, I believe that it is their sin which prevents their understanding it. For instance, last Lord's Day evening, [See Sermon #3154, Volume 55—CONCERNING THE FORBEARANCE OF GOD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] I tried to preach to you upon the claims of God and sought to show you what right He has to us. There may have been some of my hearers who said, "We do not recognize the claims of God to us." If any one of you talks like that, it is because your heart is not right in the sight of God, for if you were able to judge righteously, you would see that the highest claims in all the world are those of the Creator upon His creatures and you would at once say, "I recognize that He who has created has the right to govern—that He should be Master and Lord who is both greatest and best—and that He should be lawgiver who is infallibly wise and just, and always kind and good." When men practically say, "We would not cheat or rob our fellow men, but as for God, what does it matter how we treat Him?" The reason is that they are unjust in heart and their so called justice to their fellow men is only because their motto is, "honesty is *the best policy,*" and they are not really just in heart, or else they would at once admit the just claims of the Most High.

The great central doctrine of the atonement can never be fully appreciated until a man's heart is rectified. You have probably often heard such remarks as these, "I don't see why there should be any recompense made to God for sin. Why could He not forgive transgression at once and have done with it? What need is there of a substitutionary sacrifice?" Ah, sir! If you had ever felt the weight of sin upon your conscience; if you had ever learned to loathe the very thought of evil; if you had been brokenhearted because you have been so terribly defiled by sin, you would feel that the Atonement was not only required by God, but that it was also required by your own sense of justice! And instead of rebelling against the doctrine of vicarious sacrifice, you would open your heart to it and cry, "That is precisely what I need!" The purest hearted people who have ever lived are those who have rejoiced to see God's righteous law vindicated and magnified by Christ's death upon the cross as the substitute for all who believe in Him, so that while God's mercy is displayed in matchless majesty, intense satisfaction is felt that there could be a way of reconciliation by which every attribute of God should derive honor and glory—and yet poor lost sinners should be lifted up into the high and honorable position of children of God! The pure in heart see no difficulty in the atonement—all the difficulties concerning it arise from the lack of purity there.

The same may be said of the equally important truth of regeneration. The impure in heart cannot see any need of being born again. They say,

"We admit that we are not quite all that we should be, but we can easily be made all right. As to the talk about a new creation, we do not see any need of that. We have made a few mistakes which will be rectified by experience. And there have been some errors of life which we trust may be condoned by future watchfulness and care." But if the unrenewed man's heart were pure, he would see that his nature has been an evil thing from the beginning and he would realize that thoughts of evil as naturally rise in us as sparks do from a fire! And he would feel that it would be a dreadful thing that such a nature as that should remain unchanged. He would see within his heart jealousies, murders, rebellions and evils of every kind—and his heart would cry out to be delivered from itself. But just because his heart is impure, he does not see his own impurity and does not and will not confess his need to be made a new creature in Christ Jesus. But as for you who are pure in heart, what do you now think of your old nature? Is it not the heavy burden that you continually carry about with you? Is not the plague of your own heart the worst plague under heaven? Do you not feel that the very tendency to sin is a constant grief to you and that if you could but get rid of it altogether; your heaven would have begun below? So it is the pure in heart who see the doctrine of regeneration—and those who see it not, see it not because they are *impure* in heart.

The same remark is true concerning the glorious character of our blessed Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. Who has ever found fault with that except men with bat's eyes? There have been unconverted men who have been struck with the beauty and purity of Christ's life, but the pure in heart are enamored of it. They feel that it is more than a human life, that it is divine and that God Himself is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, His Son. If any man does not see the Lord Jesus Christ to be thus superlatively lovely, it is because he is, himself, not purified in heart, for if he were, he would recognize in Him the mirror of all perfection and would rejoice to do reverence to Him. But, alas, it is still true that, as it is with moral matters, so is it with that which is spiritual and, therefore, the great truths of the gospel cannot be perceived by those whose heart is impure!

There is one form of impurity which, beyond all others, seems to blind the eyes to spiritual truth, and that is duplicity of heart. A man who is simple-minded, honest, sincere, childlike, is the man who enters the kingdom of heaven when its door is opened to him. The things of the kingdom are hidden from the double minded and the deceitful, but they are plainly revealed to the babes in grace—the simple hearted, transparent people who wear their heart upon their sleeve. It is quite certain that the hypocrite will never see God while he continues in his hypocrisy. In fact, he is so blind that he cannot see anything, and certainly cannot see himself as he really is in God's sight! The man who is quite satisfied with the name of a Christian, without the life of a Christian will never see God nor anything at all until his eyes are divinely opened. What does it mat-

ter to anybody else what his opinion is upon any subject whatever? We would not care to have praise from the man who is double minded and who is practically a liar, for while he is one thing in his heart, he endeavors to pass himself off for another thing in his life.

Formalism, too, will never see God, for formalism always looks to the shell and never gets to the kernel. Formalism licks the bone, but never gets to the marrow. It heaps to itself ceremonies, mostly of its own invention, and when it has attended to these, it flatters itself that all is well, though the heart itself still lusts after sin. The widow's house is being devoured even at the very time when the Pharisee is making long prayers in the synagogue or at the corners of the streets. Such a man cannot see God! There is a kind of reading of the Scriptures which will never lead a man to see God. He opens the Bible, not to see what is there, but to see what he can find to back up his own views and opinions. If the texts he needs are not there, he will twist others round till he, somehow or other, gets them on his side. But he will only believe as much as agrees with his own preconceived notions! He would like to mold the Bible, like a cake of wax, to any shape he pleases, so, of course, he cannot see the truth and he does not want to see it.

The crafty man, too, never sees God. I am afraid for no man as much as for the crafty, the man whose guiding star is "policy." I have seen rough sailors converted to God and blasphemers, harlots and great sinners of almost all kinds brought to the Savior and saved by His grace. And very often they have told the honest truth about their sins and have blurted out the sad truth in every outspoken fashion. And when they have been converted, I have often thought that they were like the good ground of which our Savior spoke—with an honest and good heart in spite of all their badness. But as for the men of snake-like nature, who say to you, when you talk to them about religion, "Yes, yes," but do not mean it at all—the men who are never to be trusted—Mr. Smooth-Tongue, Mr. Facing-Both-Ways, Mr. By-Ends, Mr. Fair-Speech and all that class of people—God Himself never seems to do anything but let them alone! And as far as my observation goes, His grace seldom seems to come to these double minded men and women who are unstable in all their ways. These are the people who never see God.

It has been remarked by a very excellent writer, that our Lord probably alluded to this fact in the verse which forms our text. In Oriental countries the king is seldom to be seen. He lives in retirement and to get an interview with him is a matter of great difficulty. And there are all sorts of plots and plans, and intrigues and, perhaps, the use of backstairs influence. But in that way a man may at last get to see the king. But Jesus Christ says, in effect, "That is not the way to see God." No. No one ever gets to Him by craftiness, by plotting, planning and scheming—but the simple-minded man who goes humbly to Him, just as he is, and says, "My God, I desire to see You. I am guilty and I confess my sin, and plead with You for Your dear Son's sake, to forgive me." He it is who sees God.

I think there are some Christians who never see God as well as others do—I mean some brothers and sisters who, from their peculiar constitution, seem naturally of a questioning spirit. They are generally puzzled about some doctrinal point or other and their time is mostly taken up with answering objections and removing doubts. Perhaps some poor humble country woman who sits in the aisle and who knows, as Cowper says, nothing more than that her Bible is true, and that God always keep His promises, sees a great deal more of God than the learned and quibbling brother who vexes himself about foolish questions to no profit.

I remember telling you of a minister, who, calling on a sick woman, desired to leave a text with her for her private meditation. So, opening her old Bible, he turned to a certain passage which he found that she had marked with the letter P. "What does that P mean, my sister?" he asked. "That means *precious*, sir. I found that text very precious to my soul on more than one special occasion." He looked for another promise and against this he found in the margin T and P. "And what do these letters mean, my good sister?" They mean *tried and proved*, sir, for I tried that promise in my greatest distress and proved it to be true. And then I put that mark against it so that the next time I was in trouble, I might be sure that that promise was still true." The Bible is scored all over with those Ts and Ps by generation after generation of believers who have tested the promises of God and proved them to be true!. May you and I, beloved, be among those who have thus tried and proved this precious book!

II. Our second remark was that THE PURIFICATION OF THE HEART ADMITS US TO A MOST GLORIOUS SIGHT—"The pure in heart *shall see God*."

What does that mean? It means many things. I will briefly mention some of them. First, *the man whose heart is pure will be able to see God in nature*. When his heart is clean, he will hear God's footfall everywhere in the garden of the earth in the cool of the day. He will hear God's voice in the tempest, sounding in peal on peal from the tops of the mountains. He will behold the Lord walking on the great and mighty waters, or see Him in every leaf that trembles in the breeze. Once get the heart right and then God can be seen everywhere! To an impure heart, God cannot be seen anywhere, but to a pure heart God is to be seen everywhere—in the deepest caverns of the sea, in the lonely desert, in every star that gems the brow of midnight!

Further, *the pure in heart see God in the Scriptures*. Impure minds cannot see any trace of God in them. They see reasons for doubting whether Paul wrote the epistle to the Hebrews, they doubt the canonicity of the gospel according to John—and that is about all that they ever see in the Bible. But the pure in heart see God on every page of this blessed book. As they read it devoutly and prayerfully, they bless the Lord that He has been so graciously pleased to reveal Himself to them by His Spirit

and that He has given them the opportunity and the desire to enjoy the revelation of His holy will.

Besides that, *the pure in heart see God in His church*. The impure in heart cannot see Him there at all. To them, the church of God is nothing but conglomeration of divided sects. And looking upon these sects, they can see nothing but faults, failures and imperfections. It should always be remembered that every man sees that which is according to his own nature. When the vulture soars in the sky, he sees the carrion wherever it may be. And when the dove on silver wings mounts up to the azure, she sees the clean winnowed corn wherever it may be. The lion sees his prey in the forest and the lamb sees its food in the grassy meadow. Unclean hearts see little or nothing of good among God's people, but the pure in heart see God in His church and rejoice to meet Him there!

But seeing God means much more than perceiving traces of Him in nature, in the Scriptures and in His church—it means that *the pure in heart begin to discern something of God's true character*. Any man who is caught in a thunderstorm and who hears the crash of the thunder and sees what havoc the lightning flashes work, perceives that God is mighty. If he is not so foolish as to be an atheist, he says, "How terrible is this God of the lightning and the thunder!" But to perceive that God is eternally just and yet infinitely tender—and that He is sternly severe and yet immeasurably gracious, and to see the various attributes of the deity all blending into one another as the colors of the rainbow make one harmonious and beautiful whole—this is reserved for the man whose eyes have been first washed in the blood of Jesus, and then anointed with heavenly eye salve by the Holy Spirit! It is only such a man who sees that God is always and altogether good and who admires Him under every aspect, seeing that all His attributes are beautifully blended and balanced, and that each one sheds additional splendor upon all the rest. The pure in heart shall in that sense see God, for they shall appreciate His attributes and understand His character as the ungodly never can.

But, more than that, *they shall be admitted into His fellowship*. When you hear some people talk about there being no God and no spiritual things, and so on, you need not be at all concerned at what they say, for they are not in a position to warrant them in speaking about the matter! For instance, an ungodly man says, "I do not believe there is a God, for I never saw Him." I do not doubt the truth of what you say, but when I tell you that I *have* seen Him, you have no more right to doubt my word than I have to doubt yours! One day at an hotel dinner table, I was talking with a brother minister about certain spiritual things, when a gentleman who sat opposite to us, and who had a table napkin tucked under his chin, and a face that indicated his fondness for wine, made this remark, "I have been in this world for 60 years and I have never yet been conscious of anything spiritual." We did not say what we thought, but we thought it was very likely that what he said was perfectly true—and there are a great many more people in the world who might say the same as he did! But that only proved that *he* was not conscious of anything spiritu-

al—not that others were not conscious of it! There are plenty of other people who can say, "We are conscious of spiritual things. We have been, by God's presence among us, moved, bowed, carried forward and cast down, and then lifted up into joy and happiness, and peace—and our experiences are as true phenomena, at least to us, as any phenomena under heaven! And we are not to be beaten out of our beliefs, for they are supported by innumerable undoubted experiences." "He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." "But there is no such secret place," one says, "and no such shadow." How do you know that? If someone else comes and says, "Ah, but I am dwelling in that secret place and abiding under that shadow," what will you say to him? You may call him a fool if you like, but that does not prove that he is one—though it may prove that *you* are one, for he is as honest a man as you are—and as worthy to be believed as you are.

Some years ago, a lawyer in America attended a religious meeting where he heard about a dozen persons relating their Christian experience. He sat with his pencil in his hand and jotted down their evidence as they gave it. At last he said to himself, "If I had a case in court, I should like to have these persons in the witness box, for I should feel that if I had their evidence on my side, I should gain the case." Then he thought, "Well, I have ridiculed these people as fanatics, yet I would like their evidence in court upon other matters. They have nothing to gain by what they have been saying, so I ought to believe that what they have said is true." And the lawyer was simple enough, or rather, wise enough—and pure enough in heart—to look at the matter rightly! And so he also came to see the truth of God and to see God. Many of us could testify, if this were the time to do so, that there is such a thing as fellowship with God even here on earth, but men can enjoy it only in proportion as they give up their love of sin. They cannot talk with God after they have been talking filthiness. They cannot speak with God as a man speaks with his friend if they are accustomed to meet companions in the alehouse and delight to mingle with the ungodly who gather there. The pure in heart may see God and do see Him—not with the natural eyes, and far from us is such a carnal idea as that—but with their inner spiritual eyes they see the great God who is Spirit! And they have spiritual, but very real communion with the Most High.

The expression, "They shall see God," may mean something else. As I have already said, those who saw Oriental monarchs were generally considered to be highly privileged persons. There were certain ministers of State who had the right to go in and see the king whenever they chose to do so. And the pure in heart have just such a right given to them to go in and see their King at all times. In Christ Jesus they have boldness and access with confidence in coming to the throne of the heavenly grace. Being cleansed by the precious blood of Jesus, they have become the ministers, that is, the *servants* of God, and He employs them as His ambassa-

dors and sends them on high and honorable errands for Him—and they may see Him whenever their business for Him entitles them to an audience with Him!

And, lastly, *the time shall come when those who have thus seen God on earth shall see Him face to face in heaven*. Oh, the splendor of that vision! It is useless for me to attempt to talk about it. Possibly within a week some of us will know more about it than all the divines on earth could tell us; 'tis but a thin veil that parts us from glory! It may be rent asunder at any moment and then at once—

"Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in"—

the pure in heart shall fully understand what it is to *see God!* May that be your portion, beloved, and mine, also, forever and ever!

III. Now, lastly, and very briefly, I have to remind you that THIS PURIFICATION OF THE HEART IS A DIVINE WORK.

And believe me when I tell you that *it is never an unnecessary work*. No man (except the man, Christ Jesus), was ever born with a pure heart. All have sinned, all need to be cleansed—there is none good—no, not one!

Let me also assure you that *this work was never performed by any ceremony*. Men may say what they please, but no application of water ever made a man's heart any better! Some tell us that in baptism, by which they mean baby sprinkling, as a rule, they regenerate and make members of Christ, children of God and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven! But those who are sprinkled are no better than other people. They grow up in just the same way as others. The whole ceremony is useless and worse than that, for it is clean contrary to the example and teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ! No aqueous applications, no outward ceremonies can ever affect the heart!

Neither can the heart be purified *by any process of outward reformation*. The attempt has often been made to work from the outside to the inside, but it cannot be done—you might as well try to give a living heart to a marble statue by working upon the outside of it with a mallet and chisel! To make a sinner pure in heart is as great a miracle as if God were to make that marble statue live and breathe and walk!

The heart can only be purified by God's Holy Spirit. He must come upon us and overshadow us. And when He thus comes to us, then is our heart changed, but never before that. When the Spirit of God thus comes to us, He cleanses the soul. To follow the line of our Savior's teaching in the chapter before us—by showing us our spiritual poverty—"Blessed are the poor in spirit." That is the first work of God's grace—to make us feel that we are poor, that we are nothing, that we are undeserving, ill-deserving, hell-deserving sinners! As the Spirit of God proceeds with His work, the next thing that He does is to make us mourn—"Blessed are they that mourn." We mourn to think that we should have sinned as we have done. We mourn after our God. We mourn after pardon. And then the great process that effectually cleanses the heart is the application of

the water and the blood which flowed from the pierced side of Christ upon the cross. Here it is O sinners, that you will find a double cure from the guilt and from the power of sin! When faith looks to the bleeding Savior, it sees in Him not merely pardon for the past, but the putting away of the sinfulness of the present! The angel said to Joseph, before Christ was born, "You shall call His name, Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."

The whole process of salvation may be briefly explained thus. The Spirit of God finds us with foul heart and He comes and throws a divine light into us so that we see that we are foul. Then He shows us that being sinners, we deserve to endure God's wrath and we realize that we do. Then He says to us, "But that wrath was borne by Jesus Christ for you." He opens our eyes and we see that "Christ died for us"—in our place! We look to Him, we believe that He died as our substitute and we trust ourselves with Him. Then we know that our sins are forgiven us for His name's sake and the cry of pardoned sin goes through us with such a thrill as we never felt before! And the next moment the forgiven sinner cries, "Now that I am saved, now that I am pardoned, my Lord Jesus Christ, I will be Your servant forever! I will put to death the sins that put You to death and if You will give me the strength to do so, I will serve You as long as I live!" The current of the man's soul ran before towards evil, but the moment that he finds that Jesus Christ died for him and that his sins are forgiven him for Christ's sake, the whole stream of his soul rushes in the other direction towards that which is right! And though he still has a struggle against his old nature, yet from that day forth the man is pure in heart—that is to say, his heart loves purity, his heart seeks after holiness, his heart pines after perfection.

Now he is the man who sees God, loves God, delights in God, longs to be like God and eagerly anticipates the time when he shall be with God and see Him face to face. That is the process of purification—may you all enjoy it through the effectual working of the Holy Spirit! If you are willing to have it, it is freely proclaimed to you. If you truly desire the new heart and the right spirit, they will be graciously given to you! There is no need for you to try to fit yourselves to receive them. God is able to work them in you this very hour! He who will wake the dead with one blast of the resurrection trumpet can change your nature with the mere volition of His gracious mind! He can, while you sit in this house, create in you a new heart, renew a right spirit within you and send you out as different a man from what you were when you came in as if you were a newborn child! The power of the Holy Spirit to renew the human heart is boundless! "Oh," says one, "would that He would renew my heart, that He would change my nature!" If that is your heart's desire, send up that prayer to heaven right now! Let not the wish die in your soul, but turn it into a prayer and then breathe it out unto God and listen to what God has to say to you. It is this—"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." Or this—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved"—saved from your love of sin, saved from your old habits, and so completely saved that you shall become one of the pure in heart who see God!

But perhaps you ask, "What is it to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?" It is to *trust* Him, to rely upon Him. Oh, that we could all rely upon Jesus Christ now! Oh, that that troubled young man over there could come and trust in Jesus! You will never get rid of your troubles till you do! But, dear friend, you may be rid of them this very moment if you will but believe in Jesus! Yes, though you have struggled in vain against your evil habits, though you have wrestled with them sternly and resolved, and re-resolved, only to be defeated by your giant sins and your horrible passions, there is one who can conquer all your sins for you! There is one who is stronger than Hercules, who can strangle the hydra of your lust, kill the lion of your passions and cleanse the Augean stable of your evil nature by turning the great rivers of blood and water of His atoning sacrifice right through your soul! He can make and keep you pure within! Oh, look to Him! He hung upon the cross, accursed of men, and God made Him to be sin for us, though He knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He was condemned to die as our sin offering that we might live forever in the love of God. Trust Him, trust Him! He has risen from the dead and gone up into His glory, and He is at the right hand of God pleading for transgressors. Trust Him! You can never perish if you trust Him, but you shall live with ten thousand times ten thousand more who have all been saved by grace, to sing of a mighty Savior able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him!

God grant that you may all be thus saved, that so you may be among the pure in heart who shall see God and never leave off seeing Him. And He shall have all the glory! Amen and Amen!

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THE CALL OF "TODAY"
NO. 3160

A SERMON
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Therefore as the Holy Spirit says: "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."
Hebrews 3:7. **(NKJV)**

THE Holy Spirit says, "Today." There is a great talk about yesterday. There are some who will have it that there are none like the days that are past—"the good old times." There are some who glory in what they did years ago. Their work was done yesterday. They have long ago retired from the business of life, but still they are accustomed to indulge in the recollections of what they did in days gone by. Yesterday is also dwelt upon in lamentation and even in despair. Yesterday! Alas, opportunities are past. "The harvest is past, and the summer is ended, and we are not saved." Yesterday we lived in sin. Yesterday we rejected Christ. Yesterday we stifled conscience and, therefore, despair says that it is now all over. Time is gone. Closed forever are the gates of mercy—the death warrant is signed—the gallows are erected for the execution.

Now it is noteworthy that the Holy Spirit, neither that we may take comfort in it, nor despair about it, said not, "yesterday"—He said, "*To-day*." He points us not to the past—(we shall have to look at that and weep over it, or bless God for it either with repentance or gratitude)—He points us not to the time of the flood but to *today*. A very large proportion of mankind, you will find, delight in dwelling upon the word, "tomorrow." Oh what will they not do tomorrow! Sin shall be rejected tomorrow! The Savior shall be sought tomorrow! Clasped in the arms of faith, they will exult in the peace of Christ tomorrow! They will pray tomorrow! They will serve God tomorrow! Alas, of all the nets of Satan as a fowler for the souls of men, perhaps there is none in which he took in more that in this big net of procrastination. "I will—I will," and there it ends! "I go, sir," and he went not. To resolve and re-resolve, and then to die—the same is the melancholy history of thousands of hearers who bid fair for heaven a thousand times and yet will never enter there!

Tomorrow! Oh, you cursed word, tomorrow! How has man made you cursed! I find you not in the almanac of the wise—you are only in the calendar of fools. Tomorrow! There is no such thing except in dreamland, for when that comes which we call tomorrow, it will be *today*—and still

forever, *today, today, today*. There is no time but that which is. Time was, is not—and time to come is not!

Today is the only time we have. Happily for us, the Holy Spirit says, "TODAY IF YOU WILL HEAR HIS VOICE." Never do I find Him saying, "Tomorrow." His servants have often been repulsed by men like Felix who have said, "Go your way for this time. When I have a more convenient season I will send for you." And never did any apostle say, "Repent tomorrow, or wait for some convenient season to believe." The constant testimony of the Holy Spirit with regard to the one single part of time—which I have shown, indeed, to be *all* time, is—"Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

Now I am trying to speak, tonight, not as though I were preaching at all. But I need to talk to you Christians, first, and then to you unconverted people very seriously—and may God the Spirit speak through the words.

I. First to you that love the Lord, or profess to do so—Christian people I have to say to you tonight—THE HOLY SPIRIT SAYS, "TODAY." That is to say, that it is essential to duty that we attend to it at once. Every command of Christ bears the date today. If a thing is right, it should be done at once. If it is wrong, stop it immediately! Whatever you are bound to do, you are bound to do *now*. There may be some duties of a later date, but for the present, that which is the duty, is the duty now. There is immediateness about the calls of Christ. What He bids you do, you must not delay to do. The Holy Spirit says, "*Today*." And I would say this with regard to everything. Do you love the Lord? Have you ever professed His name? Then the Holy Spirit says, "*Today*." Hesitate not to take up His cross at once and follow Him—the cross of Him who was nailed to the cross for you! The cross of Him who, by His precious blood, has made you not your own, but His! Confess Him before men. Has He not said, "He that denies Me before men, him will I deny before My Father who is in heaven"? Confess with your mouth, if you have believed with your heart.

It is the immediate duty of the believer to be baptized. "As soon as you believe in Christ you may." "*Today*," says the Holy Spirit. Having united yourself to the people of God, then whatever, according to your position and calling, is incumbent upon you, do it! Are you a young Christian—warm, fervent in spirit—and do your seniors call you impudent and dampen your ardor? Listen not to them! Go and do what is in your heart! I would give nothing for a man's zeal if that zeal does not make him sometimes indiscreet. Imprudence, so far from being a sin, is often an index of the possession of the highest grace. No, David, imprudent as you are, take the smooth stones from the brook. Wait not till you have become a king or a gray headed monarch about to resign the crown to Solomon. While you are ruddy and a youth, hesitate not! The Holy Spirit says, "*Today*." Or are you called in middle life? Your sun has already

spent half its day. Is it suggested to you that you should seek your children's conversion? Plead at once that your little ones, so long neglected, may now be saved. The Holy Spirit says to you, parent, father, mother—"*Today*." Have you come into the midst of a multitude of workers of which you are the master seeking their good? Seek it today! Have you in your heart the intention to serve God when you have amassed so much wealth? What? Shall God be second? Shall mammon take the first place and Jehovah be put in the background? No! Let your gold come in second or not at all. Let your God come in now! The Holy Spirit says, "Today." "But there are urgent things pressing." If you can claim that they are duties, God forbid that I should bid you neglect them! But if they are covetous and lustful, put them aside and *now*, in the prime of your life, while yet the marrow is in your bones and your eyes are not dim, give to God what He claims of you *TODAY!*

Have you lingered long upon the road and has the evening come, and has the sun almost touched the horizon, and is the red light gleaming in the sky? Then the Holy Spirit says to you, "O aged Christian, serve God today." I cannot comprehend the postponements of old age, yet do we frequently meet with them. There was an aged man who meant to devote all his substance to the church of God, but he put it off and the thing was never done. There was another who meant to have spoken to his children. He would gather them together on a certain day and would speak to them and their children, for so had it come about that he was a grandfather, now, but he said he would do it, by and by—but *the time never came*. "Whatever your hand finds to do"—what do the Scriptures say? "Think about it?" No—"*Do it*." Give God your first and choicest thoughts! Many a man has thought over a good thing till the devil has come in with a second thought, and the thing has never been done. I love that blessed thing that made Magdalene, or Mary—whichever it was—break the alabaster box over the Savior. She did not sit down to calculate, or the thing would not have been done! And this is especially incumbent upon the aged. You are not likely to be guilty of indiscretion—your blood is not hot—therefore you may fling the reins on the back of your zeal! You are not likely to exceed in your zeal—therefore go at once, I pray you!

Oh, I wish Christians were in the habit of following the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Remember, there are many things He gives to us that we do not deserve at all or do not receive so as to carry them out. Be you not as the horse or mule which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle. Oh, be guided by gentler means, the softer touches of God's hand! The Holy Spirit says, "Today." Whatever Christian service may come across you, Christian brothers and sisters, *let me urge you not to let the night pass away, nor tomorrow, until you have accomplished the whole of it*. Get through it, dear brothers and sisters, get

through it at once. The Lord knows when duty will be most acceptable to Him. The Lord loves fresh gathered fruit. You are not to store it up until the bloom is gone and say, "I will bring it tomorrow." The Holy Spirit says, "*Today*." WHATEVER IS TO BE DONE FOR THE LORD, LET IT BE DONE NOW!

And then there is a second set of obligations which come upon the Christian—*undoing*. Now THE HOLY SPIRIT SAYS TODAY." Have I done wrong towards my neighbor? Have I spoken an unkind word? Have I made an unjust speech? Let me make my peace with my friend. But when? "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." I heard the other day that when a wasp had stung one, the sting would go away if the wasp died before the sun went down. And perhaps there may be about each one of us some bad habit, something we cannot justify ourselves in. Let us seek to be purged from it, for "the Holy Spirit says, '*Today*.'" Is there any sin to be conquered? There is no such time to kill sin as today. You will never kill this Amalekite as well as now. He will be off his guard if you smite him now. AT ONCE, THEN, STRIKE THE BLOW AGAINST THE SIN, WHATEVER IT MAY BE. There is no time for killing weeds in the garden of the soul like today! There is no time for throwing salt upon the field which is full of noxious poison like now. Never imagine that you will get rid of sin by degrees. I know some people have been cured of a taste for strong drink by degrees, and such things may be possible, but the Christian will find it easier to wean himself at once by a sacred total abstinence from everything that is sinful—for as long as you parley with the enemy, the enemy will still have power over you—and blessed is that man who does not begin to take off one finger of his right hand and then another and then another, but takes the axe and chops it off as one whole thing at once! "If your right hand offends you, cut it off." [Not to be taken literally.] Some think this is enough—"If your right hand offends you, cut the nails." It is not so. Oh, yes—for doing and for undoing—the Holy Spirit says, "*Today*."

But I cannot linger where there is so much to say. Remember, beloved Christian friends, that there are some duties which if you DON'T DO TODAY YOU WILL NEVER DO. I called upon a Christian some time ago and saw him looking very sorrowful. He was a man of earnest spirit, always trying to do good, and I was surprised to see sorrow on his face. But he said, "My dear sir, I met with a very sad thing this morning. There is a man who has been doing certain errands around here, and I noticed him and felt a great concern about his soul. And yesterday I had resolved that when he came into the shop, I would speak to him. It has been my habit to speak to all I come in contact with. Well, I don't know whether I can excuse myself or not, but this man came upon his usual errands, but I was busy and did not speak to him as I designed. I intended to do it this morning, but his wife has come round and said he is dead. and I

cannot forgive myself, for there is nothing else I can do for him, and I feel almost as though his blood will lie at my door."

You cannot tell but what you will be in company this evening with somebody who will never have a warning if you do not give it *tonight.* Never have another invitation to come to Jesus—and if you should hear tomorrow that your friend has suddenly dropped dead and that he was unconverted—it would cause you some regret and remorse that you had not spoken. *Now, now*, because it is "*now*, or never." If it might be, "Now or tomorrow," there might be some reason for delay, but it is not so! It is "*now* or never!" Therefore I pray you, brothers and sisters, (and I am speaking much more to myself than to you), to be instant in season and out of season. Oh, pity those poor souls who live in darkness and do not know our sweet Lord Jesus! "You are the light of the world." Defer not the light giving lest the night come to them wherein you cannot help them!

Notice again—WHEN WE INTEND TO DO CHRISTIAN SERVICE TO-MORROW, AND DO IT FAITHFULLY AND WELL, YET WE SIN. There is a contract for certain steamers to carry her Majesty's mails and they are bound to leave Liverpool at such a time and arrive at New York so long afterwards. Suppose they leave six hours after the time? If they make the best voyage they can, they break the contract! And an action which is done tomorrow, but should have been done today, whatever is its acceptableness in itself, is faulty. It is as an untimely fruit, out of date. If I do not do till tomorrow what I ought to do today, I cannot do tomorrow's duties! I cannot possibly put Thursday's work into Friday. Cannot I call in help? Yes, but I am robbing my Master of my friend's service. I have work to do which never can be done in eternity unless it is done today. Throughout the whole of eternity I can never make up for that lost hour. The work of that hour is gone and can never be done. Eternal mercy can wipe out the sin and, blessed be God, it will—but there is the fact for all that. Therefore the Holy Spirit says, "Today." Today's work is to be done today—therefore let it is done.

For, beloved friends, there is one remark with regard to service for God and that is, that DUTIES PUT OFF, TEND TO THE HARDENING OF THE HEART. You begin to be familiar with the neglect of them and nothing is more injurious to the mind than familiarity with sin! To be acquainted with sin is to be made sinful! When I postpone a duty, I am acquainted with the neglect of that duty. How many times—(I will put a riddle to you if I can. You will probably remember it)—how many times does a man sin in an hour who does not perform the duties of that hour? There is one act of omission, which he has committed the first minute. He ought to have done it at once. Is there a sin each minute or is there a sin each tick of the clock? I would like you to think about that. It seems to me that we do not know how many sins there may be crowded into the neglect of a

duty for an hour. And some have neglected duties for a week! They have disobeyed God for a week. Have you ever seen your child sin in that way? You have said, "John, go to the door!" Has he been an obstinate child and not gone but stood still? You say again, "John, go to the door!" Still he does not go. I wonder how long you would let your child stand still? I think I know some who could not manage for five minutes to keep their hands off him—and perhaps it is well they should not stand it long.

But now God has had His hands off you, some professors, by the week together and the year together for what you know you ought to have done—and yet you have not done it. And all the while the Word of God says to you, "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the rebellion." But you have still continued to tempt the Lord and tried Him, though by the wonders of His mercy He has kept His hands off. Don't provoke Him anymore, but go and say, "I have delayed too long. Now, Father, I will do what You bid me. Help me, by Your grace, for I will not be a disobedient child anymore." Delay not, for you have already provoked Him too long! I have often pitied God, to think He should be so badly treated that His children, whom He treats so well, should make Him such poor return. Let us have sympathy with our dear heavenly Father and say, "We will grieve Him no more."

There is one more thing that I want to say to you, dear Christian. I have been putting it very strongly today, but I have felt authorized to do so because the text puts it so. THE HOLY SPIRIT SAYS, "TODAY." *The Holy Spirit*! That clothes it with deep solemnity. The Holy Spirit! That is, the divine person of the Godhead concerning whom we find that there is a sin against Him which will never be forgiven! If we want to keep clear of that sin, grieve not the Holy Spirit of God! Be very tender concerning all sin—be tender most of all concerning this. Remember how the Holy Spirit loves you—how He *loves you*! Jesus Christ loved men so that He came and lived *among* them, but the Holy Spirit loves men so that He comes and lives *in* them! I wonder which is the more admirable in condescension—the incarnation of the Son, or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit? They are both divinely merciful and gracious. Grieve Him not, then—He is your Comforter—He is *your* Comforter! And have you vexed Him who dwells in you and shall be with you? The human heart never entertained so divine a guest! Resist Him not. Yield to Him *now,* for that is the very point on which He lays stress. The Holy Spirit says, "*Today*." Now I have said in myself (and I pray God to help me carry it out) I will strive after more grace and I will seek to do what good I can now. Dear brothers and sisters, let that not merely be a resolution, but let us practice it, for the Holy Spirit says, "*Today*."

II. Now I am going to turn away from you Christians to talk to the unconverted a little, and I pray that what is said may go to their hearts. TO YOU UNCONVERTED SINNERS, THE HOLY SPIRIT SAYS, "TODAY." I asked a brother why he was not present on a certain occasion and he

said, "I never got an invitation." I am afraid there are some sinners that never come to Christ because they do not get an invitation. I know that is not the case with any sinner who is in the habit of coming to *this* house. I believe Christian ministers would do well, or, at any rate, no ill if they never preached anything but invitation! There is much more to preach to advanced people of God, but still there are men who all their lives have invited men to come to Christ, and I believe they do no ill to spend their whole time in that.

Now the point in the invitation is—when is it? Somebody says, "Will you come to my house to dinner?" Well, if that is all he says, I do not come. But if he says, "I dine at half past five," then he gives me the time of day and tells me when he wants to see me. You know if a person says, "Whenever you are going by this way I shall be glad to see you," you never call in at all. But if a man says, "I shall be glad to see you at such and such a time," you understand his invitation. And now the Holy Spirit puts a time to the invitation. I am not invited tomorrow, but this first of May—this sweet May day, the Holy Spirit says to me, "Come to Christ, today." And He says to you tonight through these lips of mine, "Today, even now, come seek and find every good in Jesus joined." "Look unto Him and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." The time is fixed, and the time is fixed for today!

Why did He fix *today*? Well, first, it was His that mercy fixed it. Suppose He had said, "tomorrow"? It would have been unkind to detain you in the gall of bitterness all the night. You would have had a wretched night and have said, "I shall not live through it." You would have wanted Christian people to come and sit with you and pray with you, while you were under condemnation, that you might reach tomorrow morning! But He has not said to you that you have got to wait until you are seventeen, or to you, yonder, that you have got to wait until you are thirty. Oh, no! He says, "*Today*." And then it is in wisdom that He says "today," because it is wisdom to seek the Lord at once—for otherwise the thread of life may be snapped. Have you ever noticed how much more frail our life is than glass? I have seen thin Venice glass three or four hundred years old, but I never saw a man last that time! We are frail things. A moment's touch and we are dust. The Holy Spirit therefore does not put it off unwisely, but He says, "Today."

And the Holy Spirit does it, too, in addition to His mercy and wisdom, out of love to holiness. He would be a partaker of our sin if He excused our living an hour in sin! He never does. If I had God's liberty to remain in sin a week, He would be a partaker in my sin. But He has bid us fly to the fountain *now*. Lovingly and yet with a sort of sternness does He bid me come today! "Today if you will hear His voice," forsake your sin and fly for refuge.

I might mention other attributes of God which would move Him to put it, "Today," but I will not. If you are at all affected by what I have said (and I hope you may be) don't say, "Well, I will resolve to *think about my soul*." I have noticed so many people who have felt, "I'm a good fellow after all—I have made a splendid resolution, haven't I?" Just as I have seen men in commercial life head over heels in debt go to a loan society or raise a little money at their bankers, or perhaps do what is much the same thing without raising money at all—give a promissory note and say, "Well, I've paid that man!" when they have never paid him a penny, but have given him merely a bit of paper! They get on wonderfully easy because they have passed a bit of paper saying that they will pay at a certain time when they know that they never mean to do it! Resolutions are promissory notes that men give to God and nothing ever comes of them! I sometimes wish there was no "paper" in business—and certainly I wish there were no "resolutions" in religion. A resolution to repent may damn a man, but a belief would save him! A resolution to believe in Christ may only check the voice of conscience, but a belief would save! Your resolutions are of no use whatever—like draughts from Aldgate Pump—they are not worth thinking of! Oh, to have real practical obedience to Christ, for the Holy Spirit says, "*Today*."

Let me just speak further to you for a moment or two. It does seem very sweet that the Holy Spirit says, "Today." Do you know what I would do if I were in your case and you in mine? I recollect when I sought the Lord I hoped that after some months of darkness I might get light, and it was according to my hope. Now if I had to seek Him over again, I would go and say, "Lord, You have said, 'Today.' Lo, I seek You today! And shall I say, 'Today,' and You say, 'Tomorrow?' Dear Savior, I trust You today! Today speak peace to my conscience! Today apply the blood of sprinkling and give my spirit rest." I would make a plea of it if I were you—for if a man made a great feast and said to the poor, "Come today," the poor would not expect to sit shivering there to get a meal tomorrow! But they would say, "Our invitation was *today*. There is food and drink today." So, sinner, if you will come to the Lord and say, "My Lord, my Father, You have called me today—therefore today I feel Your love to me and I pray You, today, to put my sins away as far as the east is from the west"—God will keep His word and you will find speedy rest!

Oh, some of you HAVE LIVED LONG ENOUGH WITHOUT GOD! Some of you have lived 50 years without God and long enough to be condemned! Oh, you would not like to be converted and then be of no service to your Lord at all, or only have given Him a few months of your life, would you? I pray you, think of this—the long time past which may have sufficed you to have worked the will of the flesh and the short time that is to come. Do you know how soon you are to die? Is there any man here who is certain that he will live to see another year? When the next service is held to watch the old year out and the new year in, will you be here, or

where will you be? The Holy Spirit says, "*Today*." Every hour that passes is hardening you if you are remaining out of Christ! It becomes less probable that God will meet with you. There are so many more opportunities wasted, so many more appeals thrown away. O, dear hearers, if God made you stand on this platform and said, "I will tell you who they are that will reject your message and perish," I would say, "Good Spirit, tell me no such thing! Conceal the secret! I do not wish to know it!" I think it would break my heart to look in some of your faces and think, "That man will be in hell and be in anguish and ask for a drop of water to cool his tongue." I could not bear to feel that it would be so! And yet I feel morally certain it will be so with some of you. Oh, I am staggered when I feel how souls come into this Tabernacle (and some of you are always here) and do not get the blessing. I pray tonight that some of us may get the blessing!

An incident occurred this afternoon. An aged minister, an excellent man, came into my vestry and shook my hand and said, "I have got this letter which I would like you to see." Well, I had many things to attend to, but he was so anxious and said, "I know you will like to see it," that I took the letter. Before I read it, he explained to me that he had a son who had made a profession of religion, but had gone aside from it, and it had pretty well broken his heart. At last, he was to go to America, and the father sent him away with a very heavy heart. The old man took off his spectacles. The letter was from his son and it said, "I went to hear Mr. Spurgeon, and I have not the slightest doubt that it has had an influence on my whole life. The text was, 'He is as a root out of a dry ground.' The sermon was divided into four parts." I remember the sermon well enough—I was suffering from great pain at the time. "The point which lasted longest was that in which he said that God had made Christ to grow up like a root, like a root out of a dry ground. He went on for 25 minutes"—(then he gave an opinion of my style which I won't read to you)—"but what surprised me most was that out of five or six thousand, he fastened his eyes on me though I was in the farthest gallery"—(the young man's name was Thomas So and So, the son of the Baptist minister)—"and suddenly he shouted out these words, 'There's that wild, daredevil Tom! God means to save him and he will be a comfort to his father in his old age.'" The old gentleman, when I got to that, said, "And so he is"; the letter went on, "I thought he was going to say my name. I trembled lest the people should know my name was Tom!"

Well, that cheered my heart to think of that young fellow. And I thought I would have a shot at some of you tonight—and I pray that it may go right straight through your hearts!

And now, this first of May, if you meet with God tonight, if you pray and believe in Jesus tonight, this will be your spiritual birthday! You will remember the night that believers were baptized and that, that night

Christ met with you. It is now 23 years, I think, within an hour or two, since I was also baptized on the first of May, confessing Christ in my early youth. And I will close my sermon by saying that if He had been a bad master I would have run away from Him. And if He had not kept His promises, I would not believe Him. But He has been a good Master and a dear Savior! I think it is 23 years during which I can bear an earnest testimony to the goodness and love of Christ. If you knew Him you would not live a minute without Him! "Ah," you say—"will He have *me*?" Will you have Him? That is the point! You won't have any wooing to do towards Christ. He loved sinners. He died for sinners. "Whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

THE HOLY SPIRIT SAYS, TODAY. Do you say, *today,* too? Amen and amen!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 3; 4:1.

Hebrews 3:1. *Therefore, holy brethren, partaker of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.* "Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." What wonderful titles! "Holy brethren," made brethren in holiness and made holy in our brotherhood—"partakers of the heavenly calling"—called of God from among the worlds. Our occupation and our calling henceforth is to serve the Lord. Well, if you are holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." Think much of Him! Remember who it is you follow, with whom you are brethren! If you think little of your leader, you will live but poor lives. Consider Him, often think of Him, try to copy Him. With such a leader, what manner of people ought we to be?

2, 3. *Who was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all His house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who has built the house has more honor than the house.* Moses was but a part of the house, after all—a prominent stone in the building—but Christ is the builder! Not only the builder of the house, but foundation, capstone of it! Then think much of Him. Get an high idea of Him as faithful unto God in everything. Moses kept the law and was a good example to Israel save in some point of weakness, but Christ perfectly carried out His Father's commission and He is worthy of more honor than Moses.

4-6. *For every house is built by one man but He that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all His house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a Son over His own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.* "But Christ as a Son"—far higher degree—"Christ as a Son over His own house," of which

He is the heir, of which He is even now the sole proprietor—"whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." None are truly Christ's but those who persevere in grace. Men may be nominally Christ's, but they are not Christ's house unless they hold fast to the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. Temporary Christians are not really Christians.

7, 8. *Therefore as the Holy Spirit says: Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the rebellion, in the day of temptation in the wilderness.* You are His house, give Him rest, do not provoke Him! If you belong to Him, be holy, do not grieve Him. If you are His house, be not defiled—surely He should dwell in a holy place!

9. *When your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My works forty years*. Oh, children of God, you have, some of you, been *more* than forty years, now, in the Lord's service! Do not vex Him. You have been long called out of Egypt and brought into the separate place in this wilderness world—be careful to be fit for the divine indwelling.

10, 11. *Therefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known My ways. So I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest).* God grant that none of this congregation may be of that mind who, having named the name of Christ and being known as His people, continue to grieve Him one way and another—to put Him to the test by their doubts—to make Him angry by their sins. No, God grant we may be of another sort lest He should lift His hand and swear, "They shall not enter into My rest."

12. *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God*. Here the charge is not to the outside world but to those whom he had called, "holy brethren." He drops the word, "holy," for there are some brethren, so called, who would not deserve that name, and to them he speaks very pointedly, "Take heed, take heed, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief." And how will that be shown? By wandering off, one way or another, away from the living God. If your God is not a living God to you in whom you live and move and have your being; if He does not come into your daily life, but if your religion is a dead and formal thing, then you will soon depart.

13, 14. *But exhort one another daily, while it is called, Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.* Not otherwise. Again I say they who do not hold on and hold out are not really partakers of Christ—we are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end. Those that fly to this doctrine and that, unsettled spirits, wandering stars, mere meteors of the night—these are not Christ's, but we must hold the beginning of our faith steadfast unto the end.

15. *While it is said, Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the rebellion*. Twice over we are warned of this, to avoid hardness of heart. God save us from ossification of heart, petrifaction of heart, till we get a heart of love or a heart of stone—may God save us from this.

16. *For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses*. There were two—it was a slender remnant that were faithful!

17. *But with whom was He grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness*? God speaks very lovingly of the bodies of His saints, but see how He speaks of the bodies of apostates, "whose carcasses," as if they were no better than so many brute beasts, "whose carcasses fell in the wilderness."

18. *And to whom swore He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not?* Sinning and not believing seem to go together. The 17th verse asks the same question as the 18th, but the answer is different. "With them that had sinned" says the 17th verse, "to them that believed not," says the 18th verse. Lack of faith brings lack of holiness, and when we abide in the faith we abide in obedience.

19. *So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief*.

Hebrews 4:1. *Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.* I left out the, "us," because that is inserted by the translators and should not be there. The promise is left to somebody, it does not say to us—"a promise being left of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." Not come short of it but even *seem* to do so. God keep us from the very shadow of sin, from the very appearance of evil. "For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them." In the old time that gospel which was preached to them was preached to us—"but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." God send us this holy mixture of the hearing and the believing, to our soul's salvation, to His glory. Amen.

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

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POSITIVISM
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"We know...And we know...And we know."
1 John 5:18-20.

IT is remarkable how throughout the whole of John's epistle he continually uses the word, "know." It has quite refreshed me to carefully read through the epistle and to observe how, as the clock strikes the same note again and again, John seems to have kept to this monotone—"We know, we know, we know." In this age, when it is fashionable not to know anything, when the professedly learned would hold us in a state of perpetual doubt and our great poet tells us that there is more faith in honest doubt than in half the creeds—and everybody seems to be bewitched with what is called "modern thought"—it is quite cheering to one's ears and delicious to one's heart to hear the bell strike out again and again, "We know, we know, we know"! After all, there is something certain somewhere, some grip for our anchor, some foundation to build our eternal hopes upon—something that can be trusted, something besides cloud and will-o'-the-wisps! "We know, we know, we know." Take your pencils and read through this first epistle of John and underline the word, "know," and you will feel the force of our remark. Look at the second chapter—"Hereby we do *know* that we *know* Him." "He that says I *know* Him." "Hereby *know* we that we are in Him." In the 13th verse we read, "Because you *have known* Him." "I write unto you, little children, because you *have known* the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because you *have known* Him that is from the beginning." "We have an unction from the Holy One and you *know* all things." "I have not written unto you because you *know* not the truth, but because you, *know* it, and that no lie is of the truth." And so in the third chapter, verse after verse. "The world knows us not, because it *knew* Him not." "We *know* that when He shall appear, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is." The fifth verse "You *know* that He was manifested to take away our sin." And so it is—on, on, on, all through the chapter—"we know," "you know," and "they know."

And why is this? It seems to me, first, that John had the echo of his Master's words ringing in his ears. He laid his head upon his Master's bosom and caught his Master's spirit. Yes, more—his Master's thoughts! Yes, more—his Master's very words! Continually as you read John's first epistle you are reminded of passages in his gospel. The epistle seems to be the essential extract of this gospel. John, the beloved of Jesus, repro-

duces his Master more fully than any other apostle. Listen to the Master's words in the 14th chapter of John, fourth verse—"I go to prepare a place for you. And where I go *you know*, and the way *you know*. Thomas said unto Him, Lord, we know not where you go, and how can we know the way?" (Seventh verse)—"If you had *known* Me, you should have *known* My Father also; and from henceforth you *know* Him and have seen Him." Hear how the *know* rings out! Again, attend to our Lord 's Prayer in the 17th chapter of John—"Now they have *known* that all things whatever You have given Me are of You." "They have *known* surely that I came out from You." "O righteous Father the world has not *known* You: but I have *known* You, and these have *known* that You have sent Me." The words of Jesus had so fastened upon John's mind and had so deeply impressed his heart, that when his soul needed words, it caught at those which had rooted themselves so firmly among the most happy memories of his life! I attribute the preponderance of the word, "know," which constitutes itself an idiom in the epistle, to the fact that the expressions of the Master had been treasured up by the servant.

Furthermore, John is one in whom we see very little of mental conflict. Thomas had brain in excess of heart and hence he had his doubts, and exclaimed, "Except I put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." By and by he became a grand believer and, indeed, a very leader in true doctrine, for he was the first that ever inferred the deity of Christ from His wounds when, looking at the scars, he said, "My Lord and my God." John was too intimate with Christ to doubt. And he had too much heart to be a questioner, too much of earnest, intense, loving life to be subject to those diseases which spring from preponderance of intellect over affection. His soul was, like his Lord's, on fire with divine love, and it burnt up the chaff of doubt too rapidly for it even to have seemed to be there! It had only to be scattered over the flame to vanish at once. It is very beautiful to notice how positive John is in his writing. I like the commencement of his epistle—it is so different from the wavering talk which we hear now a days! He begins thus, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon (that is, intensely gazed upon) and our hands have handled of the Word of life; that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." Is not this true "positivism"? Where will you find it if you do not find it here? Speak of dogmatism! Here is dogmatic teaching, indeed! He does not hesitate, or fear, or doubt for one moment! His evidence is too sure and his conviction too firm! And hence it is that he rings out that bell so, clearly, "We know, we know, we know."

The full assurance expressed by the word, "know," arises from the fact that perfect love always casts out hesitancy and doubt which are a form of fear and, as John tells us, "Perfect love casts out fear, because fear has torment." Love cannot endure a doubt. If love is crossed with doubt, it becomes jealousy, and that is cruel as the grave. A man had better

meet a wolf in the depth of winter, or a bear robbed of her whelps, than a man in his jealousy, for his fury burns like coals of juniper which have a most vehement flame. Love must have certainty. Those whom we dearly love must be beyond suspicion as to their reciprocal affection. As to a doubt whether there is a Christ, or whether He is the Son of God, or whether He loved us and gave Himself for us, this may be indulged in by those who love not—but where love is supreme it sits in state like God upon the cherubim—and the Dagon of doubt falls down and is broken in pieces! If the church of the present age loved Jesus better, she would speak much more confidently about Him and, in so doing she would speak more like the oracles of God. But where the dampness of lukewarm affection settles down, the cold chill of doubt is sure to follow—and it is in these wintry nights of declining love to Jesus that the frost of unbelief binds up the rivers of spiritual life. If the Lord quickens the love of His church, as soon as it is done, her sons say, as John did, "We know, and we know, and we know"—and the grand old positive spirit of Luther and of Calvin, blazing with the enthusiasm which came with Whitefield and Wesley, will come back to the church—and God will bless the world thereby!

I am about to speak upon the forms of Christian knowledge. "We know"…"and we know"…"and we know." *Here I note, first, that Christians have this knowledge in seven different forms, of which the one draws on the other like golden links of a precious chain.*

I. *And, first, we know, that is to say,* we have INSTRUCTION. *And herein we are saved from ignorance.* The Christian is not ignorant of the gospel and its great primary truths of God, but he knows them by the teaching of the Holy Spirit and by searching the word. That use of the term, we have frequently in this epistle. I will give two examples. The 20th verse of the fifth chapter—"We know that the Son of God is come, and that He has given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true." We know the fact of incarnation and the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we have been so informed by the Scriptures. In the 16th verse of the fourth chapter we have another instance—"We have known and believed the love that God has to us." We know the love of God, for it is revealed and we accept the witness of the Spirit concerning it.

We know the great facts of the gospel and this is no small blessing. Myriads of our fellow creatures are unaware of the first principles of the faith, scarcely knowing that there is a God, and altogether ignorant of the wondrous plan of redemption by the blood of Jesus. Even in this (so called) Christian country, there is much ignorance about these things. I wish that Christian people would more frequently question others about what they know of Christ. No book is less read, in proportion to its circulation, than the Bible—and certainly no book is less understood! With all the preaching we have—and some of it is very excellent—there is a great ignorance of the rudimentary truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ everywhere! One is surprised to find that the language which is used in the pulpit is not understood at all by the mass of the people. They do not

know where the preacher is—he is somewhere up in the clouds—they learn nothing from his big words! They suppose it is all right, and very good, and they listen to it—but as far as instruction is concerned, many a preacher might almost as well speak in Syrian! "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound." It is a happy thing to know that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has come in the flesh, that He took upon Himself the sins of His people, that He bore the wrath of God on their behalf, that by believing in Him, men are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. It is a blessed thing to know that "in Him we have redemption through His blood," and sanctification and eternal life! It is a blessed thing to know the Holy Spirit—to know that He converts the soul and comforts, illuminates, guides and sanctifies. It is well to know something of the future life, to know the doctrine of election, the doctrine of effectual calling and the doctrine of the eternal security of the saints. Many there are who have not found out these truths of God, but if we have done so, it is not a thing to boast of, but a matter to be very thankful for! I am afraid the Bible is so common that we are not duly grateful for it. And the preaching of the gospel has become so usual a thing to us that we are not sufficiently mindful of the high privilege conferred upon anyone who is permitted to hear it. Be glad, dear friends, that so far as instruction in the gospel is concerned, we are not left in the dark, but we can say, thanks be to God, *we know*, for we have been taught—some of us from our youth up. We know, for we have searched the Scriptures. We know, for we have listened to a gospel ministry. We know, for we have weighed, judged and studied these things for ourselves.

II. *There is a far higher knowledge than this, which I shall speak of secondly*. By knowing is frequently meant APPREHENDING and understanding. This kind of knowledge is opposed to a mere hearing of doctrine and facts without understanding their inner meaning. To wit, a man may know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died, but He may not understand the great truth of substitution and why Jesus died. Now, I do not say that any very deep understanding of the truth is necessary to salvation, but I do say that it is an inestimable privilege to be able to go deep into these things and to know not merely the facts, but the reason of the facts—and the teaching of the facts. A nut is very well, but I prefer to crack the shell and get the kernel. It is delightful to read the word, but to meditate upon it and understand it is the great matter! In instruction we are like the cow when cropping the grasses. But *apprehension* is like the same creature ruminating—when she lies down and chews the cud! It is then that the real nourishment is gained. John uses the word, "know," in that sense in the second clause of the 20th verse of our text—"And we *know* that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding that we may *know*." That is, He has taught us what is meant by His coming. From our very childhood we knew that Jesus came in the flesh, but perhaps it is only a little while ago that we understood how—

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

and how He stands as our representative before the throne of God at this moment. We know the doctrine of imputed righteousness as a matter of fact, but, perhaps, we have not even now entered into the full sense of our acceptance in the Beloved. I urge upon everyone who knows the truth of God to pray daily for a deeper understanding of its innermost meaning, that he may know the marrow and fatness of the covenant, may dig into the mines of revelation and turn up those masses of gold which surface readers never discover! The Scriptures do not at once yield up the whole of their wealth even to a student. He must dig and dig, and dig and dig again. Jerome used to say, "I adore the plenitude of Holy Scripture." And well he might, for there is a mighty fullness in it. I think it was Henry Martin who, when he had to translate the Bible into the Persian language, said that he never knew the word so well as when he had to go over every syllable of it. You remember Uncle Tom spelling "L-e-t let, n-o-t not, y-o-u-r your, h-e-a-r-t-s hearts be troubled," and so on, and how he said that every letter of it was sweet. After you have thought over a verse for hours, you feel persuaded that you have found out its full teaching. Perhaps you have looked to learned authors and noticed the correct text and many good thoughts thereon, and yet further on a new meaning pops up—and perhaps weeks after, when that text has been abiding under your tongue like a sweet morsel, you all of a sudden say, "I never saw this before! Here is something fresh and still more wonderful! Now I know the inmost sense of this delightful Scripture."

How I wish that all Christians in this sense *knew*, so that they could say "We know, we know, we know." We ought not merely to assert our belief in an orthodox creed, but we should know the meaning of it. We should not merely confess that such and such are our doctrinal sentiments, but we should go into the truths of God like bees into the cups of the flowers and find out where their honey lies! O that we could all feel that we have gone into the secret caves of revelation, the Spirit of God holding a flaming torch and leading us into all truth! O that we might all see the innumerable sparkles of those precious gems which glitter in the deep places where the lion's whelp has not trodden, far down where only the Spirit of God can lead—and where only an eye that has been touched with heavenly eye salve can see! Oh, for a church made up of people who understand and, therefore, know!

III. *We know by instruction and we know by apprehension, but there is a sweeter sense than this. We know, in a third sense, by personal acquaintance*. You will find that meaning in such passages as the second chapter, at the 13th and 14th verses—"I write unto you, fathers, because you have known Him that is from the beginning." Our text is another specimen. "We *know* that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding that we may *know* Him." I will not quote all the texts—there are many of that kind. Thus we know the Lord Himself! A friend comes to you and he says, "Do you know such a person?" You say first,

"I know there is such a person"—that is instruction. Being further asked, "But, do you know him?" You answer, "Well, I know that he was a fine tall man, a soldier in the infantry, and that he went to the Crimea." That is a sort of knowing him by apprehension, but does not fully answer the question, "Do you know him?" You say, "Well, I cannot say that I know him, for if I were to see him, I could not recognize him, I have never even spoken to him." To be acquainted with a man is a higher order of knowledge than the former, and in that sense believers know God, know Jesus Christ and know the Holy Spirit. They are acquainted with God! "No, man has seen God at any time," but we have spoken to Him and He has spoken to us. We have not heard His voice with these ears, but we are sure that we have heard Him in our hearts. Our spirits know His voice. We have sometimes been bowed down with terror as He has spoken and brought us under the spirit of bondage, but now we know the sound of His voice as a Spirit of love and we respond to it, crying, "Abba, Father."

We know the voice of Jesus; we are like the sheep who will not follow a stranger, "for they know not the voice of strangers." But we know Jesus, and when He speaks to our souls we answer to His call. We not only know His voice, but we know *Him*. We have come into personal contact with the Christ of God, not in mere imagination, but in fact. As surely as we live, the eternal God in Jesus Christ has looked upon us and has touched us—no, more, has worked a miracle on us and has made us new creatures, "begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." I speak not of you all. I speak only of those of whom it is true that they do know the Lord. The Lord Jesus has become our familiar acquaintance. We tell Him all our griefs. There is not a trouble but we carry to Him, not a sorrow but we pour it into His bosom! And He, on the other hand, reveals His heart to us, for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

True believers, especially full grown believers, when they are advanced in the divine life, know the Lord Jesus Christ as they know their friends—yes, as they know their very selves! They speak with Him as a man speaks with his friend. They even know Him as they cannot know their friends, for they have received Him into themselves and they have become one with Him. They have eaten His flesh and drunk His blood—and He is in them and they in Him with an intimate knowledge excelling all other knowledge beneath the sun! Though they do not profess to know all that is to be known of Christ, for there is a love of Christ that passes knowledge, and heights and depths that are beyond all mortal ken, yet they do know Him and their daily aspiration is to know Him more and more fully!

See, then, that as apprehension surpasses instruction, so acquaintance rises far beyond apprehension. May you and I know with this third knowledge and live in the sweet enjoyment of it all our days!

IV. *Out of this rises a fourth degree of knowledge, namely, that of* CERTAINTY *as opposed to skepticism*. When we are under instruction, doubts

may arise. When we apprehend and understand, doubts may still trouble us. But when we come to be acquainted with Jesus, they are less likely to haunt us. Out of fellowship with Jesus springs the higher state of absolute certainty as to divine things! John himself was very certain. I read to you the commencement of his epistle just now, and you saw how confident he was. And we find him writing all through his epistle with equal strength and force of assurance. He says in the third chapter, the fifth verse, "You know that He was manifested to take away our sin, and in Him is no sin." And in the 24th verse, "And hereby we *know* that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us." In the fifth chapter read verse nineteen—"We *know* that we are of God." And few as he felt that his brethren were and the whole world engaged on the other side! In the spirit of Athanasius, he cries, "The whole world lies in the wicked one." He allows no force to the evidence even of a contradicting world, because one man abiding in the truth has more weight in his witness than millions under the power of the Father of lies!

Now brothers and sisters, this is a blessed state to get into—that of certainty! I am utterly amazed at hearing it continually asserted that the thoughtful public teacher must make great allowances for "the spirit of the age, which is one of earnest skepticism." I do not believe it! The spirit of the age is that of thoughtlessness and trifling! But what have I or any other Christian to do with the spirit of the age? The spirit which is in us by which we ought to speak is the Spirit of God—not the spirit of the age! In what spirit are Christian ministers to speak? The spirit of the first century, while the first century lasts, I suppose? The spirit of the second century when the second century comes in, and so, from age to age the spirit of the Christian is to alter? Can it be so? You remember when they condemned Leighton because he did not speak according to the times? He replied, "If all of you are speaking for the times, let one poor brother speak for eternity." Was he not correct? Surely the Spirit of the truth of God never changes, for the truth of God is immutable! Surely the Spirit of God never alters, for He is divine! Have we one medicine for one age and another medicine for another? Does it run thus—"Go you into all the world and *adapt the gospel* to every century?" I find it not so written! Our standing orders are, Preach *the g*ospel, the *gospel*, the *same* gospel to every creature, thoughtful or thoughtless, philosophical or ignorant, civilized or uncivilized. *Semper idem* is the motto which the gospel may write above her temples! There let it stand. She cannot alter. For her to alter were death to the truth of God and treason to Christ! Though we believe not and though the age grows doubting, He abides faithful—He cannot deny Himself!

Ah, brothers and sisters, if you are not certain about these things, may God grant that you may be certain! Oh, to be uncertain whether the Savior loved me and gave Himself for me—it would be as death to my soul! Some find delight in pulling down, as far as they can, the eternal pillars of the temple, but to see a sacrilegious hand laid on the least of them is painful in the extreme! There hangs my hope on yonder bloody

tree where the incarnate God offered up expiation for my sin! If you can disprove the doctrine of atonement, my comfort is gone! I care no more to live, there remains nothing for me. Therefore is my soul driven back by sheer necessity to fundamental truths of God and cannot be content till she casts away the rubbish of human opinion and gets down to the rock against the sheer granite of eternal truths which God has spoken, which are, "yes," and, "amen," in Christ Jesus! Labor after this brothers and sisters! Let it not be to you a question whether there is such a thing as regeneration—it cannot be a question if you, yourself, are regenerate! It will not be a question whether there is such a thing as justification if you are justified! You cannot doubt as to sanctification if you are consciously sanctified, any more than angels in heaven will doubt whether there is a heaven while living there and enjoying the glory of it! May we get up to this fourth point, which is that of *absolute certainty* as opposed to skepticism.

V. *But now, fifthly, there is a knowledge of another kind, very useful in these days, namely, that of* DISCERNMENT *as opposed to a readiness to receive erroneous teaching*. That meaning was intended by John. Read in the second chapter, beginning at the 18th verse—"Little children, it is the last time: and as you have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But you have unction from the Holy One, and *you know* all things." He does not mean that the saints know everything, but they judge, they discern, they know the truth of God from error. When doctrine presents itself to you, you know whether it is of Christ or of antichrist, and act accordingly. You are able to judge, to discern, and to distinguish. In the fourth chapter you have it again, at the second verse—"Hereby know we the Spirit of God (or discern the Spirit of God). Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God." "Hereby," says he in the sixth verse, "know we the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error." We know which is which, even as our Lord says—"A stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers." And again, "I know My sheep, and am known of Mine." There is a spirit of discernment and it is needed much now a days. It comes to us in the following way—instruction, apprehension, acquaintance, certainty—these bring discernment to detect the false from the true.

Very delightful, too, is it to my mind to see how the least instructed Christian who does not know his Lord and love Him, is not to be led astray. Mere professors like to hear a man who can speak fluently. And if he will use very pretty phrases and talk about waterfalls, and the rippling rills, and the skies, and the clouds and heaven knows what besides of mimic poetry, they mightily cry up the orator! The child of God thinks not so, for he has another way of judging. He says when he hears such rhetoric, "There was nothing for me." "What do you mean? There were

plenty of flowers." "I cannot eat flowers," he says. He judges whether he was fed or not, and he knows what he can eat. Nobody teaches sheep what is good for food and what is not—they know by instinct. I do not suppose they could preach a sermon upon healthy herbs and unhealthy plants, but they know by some means—and so do believers. They could not write it down. They could not compose an essay upon discernment, but they know what they can feed upon and they know what they cannot feed upon—and they have very sure tests within them. "Ah," says the believer, "that will not do for me. There is no Christ in it. Away with it." They listen to some humble preacher who loves Jesus Christ and lifts Him high, and they say, "Ah, well. He puts his *h's* in the wrong places and his grammar is deficient, but we were blessed, for when he exalted our Master and preached of Him, our very hearts danced within us for joy!" I have felt just that myself—I have sat and cried as if my heart would break to hear Jesus Christ spoken of by a plain working man—but have felt indignant when I have listened to a learned thinker confusing the minds of the simple by words worth nothing at all!

Yesterday I was in a certain place, needing refreshment. It was pressed upon me to purchase something which was said to be very good to eat. And as far as I could make out, when I partook of it, it was *nothing* beaten up and blown out to a great size and a little sugar powdered over it! And it reminded me of the sermons that I have read in which there was nothing whatever—only blown out extensively, developed into a great size and a little sugar of rhetoric put to it! Hungry souls cannot feed on wind! They will not have it. They very soon go away. Of course the fine fashionable people—the empty professors who look for words, only, say, "Oh, you must not be uncharitable. We cannot expect doctrine in every sermon," and so on. Thus like the wild asses they sniff up the wind and are satisfied! But not so the people of God—they feel that time is too short and eternity too long—and hell too terrible, and heaven too precious—to have their Sundays frittered away by pretty little essays which have as much connection with Mohammedanism as with the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ! There are plenty of such preachers around—and an abundance of gentlemen who will pat them on the back and say, "These are highly intellectual brothers and are fit to occupy large spheres."

Our business is to preach Jesus Christ—and if we cannot preach Him, let us take to tailoring, or plowing, or cobbling, or some other honest way of earning one's livelihood! To preach anything else but Christ crucified is to betray our Lord and Master! And most assuredly to bring upon ourselves confusion and condemnation in the last great day of account! Dear brothers, may we have given to us the spirit of discrimination that we may know the precious from the vile, for if we do so as preachers we shall be as God's mouth! And may we as hearers have the same discrimination that we may always be able to receive that which is of God, and to reject at once with solemn determination that which is according to the spirit of the world and not after Jesus Christ!

VI. *I pass on from that form of knowledge to another, which is this—knowledge in this epistle is frequently meant* ASSURANCE *in opposition to anxiety*. That is the frequent use of the term, here, as in the second chapter, the third to the eighth verses—"Hereby we do know that we know Him if we keep His commandments. He that says, I know Him, and keeps not His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keeps His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby *know* we that we are in Him." Then in the 14th verse of the third chapter—"We *know* that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." In the 24th verse—"Hereby we *know* that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us." Far too seldom do Christians reach this point. They should do so and they should come up the ladder by the steps I have described, but many seem to think that it is almost necessary for them to always say most timorously, "I hope I am in Christ. I trust I am saved." They dare not say, "I know that I am in Him, and that His Spirit is in me."

Now, if they have never reached this rung of the ladder, God forbid we should condemn them, for some of God's children remain trembling and doubting for many a day, yet they should not be content to be there. It ought to be the desire and aim of every one of us to know whether we are saved or not, because it is not a question that we can afford to leave in doubt. Any person here who has invested his money in any commercial enterprise, who should have it hinted to him this evening when he reaches home, that it is an unsound concern, would not be at all likely to be quiet until he had discovered whether it was so or not. And, therefore, our soul's eternal interests which are far more important, cannot be allowed to remain in suspense. As soon as ever the question is raised, a sensible man will be unsatisfied till it is settled! "Can it be settled?" someone asks. "Can it be?" Oh, brothers and sisters believe me—many of us do know our calling and election! Why? Because God has given us infallible tokens. He says, "Whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life." We do believe in Him! We trust Him with all our hearts and God has said that we are saved and have everlasting life! Shall we doubt God? Then "we know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." If we feel a hearty love to God's people, inspiration tells us that we have passed from death unto life! Shall we doubt it? No, we will believe it!

"Well," says one, "that seems to me to be presumption." Do you think so? Suppose you promise your children tonight that you will take them out tomorrow morning and one of them says to you, "Well, Father, I hope you will." There is no joy in his countenance—why? Because he says he does not think you will. He is afraid it would be presumption to believe you! Do you not think it is presumption in him to doubt you? Look at that other little one. You say, "Jane, I shall take you out tomorrow." She claps her hands with delight! The thoughts of doubting you never enters her little head. Is she presumptuous? What? Presumptuous to believe her father? Surely it never can be presumption to believe God! To disbe-

lieve God and to think highly of yourself—that is presumption! But to trust God and to believe His word—is there any presumption in that? "Ah," says one, "but if I knew for certain that I was saved, I am afraid that I would grow careless." Why? Full assurance is the very thing that makes men watchful! They feel it such a great joy to be loved of God that they are afraid of doing anything to grieve Him! The man who does not know whether he has any money or not, is not likely to be very watchful over the box which may, perhaps, contain something, or may not! But if he knows that he has a treasure there, he will take good care that nobody shall rob him of it! Brothers and sisters, if we were slaves under the spirit of bondage and had to be whipped to do what was right by the fear of being sent to hell, that would be one thing—but the children of God are not slaves—they are sons and daughters and because God's everlasting love to His own dear children can never turn into hate, do they, therefore, disobey their heavenly Father? God forbid! Assurance is the mainspring of holiness in a Christian!

VII. *The last work is this. There is knowledge, namely, the knowledge of* UNSTAGGERING FAITH *which knows a thing which is not* AS YET. You have an instance in the second verse of the third chapter. "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 He, for we shall see Him as He is." Why, O great apostle, did you not say, "We *hope* that when He shall appear"? No, no! He did not hope it at all—he knew it! He was sure of it. But do we not generally say, "We trust that when Christ shall appear it will be so?" So far true, but oh, it is better when faith reckons the things that are not as though they were. A man will take a thousand pound check from his neighbor and say, "I have the money." "My dear sir, you have not! You have only a piece of paper." "Ah," he says, "but it has a good name to it. It is as good as gold." Surely the promise of a God that cannot lie is as good as the check!

I bless God that for some little time instead of worrying myself about a thousand things which concern this church, and the college, and the orphanage, and the colportage—whenever I have any sort of trouble, it has been my sweet privilege to breathe a prayer to God and leave all my anxieties at His feet. I do the best I can to keep things right and then I leave them with the Lord. If the works are not His work, then let them go to pieces! If they are, then He will attend to them. I am an instrument in His hands and as such I do the little I can, and leave the rest to Him. It is wonderful how smoothly things go when we trust them with the Lord! Your fidgeting and worrying do all the mischief! Something gets between the wheels and they will not work—and I will tell you what that something is—it is your own finger—and when you feel such a squeeze that you cannot bear it, it is a lesson to you. Take your finger out and let it alone. The best way to do with a great trouble is to pray to God about it and then put it on the shelf and never take it down again.

You have come here on a weeknight, some of you, with a heavy burden. All the time the preaching is going on, and the praying and singing,

you have lost your load, or have not felt it. But just as you get outside, you say, "I have left my burden inside! Let me go and take it up again!" And you feel it on your mind as heavily as ever! Beloved, this is not the way to trust God. The way to trust Him is to cast your care on Him altogether. "All things work together for good to them that love God." Be sure that when you pass through the rivers they shall not overflow you, and through the fires, they shall not burn you. Be sure that as your days so shall your strength be. Be sure that God will bring you through, for He will deliver His people out of all troubles and give them a sure admittance into His eternal kingdom and glory. We should speak with certainty of troubles and trials—and deliverance from them—and of all the future we should say, as our text has it, "We know, and we know, and we know." That is how Paul spoke. "We know that all things work together for good." He did not say he thought it and he hoped it, but, "we know." "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" and by its assuring power "we know, and we know, and we know."

Now, dear hearer, if you are unconverted, what do you know? If you know not the Lord, what do you know? Nothing that is of any use to you spiritually! Oh that God might make you know this—that you are lost by nature, and unless forgiven, you will be lost forever and ever! And when you know that, I pray the Lord, by His Spirit, to make you know that there is a Savior—and that He is able to save unto the uttermost! And then may He make you know in the fullest sense that He loved you and gave Himself for you! So may you know Him and be found in Him when He comes in the clouds of heaven. Amen.

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THE UNFAILING HELP
NO. 3162

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 1909,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 20, 1873.

"And the King said, If the LORD does not help you, where can I find help for you? From the threshing floor, or from the winepress?" 2 Kings 6:27.

I READ in your hearing the very horrible incident connected with the siege of Samaria. I do not wonder that when the poor woman applied to the king he should have been horrified. He felt that her case, and the case of all about him was a desperate one, so he said, "If Jehovah does not interpose, what can I do?" The winepress is dry and the threshing floor is empty—there is nothing left to alleviate the horrors of famine. "If the LORD does not help you, where can I find help for you?"

I. Now the CASE OF EVERY UNSAVED MAN IS A VERY TERRIBLE ONE. He is not in dread of *immediate* death by famine, but if he is at all awakened to know his true condition, he will labor under a fear of something worse than death, and worse than the need of bread. There is many a sinner that I have met with (and I know the feeling myself) who would be glad if death could end it and if that were all. But "there is the dread of something after death"—that wrath to come of which the Word of God speaks in such solemn tones—that fire that never shall be quenched, that worm that dies not—it is that which haunts the sinner's conscience when he is once awakened to know his condition! And horrible as the story was in Samaria, it is not worse than the horrible fate that awaits every man who lives and dies unsaved!

Now it is no wonder at all, that when a man is awakened to see his great danger, standing as he does upon the edge of a precipice with a frightful gulf beneath him, he begins to appeal to anybody and everybody and to cry for help. So, tonight, I am going to begin by saying that in the case of the sinner, it is vain to look to man, for every honest man will have to say to such an one, "*If the LORD does not help you, how can I help you*?" You feel that you are in dreadful danger and you want to be saved—I beseech you, do not look to any of us, or to any of your fellow creatures for help, for we are quite powerless in the matter! God must save you! He must give you Christ or else you must die. We have no power to forgive your sins. There are some pretenders who surely ought to feel themselves out of place in this age, like owls in daylight, who still profess that they can pardon sin. It is a strange country, this. If a poor

woman in a red cloak passes a farm and for sixpence tells a servant girl her fortune, she is put in prison. And I will not say but what she deserves it—yet a gentleman may stand up before his thousands and pretend to turn bread and wine into the flesh and blood of God, and to have power to pardon sin, and I have never heard of any punishment for so gross an imposition! It is infinitely grosser than anything the poor ignorant witch has ever practiced! It is not in us to pardon sin. If you had offended us, we might pardon your offenses against ourselves, but offenses against God must be forgiven by God, Himself.

"Does not the power which rested in the apostles to forgive sin still rest in the church?" I think it does, but no apostle ever had the power to pardon an impenitent soul! No apostle ever had the power to pardon one who did not believe in Jesus. All that an apostle could do was to say that he was pardoned when he saw that he believed and repented—and that same power belongs to us to this day—to declare, in God's name, that HE THAT BELIEVES IN HIM IS NOT CONDEMNED and that he that confesses his sin to God and forsakes it, *shall find mercy*—but with this exception (and it is no exception, at all) all power in the matter of pardoning sin rests with the eternal God and with Him, alone. It is certainly not in the power of any man to renew your nature! You cannot enter heaven except you are born-again. Unconverted man, you must be made *a new creature in Christ Jesus*, but there is no man under heaven that can create in you a new heart or a right spirit! Let a man first create as much as a fly and send it winging its way in the summer's air and then let him talk about regenerating a soul. It is a stupendous work—a work to which only the deity is equal! God alone creates or recreates the soul of man! You look in vain, then, to any—even though they call themselves priests or bishops or doctors of divinity! Your fellow men cannot help you in the matter! You must be born-again from above, and the Spirit of God must do it, or your case is hopeless.

But it is said, "Can we not pray for sinners?" Yes, blessed be God, we can, and THE PRAYER OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN AVAILS MUCH. During this week I have had very many requests for prayers, and some of them from some of you now present. Such prayers as mine, indeed have gone up to heaven for you, that you might find peace. But I charge you before God, put no superstitious confidence in *my* prayers or in the prayers of anybody! What could your mother's prayers do for you? Nothing at all unless you pray for yourself. If the Apostle Paul were here and pleading to God, what would be the use of his prayers? Just nothing unless the Lord moved you to make a personal confession of your sin and to believe personally in Jesus and personally to pray to Him! Now there is a *great value in prayer*. I value the prayer of a little child. The poorest Christian has power with God in supplication. We do not undervalue that, but still, if the Lord does not help you in answer to those prayers and if it does not become a *personal* matter with yourself so that *you* pray, you will be guilty of a superstitious reliance upon the prayers of others—having

made a god of them—and God will be grieved with you for having done so. No prayers of all the saints on earth could save a single soul unless that soul fled for refuge to the hope set before it in the gospel in the person of Jesus Christ.

But perhaps there may be some persons here who will say, "Cannot you help me by giving me the ordinances of the Christian religion? Will not they help me?" Ah, beloved friends, if you are continually here in this place, I am sure you are not under that delusion! There is no ordinance in the Christian religion that belongs to unconverted people. "Can you not be baptized?" you ask. No, you have nothing to do with baptism until you are a believer in Jesus Christ! Perhaps there is no Popish error which has done more mischief to the Christian church than that of giving baptism to unconverted persons—to persons who have no faith in Jesus—under the notion that it does something, for if it does *nothing* at all of any good! Why is it given? And to the extent to which it is believed that there can be any efficacy in it—to that extent it is mere Popery and Sacramentarianism and ought to be abandoned by the true believer in Jesus Christ! I believe we should increase sin by that view, but certainly not wash it away, for you would have been guilty of having dared to take to yourself an ordinance which belongs to none except to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all their heart. "But may we not come to the communion table?" No, NO, NO! And if we dared to permit you—if we said, "unconverted man, you may come to the table," we would certainly be doing you no service whatever. On the contrary, we would be doing certain injury. Remember that dreadful text—"He that eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks damnation to himself"—"condemnation" it ought to be, for that is the real word there! The other is too forcible and I do but give the correct rendering. But I would not ask you to come and eat and drink condemnation to yourself, "Not discerning the Lord's body." Why I know unconverted people who seldom go to a place of worship all the year round and yet will go and take what they call, "the sacrament," on Good Friday—choosing that day which they receive as the memorial of Christ's death in which especially to insult the Savior, for He never asked them to come to His table living in sin, living in constant neglect of all religion and then to do Him this piece of impertinence—to go and intrude themselves into that sacred feast to which they are not bidden and to which they have no right to come!

Oh, believe me, if you rely on baptism and the Lord's Supper, you might as well rely upon the incantations of a witch or upon the spell of a Hottentot! There is nothing in a sacrament that can, in itself, save a soul! When you are saved, then these outward emblems remind you of truths of God and help your memory and stir your minds. But until you are saved, to partake is profane! You must not touch these things! They are for the children, not for you—for those who are saved and not for you who are unreconciled to God! We may say, therefore, when you talk to us

about coming to what are called sacraments—"We cannot help you. If the Lord does not help you, we cannot help you there."

But there are some who will say, "But may we not join the church of God?" I hope none of you, my brethren, are under the idea that if you are unconverted and join a church, that will help you. Oh, how I have wasted my labor here if I have led any of you to believe that! I charge you, if you are not a friend of Christ, not to come among his friends or declare yourself to be one by a lying profession! It is "An excess of naughtiness," for there can be NO EXCUSE FOR A MAN TO BE SERVING THE DEVIL AND THEN TO MAKE PRETENSE OF BEING A SERVANT OF CHRIST. A man may be damned fast enough without being a hypocrite! What need of that? Join yourselves to God's people when you have joined yourselves to Christ—but not till then.

I fear there are some of you that make a profession and ought not to have done so. We labor with all our might to keep the church pure, but what can we do? There was a Judas among the Master's twelve and we have Judases here and some whose lives are inconsistent—and glaringly inconsistent, I do not doubt—and yet they profess to be the people of God! O, dead professors, I would warn you! I desire to speak *most solemnly and earnestly to you*. Of all those who perish, it must go hardest with those of you who had a name to live and were dead, who said you were the servants of Christ while you were the enemies of the cross of Christ! Be what you profess to be, or else give up your profession. Don't cry unto the Lord and insult His gracious name by making professions which you afterwards, by your life, deny. No, we cannot help you by receiving you into the church. There is nothing we can do for you. And I venture to say this, unconverted man or woman—if we were, all of us who love the Savior, concerned about your soul—if we were to summon all the saints on earth to one general conclave and they were all at once to pray for you, (and God knows your soul is worth all that, for if all the church labored but for one soul, it would be well repaid by winning that one soul), yet if the Lord does not help you, all His people cannot! It is not in the angels in heaven, nor the white robed hosts above, nor the saints below to do anything for a soul unless God, Himself, shall interpose to blot out that sinner's sin, to renew that sinner's nature and to lead the sinner personally to pray for himself! There is the case then.

II. That leads me, secondly, to call every unconverted person's attention to the fact that he lies in the hands of God. "If the LORD does not help you, where can I find help for you?" *You lie in the hands of God*. Let us take you by the hand, now, and speak to you earnestly, my brother, my sister, whose conversion I anxiously desire, but whose conversion I cannot work, for God alone must do it.

I remind you that you are in the hands of one whom you have offended. You have grieved God. From your youth up, perhaps, you have been indifferent to Him. You have used His name, perhaps, to curse with. His day has been the one above all others which you have chosen for the

pleasures of the world. You have offended God and He is angry. This is not my word—it is written here—"He is angry with the wicked every day. If he turns not, He will whet His sword. He has bent His bow and made it ready." You are in the hands of the God whom you have offended! Just as a moth is beneath your finger and you can crush it or not, as you will, so are you absolutely in the hands of God—and in the next moment He can send you to hell—and who would be able to say to Him, "What are You doing?" Or who would say that He was unjust?

Remember next, that *you have no claims whatever upon this God.* He made you and as a creature, you might claim that He should treat you justly. I would not advise you to urge that claim, however, for JUSTICE IN YOUR CASE WILL MEAN DESTRUCTION. There is nothing due from God to you except anger. You deserve nothing at His hands. You are altogether in His hands, then—in the hands of an angry God and in the hands of one on whom you have no claim.

And I should like you to feel the next thing I am going to say. Oh, if you were to feel it, it were enough to make you spring from your seat! THAT GOD IS LOOKING AT YOU NOW AND IS NEAR YOU NOW. Your elbow touches the next person in your seat, but that person is not so near to you as God is! In Him you live and move and have your being. It is not a case of God's coming to be with you. He is *here*—reading that thought that flitted through your mind just now and knowing the thoughts that you have before they are your own—thinking of you as if you were the only being in the world and He gave all His attention to you. Well now, such is the omniscience of God, that He sees you as though you were His only creature and He had nothing else to do but to note your follies and faults. But, oh, while I thus speak, let me remind every man who thus feels that he is in the hands of God—you could not be in better hands—for God is very merciful and full of compassion! It will be no delight to Him to crush you. Sinner, it will give your God no joy to curse you! "As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he turn unto Me and live." That is God's heart speaking out to you! You are in His hands and those are the hands of mercy.

And let me remind you that He can save you though no man can. At this very moment HE CAN FORGIVE YOUR SINS and supply to you the new nature which you need—and everything that can make that new nature perfect and fit to dwell in heaven! You have not gone too far in sin for His power. Nothing is too hard for the Lord. "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "Though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as wool." "Though they are red like crimson they shall be as snow." And everything is provided in order to this. Since God could not be unjust, it was necessary, if He pardoned sin in your case, that He should somehow or other vindicate His law—and He has done so by giving His own Son to bleed and die on the cross of Calvary! Jesus Christ has made it right with the law of God! The justice of God is magnified

and the mercy of God is now unfettered! And God can deal with sinners and blot out their sins like a cloud and their transgressions like a thick cloud.

Let me call your minds back to Samaria. There was a poor woman whom the king could not help, but God could help her, for the very next morning after she met the king, there was such plenty in Samaria that they were selling fine flour dirt cheap! It seemed as if God had literally pulled up the windows of heaven and rained down plenty for them to eat, there was such plenty there! And so, poor starving dying sinner, it is in God's power in a moment to fill you with the bread of heaven, to give you such abundance of mercies, such a store of grace and love, that you shall feel as if the windows of heaven were opened on your account! Yes, God will give you what He never gave the people of Samaria—give you His own Son to be your soul's continuing, everlasting bread—and you shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness! GOD CAN DO IT. You are in His hands I say. He can leave you to perish, but, on the other hand, He is a gracious God and He has given His Son to die for you—and He is able to save!

Now I think if God the Spirit is blessing the word this moment, some of you are saying, "Then I will ask Him to have mercy upon me." Do so, dear friend—do so! "I will wait till I get home." No, don't! Breathe the prayer *now*. Let it drop as a liquid prayer, if it will, from your eyes into the pew. God has a bottle for such tears. Ask Him now. Say, "Lord I am in Your hands. I know I cannot save myself. My fellow men cannot save me, but You can. I hear You have given Your dear Son to bleed for helpless, lost and ruined sinners. O, God, have pity upon me! If You do, I will bless You for it as long as I live! It is a poor thing to say, but yet it is all I can do. I do not deserve it, Lord. If You cast me forever from Your presence, You will be just when You judge and just when You condemn. But save me, Lord, for Your sweet mercy and let me live and not die!" O, souls, you shall not cry in vain! From the ends of the earth shall such a prayer be heard! You shall yet say like Jonah, "Out of the belly of hell cried I and You heard me." God grant you grace so to cry!

III. Now my last point will help more fully to open up the *way of salvation*. There is one thing—this is the last point—there is only one thing which will prove fatal to all hope of God's saving you. There was one man in the city of Samaria that was not the better for flour being sold at so cheap a price. That poor woman who had complained to the king went and got her share of the meal. The poorest beggars in the darkest lanes of Samaria went swarming out and satisfied their hunger. And even lepers whom men would not touch—defiled and filthy—went into the tents and feasted to the full! There was only *one man in all the city* to whom that day, instead of being a blessing and a festival, became a funeral—one man—and that one man's story we read just now. He was a lord, so that it is not always the poor who are lost. I am afraid that there is a larger proportion of the lords lost than any other class. He was a lord.

But it was not his being a lord that destroyed him—it was his being an *unbelieving lord*. He mocked the promise; he said it could not be; he jeered, jested, insulted—"If Jehovah should open windows in heaven, might such a thing be?" But no one else; I do not find that anybody else was permitted to die or starve that day except that unbelieving man—and he was trampled to death in the gates of the city!

Now I come here tonight to say, beloved, guilty as we are and deserving God's wrath, yet the MERCY OF GOD IS EVER MORE ABUNDANT THAN THE MEAL WAS IN SAMARIA'S GATE. Every soul here that believes in Jesus shall have a share in it and the only man who shall not have a share in it is the man who will not believe, for, "He that believes not shall be damned." If you believe not, you shall not be established. To believe means to trust in Jesus. And none shall perish but those who refuse to trust Him. As many as shall rely on the Lord Jesus shall have their needs supplied even to the fullest.

Now remember, I pray you, and very solemnly lay it to heart, that this man who died saw the provisions of mercy with his eyes and yet never tasted of them. Oh, I cannot bear to contemplate it—that I should have some here who have heard for many and many a Sabbath all about the Savior and His wounds and griefs and death for sinners—and should never have a share in the atoning sacrifice! That they should hear about the Spirit of God and His regenerating and quickening influences and should never, themselves, be born-again—should hear about the pardon of sin and yet die unforgiven—should hear about the justifying righteousness of Christ which is the most glorious of robes and should perish in their nakedness of their sins! It is a dreadful case *to starve with bread within sight*. The punishment of Tantalus was well conceived by the old heathen poets when they wanted to describe an unbearable torture. The water came up to his lips, but when he tried to drink, it receded. The bread was close against his mouth and fruit hung from boughs above his head, but the moment he lifted his hand to grasp it, the windswept the boughs away and he remained in perpetual hunger and thirst!

Oh, it will be a shocking thing for us to live in that state! "You shall see it with your eyes, but shall not eat thereof." You shall hear of Jesus but not have Him because you would not believe! You shall die—a Savior's name being whispered in your dying ears and yet no comfort shall come to your conscience in that Savior because you rejected Him. You shall wake up in another world and see Him on His throne, but only to be condemned by Him! You shall look up from the bottomless pit and see the saints—only see them—but not partake of their bliss! God grant this may not be a prophetic declaration of what your future doom will be. May you not be unbelieving! Remember this man—he kept the gate and they rushed out, poor hungry starving souls, to get bread. They poured out like a mighty torrent so they could get food to eat, but there he stood, meager and gaunt, until he was trampled down and died! And to live in a

revival, unmoved, seems to me to be the climax of misery—to hear, one after another, that people have come to Jesus and not to have come yourself! As I look round upon these seats, I bless God and thank Him that so many of you are putting your trust in Jesus for salvation. Yet if I kept on putting my finger along, I would have to stop here and there and say, "Ah, there is one that has not believed!" And there has been a rush to Christ in this church—a mighty rush to Christ of poor sinners—yet some have not come! Truly, they might well say—

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

"Even me." I hope they will pray that prayer tonight—"Even me." It would be a sad thing to see others saved while they are lost!

One thing more and that is—remember that *this man kept the gate*. He was nearest to the outside of the city, but it was an unfortunate honor that the king should appoint him to keep the gate. I am always thankful when pew openers are converted, and people who have to do with the management of a congregation. I am sure if they are not before they take office, they will not be afterwards. They have so much to do with thinking about other people and where to put them, that they cannot so well enjoy the service—and if they have not got a grip of the gospel before they undertake such an office—I am often afraid they never will! And yet, surely, to be employed about the house of God, to be always there and to be helpful—to keep the gate and not get food ourselves seems a dreadful thing! I daresay you have often thought of what became of Noah's carpenters. They helped Noah to build the ark. He paid them wages, I do not doubt, and they built it—stout and trim vessel as it was. Very likely some of them, when the rains descended and the floods came, as they were sinking in the waters, could say, "I helped to build that ark, yet I am lost. I helped to caulk her and to tar her. I helped, when the beasts were coming in, to take fodder into the ark—and now I am lost." You subscribed to the building of a house of prayer and never pray? You help to support the ministry, yet have no share in the good truth of God? Oh, you will die—I am sure some of you will die with this upon your hearts—that you were made helpful outwardly, but inasmuch as you have never given your souls to Jesus and been led to trust in Him, you will perish as Noah's workmen did, having no part nor lot in this matter!

Oh, when I see you all gathered together here, Sunday night after Sunday night, I call myself to account and ask, HOW LONG, HOW LONG WILL THESE PEOPLE REMAIN WITHOUT CHRIST, without God, without hope? Is there any part of the gospel I leave out? Is there any flaw in my ministry that prevents their coming to Christ? Do I consult my own repute and try to make my words fine and polished? Now I think I can say before the Lord—if I knew any other style of preaching likely to bless you—whether it were the most refined, if I could reach it—I would try it!

And if it were the most vulgar, I would not be ashamed of it though all the old reproach and rebuke should come upon me again—if I might but win your souls! Why will you die!? Young man yonder, why are you doing that in London which you would not have dared to do at home? Young woman yonder, why are you shaking off all serious thought and casting the reins on the neck of folly to run after destruction? Gray headed man yonder, if you have not made peace with God, how can you delay? You have not many days to live, yet you are lost!

Oh, all of you, *what shall it profit you if you gain the world and lose your soul*? The sun has gone down—let it not rise again until you have sought the Savior! This is all you have to do—to confess your fault into the great Father's bosom and say, "I have sinned against heaven and before You." And then to stand and look to Jesus, bleeding and dying, AND TRUST HIM WITH YOUR SOULS. God help you to do this for Jesus' sake. Amen and Amen!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 KINGS 6:1-23.

Verse 1. *And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with you is too small for us.* It seems to have been a habit of the prophets to gather about them companies of young men whom they instructed in the Holy Scripture and in the truths of revelation. Many of these young men became prophets and were the instructors of the people. Elisha, then, was the president of a college for young men who were being trained for the sacred ministry of God. They had grown so numerous that they were cramped in their lodging and they said, "The place is too small for us. Let us go, we pray you, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a fit place there, where we may dwell." They were ready to work to build their own lodging. They do not appear to have gone into debt for it, and to have saddled themselves and the institution for many years afterwards, but they put their own shoulders to the wheel as good men should do when there is any work to be done for the cause of God!

2, 3. *Let us go, we pray you, unto Jordan, and take there, every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell. And He answered, Go. And one said, Be content, I pray you, and go with your servants. And he answered, I will go.* His presence would be an encouragement to them. His holy conversation would make their work more pleasant. They would also feel as if they were more truly working for God when they had the presence and the patronage of God's servant. He, on the other hand, was quite ready to go. God's ministers, if they are what they should be, are quite ready to help in any kind of work. We find Paul the apostle picking up sticks to make a fire and we find Elisha going with

his dear friends to the forest when they would cut down timber to make a house. We sometimes regret that spiritual work should so often have to come into contact with commonplace things and yet, so it is. Young prophets must have a house and when we gather a congregation we must build them a meeting house. In this country we cannot meet every day in the open air, and we often regret this, yet I believe it is meant by God to be a discipline for His church. If the church cannot come into contact with common life without its spirituality being endangered, so much the worse for its spirituality; it must be flimsy stuff if it cannot bear the wear and tear of common life.

4, 5. *So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood. But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, Master, for it was borrowed!* These young men were too poor to buy tools of their own and they, therefore, asked for a kindly loan of an axe head that they might use it in the Lord's service. It was very natural, therefore, that this young man should regret that the axe which he had borrowed should fall off into the water. This made him say—"Alas!" Be very careful about loans. Be sure to repay them in due time and be very particular that nothing happens so that you cannot. He said, "Alas, Master, for it was borrowed!"

6. *And the man of God said, Where did it fall? And he showed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in there; and the iron did float.* God can do all things! He can make iron float—we cannot—and yet you see the prophet did it and he did it by the use of a stick. He cut down a stick. Was there any connection between the stick and the iron? I can't see any and yet God does use means, and He would have us use means. "He cut down a stick and cast it in there, and the iron did float." If you're in great trouble tonight, have confidence in that God who can make the iron float! If you have some worry and you do not know how to meet it—some work and you do not know how to do it—look to Him who made the iron float and He can do the same for you. Trust Him, rest upon Him and see if He does not do it!

7, 8. *Therefore said he, Pick it up for yourself. And he put out his hand and took it. Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such-and-such a place shall be my camp.* Of course, he wanted to keep it secret and pounce upon Israel here and there without notice and so win an easy victory.

9-11. *And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that you pass not such a place for there the Syrians are come down. And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice. Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sorely troubled by this thing.* He could not understand how all his well laid plans were baffled.

11-12. *And he called his servants and said unto them, Will you not show me which of us is for the king of Israel? And one of his servants said, "None, my lord, O King. There is no traitor here. But Elisha, the prophet*

that is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedchamber. For the Lord knows what we say in the bedchamber when no ears can hear! If we speak to ourselves, He hears it, and if we whisper in all quietness into the ear of one who will never repeat it is written in the book of the divine record. "Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedchamber."

13. *And he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him.* Not a very wise project, for if Elisha knew all about the words of the king, it was not very likely that he would catch him!

13-15. *And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan. Therefore sent he there horses, chariots and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, beheld, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my Master! What shall we do?* That is a question we have often asked, "What shall we do?" We shall do nothing at all! What shall we do? If that were the question, we might sit down in despair! The proper question is, "What will God do? How will God deliver us?" But it is only the man of faith who thinks about God at all. How many there are of you who are in trouble and you are wondering how you shall get out of it. Poor things! Poor things! Oh, if we had but faith to look to that omnipotent arm that is moving among us—and to that great and wise heart that is thinking of us—and then trust our case with Him!

16, 17. *And He answered, Fear not: for they that are with us are more than they that are with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray You, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.* More of the horses of fire than there were horses of flesh—more of the chariots of flame than there were chariots of iron!

18, 19. *And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD and said, Smite this people, I pray You, with blindness. And He smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. And Elisha said unto them, This is not the way, neither is this the city: follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek. But he led them to Samaria.* In all which—though I grant you it seems a stratagem—Elisha spoke neither more nor less than the truth. Dothan was not his city. Samaria was the city where the man of God dwelt. He was then outside Dothan and he said, I will bring you to the man whom you seek. He did lead them to him—took them to his own home, to the very place where he lived. I think I see him leading all these blind men—they had come to catch *him*—and he had caught *them.* And he led them to Samaria.

20. *And it came to pass, when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, LORD, open the eyes of these men, that they may see. And the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw and, behold, they were in the*

midst of Samaria. In the central square of the city; they opened their eyes and found themselves caught like rats in a trap. What cannot God do?

21. *And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My Father, shall I smite them? Shall I smite them?* His hand was on his sword. He would call his men to come forward with their lances. "My Father, shall I smite them?" See the fine spirit of the prophet, the magnanimity of the man of God!

22. *And he answered, You shall not smite them: would you smite those whom you have taken captive with your sword and with your bow?* For if you had conquered them in fair fight you would not think of killing them! I have captured them by God's power. I have taken them prisoners and they will not be put to death.

22. *Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master*. This is the way of carrying on war, the best way in the entire world—to conquer by divine grace, to conquer by kindness!

23. *And He prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master.* Now mark the consequences.

23. *So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.* No, they could not come any more to vex a people who had treated them so generously! And thus the man of God was master of the situation. His noble spirit was put to the front, and God was glorified!

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DISTRACTED WITH MUCH SERVING
NO. 3163

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1909,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1866.

"Martha was distracted with much serving."
Luke 10:40.

[The original title of this sermon is ***Cumbered*** *with Much Serving.*]

THE preacher will have one hearer tonight to whom his text will be amazingly applicable—himself! Here we have meeting after meeting and engagement after engagement. We are always working as hard as we can, but we have put on much extra canvas just now, serving much and not being exempt from Martha's sin of *being distracted* with much serving. I should not wonder but what there may be some others here besides the preacher who may have fallen into the same state of mind and, perhaps, just now while engaged more than ever in God's work, it may be well for us to pull ourselves up a little and look around us, and see what state we are in, lest, like Martha, we get more and more distracted, till at last we speak as we ought not to speak and begin to upbraid others who are less wrong than ourselves!

I. We will first say a little on this point—WHAT WAS IT THAT MARTHA WAS PROBABLY DISTRACTED ABOUT?

Her fault was not that she served. Oh, that is no fault! The condition of a servant should be the condition of every Christian. "I serve," should be the motto of all the princes of the royal family of God! It was not her fault that she had "much serving." We cannot do too much. Let us do all that we possibly can—head, heart and hands—let every single power and passion of our nature be engaged in the Master's service! "Hereby shall you be My disciples, if you bring forth much fruit." It was no fault of hers that she was busy preparing a feast for the Master. Happy Martha to have an opportunity of entertaining so blessed a guest! And happy Martha too, to have the spirit to throw her whole soul so heartily into the engagement. But her fault was that she grew "*distracted* with much serving," so that she forgot *Him* and only remembered the service! She overrode her union with Christ by her service of Christ—and herein was the mischief.

I do not know what particular part of the service it was that distracted her, but I do know that any part of it distracts me, sometimes, and that

as the minister of this church, with our large college and with all sorts of work from morning till night, it is the easiest and most natural thing in the world to get "distracted with much serving," and to get into such a state of head and heart that it is almost impossible to sit at the Savior's feet and at the same time to be serving Him as we ought to do. We ought to be Martha and Mary rolled into one. We should do much service and yet have much communion at the same time.

Martha's fault, then, was that she grew bothered. In thinking this matter over, I thought she might, perhaps, have been distracted in this way. *She was the housewife and there were a great many guests coming—more than she had expected—and she thought there was not enough in the house for them.* "Surely," she said, "I have provided for only fifty, and here are a hundred! What shall I do? I did not ask that person over there to come, I am sure, but there is no getting rid of him. I wish I had laid in more store, I told Mary so. I told her there would be more, but she said, 'No, provide for only so many.' I do not believe there is enough." So she fretted over that—and any good housewife might be supposed to do the same. How often have you and I, who are serving God, fretted in the same way? We have said, "Oh, what can our poor little church do? How can such a sum of money be raised? There is much more needed than we shall ever get!" The minister has come before his congregation and has felt—"One, two, three, four, five, yes, five loaves—and these only barley loaves—and a few fishes, and these but small. What are they among so many? I wish I had a narrower sphere of labor and had fewer people dependent upon my exertions!" This is how we have sometimes thought. Then at other seasons we have said—"How shall I keep on? I have so little strength. I have scarcely had power to do good up till now, how shall I be sustained to the end of the journey?" We begin calculating and fear there is not enough meat in the house. With a sincere desire that every child of God should be supplied and that not a single guest at the table should go unfed, we begin to be bothered because we think there will not be enough!

I do not know what it was that bothered Martha, but I should not wonder if she got *distracted about the servants.* She had said to one, "Now, you must prepare the dish and mind it is to be done in a certain way. And you, Mary, are to prepare the other dish, and you the other one." There is an old proverb which says, "The more servants, the more plagues." I do not think it is a true proverb, but some people have found it to be so. Perhaps Martha did. Perhaps there was one letting that roast burn, and another spoiling another roast—and so, turning round from one to another, Martha said, "It seems as if I ought to be everywhere. There is nothing done unless I am looking after all these people. They are sure to be getting into some mischief or other! I need a hundred hands to do everything myself, or else a hundred eyes to look after those who are doing it." How often Christian ministers, especially, and each Christian

in his own position, gets into this same state. You think, "Surely I thought I could trust such and such a believer with such a work, but how he blunders at it! I can never give it to him to do again!" Then you try another with a certain duty that is very important and that goes wrong. If you have a great machine to work, it is not often, but when there is some cog gets off, or some band that gets snapped, or some wheel that gets out of order—and when one has to look after all these things and to see not only to one's own personal work, but to the work of all these different people and to be sure that they are all kept in their proper place, it is no wonder that one sometimes feels—"Dear me! I cannot manage all these people!" And so one gets "distracted with much serving."

Moreover, very frequently you find that very sad and grave mistakes have been made in things which you thought nobody could make a mistake about. Perhaps you find out that you have been the author of the mistake, yourself, and then you are bothered again. You say, "How can I set that right? How can I retrace that false step? By what possible means can I undo such and such a thing that has been done?" I suppose that if a captain in battle were to leave his position in the center of the camp and go flying about here and there, he would be pretty sure to lose the victory—and some of us do just that. We have not patience enough to sit still in the center and just to look to the work as a whole, and keep ourselves calm and quiet. We get annoyed over every little thing and about every trifle. We get bothered, in fact, about the much serving. Now, there is a good motive at the bottom of all this—it is a desire to serve Christ well. It is a wish to do His service in the best, most useful, creditable and successful manner. But there is mischief in it, as we shall have to show, by and by. Oh, how my soul longs to have this church a perfect church! How I long to see every one of you at work for Christ! How I desire myself, especially, to preach every time with fire, force and energy! And yet I go home to my bed, sometimes, and toss there because I cannot preach up to my own standard, imperfect as that is. And how I mourn sometimes over this or that brother who does not seem to understand the dignity of his profession, nor live up to the holiness which becomes the anointed of God and the blood washed in the fountain which Christ has filled. Oh, dear friends, the being annoyed with much serving is so easy in my case, and I only instance myself because I know that a face answers to face in a glass, so the heart of man answers to man. I suppose you all, sometimes, get into this state—and in proportion as you are serving Christ will be your temptation to get distracted with much serving!

We have already said that you may be bothered about a great many things. It is amazing how many things there are to annoy one even about an ordinary service. If you are responsible for the service, you are distracted as to whether you have got the right text and as to whether you

have selected the right hymns. You pray that God would bless the word, and that is right enough, but you are distracted about it. When the hymn is given out, you are bothered, perhaps, as to whether it will be sung well, or whether the people will break down. Perhaps there is some discord and if you are anxious to have everything right, you get annoyed about that. Then you are bothered, possibly, about where the people are to sit. Even such things as these will come across the mind and I should not wonder if my brothers, the deacons and elders, get distracted about them as well as the minister! They perhaps get to thinking—"Dear me, there is Mr. So and So over there. I am glad to see him here and I hope the word will be blessed." Then you get wrong thoughts about such and such persons and wonder how they will like such and such expressions—and so on. And so, instead of enjoying the service and entering into the soul of it, you are thinking, "I hope it will all go well. I hope the preacher will not use some of those naughty sayings of his that shock the ladies. I hope he will not say any of his rough things tonight." And so you get distracted. Instead of enjoying the word as it is preached, and receiving it as it is delivered, there is an anxiety about this and about that, and about 50 other things! And so we are distracted with much serving.

I have thus laid the stress upon the ministry, because that is the service of God in a special manner. But you Sunday school teachers, if you are very anxious about your class—and remember, you ought not to be teachers if you are not anxious—you will, perhaps, get bothered by the class by looking more to the outward items of your work than to the spirituality of it. You tract distributors may be doing a great work, but you may get to be more careful about the externals of it than you are about the internals. You City Missionaries—for there are some such here—may also get to think more of the filling up of your journal and about paying a certain quantity of visits, than about living near to God and going in the strength of the Most High to your work. And if so, you will fall into the blunder of poor Martha. With all your zeal for Christ, you will disqualify yourself for any great usefulness and, instead of getting a word of comfort and commendation, you will only get a rebuke from the Lord who will warn you that Mary chose the good part, while Martha, in some degree, despised it! I hope you will not misunderstand me—I would not have you do less than you now do. No, the more the better! I would not for a moment dissuade you from the utmost possible efforts which your zeal can suggest. Far be it for me to say, "Slacken yourselves in your sowing, or stop yourselves in your plowing." No, go to the end of the field and back again—and have no rest until the day's work is over! On, on, on, as the racehorse to the finish line, as the arrow to the target! On, as the world speeds on evermore in its own predestinated orbit! On, for God calls you to work while it is called today! On, for souls are perishing! On, for He is worthy for whom you would do this and Christ deserves your utmost labor at the utmost power of your whole spirit. But oh, take care that these

labors do not take the place of Christ! Take care that you do not forget the Master in thinking about the dinner that you are going to put on the table for Him. Remember that He is still to be first in your thoughts—first in the morning and last at night—and that after all, while it is good to serve, it must always be attended by sitting at the Savior's feet, or else you will not get a reward, but a rebuke.

II. Anyone here can work out that thought if he understands anything of the spiritual life and, therefore, I will now notice, in the second place, WHAT MARTHA LOST WHILE SHE WAS THUS DISTRACTED ABOUT WITH MUCH SERVING.

She was losing *what she could not get at any other time*. Jesus Christ was not always at their house. She could at any time prepare a feast, but she could not, at all times hear His voice. His visits are not such every-day things with believers that they can afford to lose them. Beloved, when we come to God's house and especially when we come to Christ's table, I think we ought to say to ourselves, "*Now*, at any rate, I will bid my Martha type cares be gone. I can attend to them when I have done. There is plenty of time, besides, for my cares, even for my cares for Christ. But now that the Lord is here, now that His people are met and He has promised to be with them, I shall have done with all my care and will give myself up to seek living and personal fellowship with Him. I will forget the dishes on the table, and the servants in the kitchen, and the fires, and everything else in the house—they must go as they may. I will give the best orders I can and then I will leave these things, for I am now going to get a privilege which I cannot always get—I am going to listen to His loving words as they come welling up fresh from my Savior's heart. I am going to sit down right at His feet and drink in that which He would teach me." I think you will acknowledge that it is easier to serve than it is to commune. You will have observed that Joshua never grew weary when he was fighting with the Amalekites. It was hard work, but he did not get his arms weakened at it. But when Moses was on the top of the mountain in prayer, he had to have two others to hold his hands up! So is it with us. The more spiritual the exercise, the sooner the soul tires of it. We could keep on preaching better than we could keep on praying and it is easier to pray in public than it is to pray in secret. And let me say that even in secret it is easier to pray aloud than it is to sit still in your communion with Christ in the solemn silence of the soul. The choicest fruits are generally the hardest to grow—and the most spiritual engagements are the most difficult for us to manage. Beloved, we ought to have an eye to this! We ought to take care that we do not neglect these merely external things which are good enough in themselves, these outward attending to ordinances, a sermon, and so on—but we ought also to take care that while we remember these in their proper places, we do not let these

things crowd out better things, but see to it that we get to Christ and enjoy living, personal fellowship with Him!

I am afraid, too, that at this time *Martha was losing her reverence for her Savior*. You will ask how she did this. I do not like her expression, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Bid her that she help me." I do not think she ought to have spoken so to her Savior. The words do not sound gentle. It seems as if she had got to be so familiar with waiting upon Him, that she had lost some of the due respect which she should have paid to the great prophet of Israel, her Savior and her Lord! This is one of the great dangers of those who serve God in the engagements of the sanctuary. I have had to confess and have mentioned it at ministers' meetings often, and have heard others confess that familiarity with sacred things is a temptation, very often, to lead us to read our Bibles for our congregations and not for ourselves—and to pray *ex officio* instead of praying with our whole hearts to God, ourselves, as though we ourselves needed the blessing! I am sure, too, that this is true of all the other officials in God's house. If a man is not saved, and becomes a minister, I do not think there is a chance of his being saved afterwards—he had better be anything than be an unsaved minister! I have noticed the same thing with regard to pew openers and such like persons who are not converted before they take their offices—and I pray that those of you who have the filling up of such positions, never to appoint unconverted people, for they may not be converted afterwards. They will be so busy putting people into their seats and doing different things, that they will be distracted with much serving!

I did once say, and gave very great offense, indeed, by it, that the people who take down my sermons ought to have the grace of God in their hearts, or else they would not get a blessing, for certainly the mechanical act of writing must prevent the mind from entering in all its fullness into the meaning of the utterance! Our dear brothers here who take such an interest in our services, and to whose kind care and watchfulness we owe so much of the quiet we enjoy on Sabbath days with our great crowds, I am sure will excuse me—indeed I will not asked to be excused—when I say they must mind that these things do not run away with their spirituality, for there is such a fear in serving Christ that familiarity with His service will tend to make us lose our respect for Him! God grant that instead of this, our reverence for Christ may grow more and more—and the more we serve Him, the more humbly may we lie down at His feet.

But I think Martha was losing something more than this, and that was *her humility*. If she had had much humility, she would have known that Mary was quite as good as she was, herself, and even a little better. But instead of that she took it upon herself to call Mary to account and even to complain to Christ about her. Many of our complaints about ministers and other good people show our own lack of humility. When I think that my brothers have many faults, I may well remember how many I have,

myself—and instead of thinking how badly some people do, I ought to suspect that I might have done a great deal worse if I had been in their place! Indeed, it strikes me that the wise man is rather delighted that things are as well as they are, than displeased that they are not any better, for he knows that the best of men are but men at the best. He knows from his own experience that men are very likely to go fast in the way of error and to travel very slowly in the way of right—and so when he does see a cause prosper, or a holy deed done, he is grateful to God for it! Though he does wish that there were more, yet he is grateful to God that there is so much genuine piety, so much brotherly love, so much earnestness, so much prayerfulness as there is in the midst of the world. Let us not be so censorious, always judging this man and that man. If you had been in his place would you have done better? Have you to pay his wages at the last? Is he your servant? Then who are you that judge another's servant? To his own Master shall he stand or fall, and perhaps the very man you judge is more acceptable to God than you are! He does not serve so much as you do. He does not preach so many sermons, nor teach so many people, nor publish so many books and so on—but he sits more at Jesus' feet than you do, lives nearer to Christ and is bringing more honor to the Redeemer's name in his humble, quiet obscurity than you are with all your publicity and with all your work! It seems to me that we are in danger of losing our respect for our fellows if we think so much of ourselves.

Does it not strike you, by the way, that very often when we get distracted about much serving, there is pride at the bottom of it? Why do we want to serve God in this way or in that way? The preacher wants those who come to say, "What a capital sermon," and, "What a fine fellow he is!" Or, perhaps, the hearers want people to say when they go out, "Now I enjoyed it!" When we do all this and when we want to see our Sunday school class very numerous, and to see many conversions, is it not just possible that at the bottom of it all we think, "it would look so well and we should be able to say that there is so much done"? Brother, if you say you have never felt like this, I can only say that you must be a very superior person. I know I have often felt like it and I here make confession of that wicked vanity which is so very common a complaint among us! We get distracted, not so much about whether Christ is served, but whether *we* shall be thought to have done anything and to have done it in a proper way! Oh, to shake one's self from all these beggarly rags of selfishness and to be content to do God's work to the best of one's ability and to say, "My Master, as to whether this looks well or does not look well in the sight of my fellows, is nothing! I gave it to You as You gave it to me. Accept it, my Master. Accept it because I love You and yet more, because You love me!"

Martha, then, was losing a great deal, but in addition to all this, she was also *losing communion with Christ*. Mrs. Rowe says somewhere—"If all the 12 apostles were to preach at the time when I ought to be in prayer, I would not leave my closet to hear one of them, or all of them." And another used to say—"I would not be kept out of my closet for all the world." But we are so easily turned away from sitting at Christ's feet to go to work! We so easily cut short the time of prayer for the sake of doing more for Christ! Communion with Christ is the most precious thing! And once lost, I do not care what you did in the time when you ought to have been communing with Christ—you may have won coppers, but you have lost sovereigns, for many have earned pence, but you have lost diamonds! For your own sake, and for the sake of those whom you would bless, you must see to it that sitting at the Savior's feet is not neglected, even though it is under the specious pretext of waiting upon Him. The first thing for our soul's health, the first thing for His glory and the first thing for our own usefulness is to keep ourselves in perpetual communion with the Lord Jesus—and to see that the vital spirituality of our religion is maintained over and above everything else in the world!

III. Having thus shown you what Martha lost, I would now like to OFFER SOME CONSIDERATIONS WHICH MAY PREVENT OUR BEING DISTRACTED WITH MUCH SERVING.

There is one consideration which has done me a deal of good and it is this—that *the Lord Jesus got on very well before we were born, and it is very likely that He will get on exceedingly well when we are dead*. When one thinks, "Oh, it is so important that such and such a point should be attended to. I must throw my whole strength into that." And then the next day there seems to be something else so very necessary to be done! And then something goes amiss there and something else here—because one cannot be everywhere—and one begins to be troubled. It might well be said to us at such a time, "Now, are you really such a very important person after all?" Before we were born, God's cause prospered and when we are dead, if we have been useful in our lives, we may, perhaps, leave a little gap for a little time, but it will soon be filled up and nobody will know it—and God's cause will go on just as well without us! "I hope I do not inconvenience you," said the gnat when he settled on the horn of a bull. "I did not know you were there," said the bull. So, sometimes we seem to think, "I hope my absence will not cause inconvenience to such and such a cause." And we might very well be answered, "Why, nobody knew you had anything to do with it! What difference will *your* absence make?" I do not want you to be careless about things on this account, but I do want you not to be distracted about them on this account. That is not a bad philosophy, though it is very often very wickedly applied—"It will be all be the same in a hundred years' time." Well, really, it will. Though the waves do go back, each one of them, after they have come up on the shore, yet none of them need regret that they die because every

wave comes up beyond its fellow, and though there may be no advance in each one particular wave, but even a receding, yet the great ocean, itself, is going forward! And so, if one little particular part of the work that has been left to me does not go on as I could wish, yet, O God, the great sea of Your church is going on in the fullness of its glory and it shall yet cover the sands of time and break upon the cliffs in an eternal spray of everlasting song! Let us be consoled in this matter. We are not such big bodies, after all, and if the thing which we devise may not succeed, yet that is not the main thing, for Jehovah still reigns and Christ still prospers!

There is another consideration—namely, that *it is pretty certain that if we have done our best for our Master, our fretting will not improve things*. Farmers have been troubled, sometimes, when the rain has been coming on at harvest time, but I never remember to have observed that the glass went up on that account, nor have I ever head of a single raindrop whose little watery heart relented because of the sorrow of the agriculturist—it came down just the same. So, if our fretting over God's work would improve it, brothers and sisters, let us fret! Let us fret together in harmony! But if it really will not, and if after having done all we can in prayer and holy work, the thing does not go on quite as well as we could wish it, then let us say, "My Master, let it be according to Your will, and if it is according to Your mind, it is sure to be according to my mind, or if not, Lord, give me a better mind." May we be brought down to this—"Your will be done." If we had more of the spirit of Christian resignation, we should feel that as we cannot add one cubit to our own stature by our own thought, so neither can we add a single drachma of success to the church of God by all our unbelieving annoyances of ourselves about much serving!

Another consideration may help us—namely, *that, after all, it is not our work, but His work in which we are engaged*. I once heard a very pretty illustration from one of our ministers who said that he was moving his books from his study downstairs to another room which he had taken for his study upstairs, and his little boy said, "Papa, let me help you." The little boy was not able to do anything, but the father thought he must encourage his desire for industry and he said, "Yes, you can take that little book." But the boy did not like to take the little book—he wanted to be a man and carry a big book. So he took a big book and got it to the foot of the stairs—and there he sank down and began to cry, for he could carry it no further. "And what," said the father, "do you think it came to? Why, I had to carry the book upstairs and the boy, too!" So it is with us—we ask Christ to let us do something for Him and we are not satisfied to do only that—we have a natural and a very proper desire to be doing more. And so we undertake something which we cannot do and we sit down and fret as if the book never would get upstairs till *we* carried it up—and then the good Father comes along and takes the book and the

little child, too, and carries both. Oh, instead of sitting down and crying, say, "My Father, I have the will to do this, but I cannot. Come and do it, my Father, for it is not my work, it is Your work." You remember how Moses put it. I have often put it in that shape, and may the Master forgive me if I have done it unbelievingly. Moses said, "Have I begotten all this people?" And often when the enormous weight of this church has pressed upon my soul, I have said to Christ, "Lord Jesus, I never married this church. It is no spouse of mine—it is Your wife and I am but as one that unties the laces of her shoes. I am but as one that pours water upon her feet that she may wash them. I am your present servant in the body, but the work is too much for me—You must do it. I have cared for Your flock till I could say that by night it has distressed me, and by day—

'My joys and sorrows mingled seem
As if they would consume me.'

But, Lord, I never bought this flock with blood. I am not to have this flock at the last! It is no flock of Mine. I am only Your hired shepherd. You will give me my wage, but oh, it is Yours to keep off the wolf! It is Yours to preserve each lamb and carry it in Your bosom and gently to lead each troubled one in the whole flock." I think we must often do this—throw it off upon our God, for it is His burden, not ours. Cast all our care on Him, for He cares for us. And especially leaving the serving of Himself to Him whose service and whose work it really is.

Yet, again. Another thing that may comfort you is *that sometimes when things are going very badly, as we think, they are really going best.* We do not always know, I fancy, when things are prospering. We imagine that the church is in good health because certain outward signs manifest themselves. Persons sometimes meet those of us who are rather stout, and they say, "How well you look!" I do not know about that. In our flesh there dwells no good thing. I am afraid that with some of us that is no very great sign of health and we might be glad enough to get rid of it. So sometimes when the church seems to be in a prosperous condition, we congratulate ourselves upon its wonderful healthiness. I do not know that we ought to do that! Sometimes the corn is best when an onlooker who does not understand it thinks it is worst—and sometimes when a little boat is borne on one side till she almost ships a sea through the tremendous gale that is blowing, the landsman thinks there is mischief ahead, but the old sailor who understands all about it says, "No, they are going at a great rate now." So, at times our ship lurches a bit, and seems as if it shipped whole seas of mischief, but it is then that the mighty breeze of the divine Spirit is really given to us! Do you not think, beloved, that some of the worst sermons that are ever preached, in the judgment of critics, are really the best? What a fool I have been dozens of times! I have thought in my conceit—"Well, now, that is a sermon that is likely to be blest"—and yet I have never heard of any blessing from it! I have thought at other times when I am finished, "Please, God, if I ever get that

subject again, I will treat it better. What a poor sermon!" And yet two or three church meetings later, there will come one, two, three, perhaps half a dozen who were blessed and converted to God by my poor sermon. The Lord help me, then, to preach poor sermons and grant that I may always preach so that He will bless it, no matter whether I like it or whether you like it, as long as God is pleased to bless the sermon! I dare say you Sunday school teachers have often found that when you have done worst, God has done best, and He has permitted you to think it was worst in order that you might bring all the glory to His feet and praise His name!

Should it not be one reason, then, why we should cast off our care, *that we serve a very generous Master?* There are some masters whom you cannot please—when you have done your best, they will still find some fault—for they have a quick eye for a fault. But our Lord Jesus seems as if He could not find fault with His people, and when we have done our best, though it is a poor, poor thing, yet He takes it and so transforms it by one touch of His own gracious and pierced hands, that we do not know it again! It is more His than ours and it is accepted by Him. He does not receive our works because of their intrinsic excellences, but because He worked them in us and because the motive for which we have performed them is honorable to Himself. Master Brooks says that, "Fond friends will accept crooked sixpences, and a little piece of forget-me-not, and set great store by these love tokens." Even so does the Savior! He takes our poor worthless works which have no intrinsic value in them and sets great store by them, saying of that cup of cold water which you gave away and which you never thought of again—"Inasmuch as you did it unto one of the least of these, My brethren, you did it unto Me." I do not doubt He will say at the last—"You did want to serve Me. You did long to honor Me and I accept it." John Bunyan says if you send a servant off for the doctor and you tell him to go on horseback as fast as ever he can—and there is but a very sorry nag in the stable, so the man uses the spur and the whip, and tugs at the bridle, but cannot make the horse go—you see that the man would go if he could, and so you do not blame him. So, he says, our poor flesh is that sorry nag, but the spirit is willing, and Jesus Christ looks on us and says—"Truly the flesh is weak, he would go if he could." And so He takes the will for the deed and does not blame us, but covers our faults in the mantle of His love.

Now I hope we are beginning to feel better. I hope we are not going to leave off caring about the work, but only leave off being bothered about it. I hope we shall be anxious to see souls saved and desirous to conduct all our labors for Christ in the best possible manner—but I hope we shall not sit down and worry ourselves as though there were no God to bless, no Christ to perfume our works with the incense of His merits and no Holy Spirit to make our very infirmities yield His glory! Let us remember

that our Father lives, that our God lives, that He who brings good out of evil lives. Let us set up our banners in His name and go forward rejoicing that He is with us and will be with us to the end!

Come, you Marys—if you have been chastened, mind not the chastening! Your living near to Christ is "that good part"; always stay there. Serve the Master, but do not break your fellowship. Do all that in you lies for Christ, but also sit down under His shadow and let His fruit be sweet to your taste. If we sometimes did less, we should do more. If we had fewer outward engagement and more private dealings with God, we should be richer. The best commerce is commerce with heaven. The richest merchants are those who negotiate with a covenant God. Those who get the largest estates are those who have learned to traffic in heaven's markets. If you would be strong, live upon the promises! If you would be happy, live with the promise keeper. If you would be mighty to win souls, be mighty on your knees! And if you would be like your Master with a shining face among the multitude, be much with your Master where He is transfigured upon the Mount.

I preach but poorly to you, but I must not begin to be distracted about that. Here I would leave the matter, only I would to God that you all had an interest in the things I have been speaking of! Some of you do not care to serve God at all. You serve yourselves—you serve your own passions. May the Lord bring you to serve Him—and the door of service is at the cross. The way to begin to be a servant is to go to the place where He took upon Himself the form of a servant and was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Trust Jesus. *This* is the work of God, if you would do it, that you believe on Him whom He has sent. May God enable you now to trust His dear Son with all your hearts! And then after that may you go and serve Him, and serve Him effectively—but God grant that you be not "distracted with much serving."

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THE MISSION OF AFFLICTION
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"Let him alone, and let him curse, for so the LORD has ordered him. It may be that the LORD will look on my affliction, and that the LORD will repay me with good for his cursing this day."
***2 Samuel 16:11, 12.* (NKJV)**

THE bright side of David's character was generally seen either when he was actively engaged or when he was greatly suffering. He was the man of action. When he ran to meet Goliath and returned with the giant's head in his hand, or when it was necessary that he should lead forth the hosts of God to war against Philistia, then David was in his element. He was one who never feared the face of man! He was courageous, dauntless and full of confidence in God.

Equally well does he stand out in the time of his trouble. He will not lift up his hand against Saul even when the king is in his power. If he cuts off the skirt of Saul's robe, even then his heart smites him. When his adversaries are before him and with a blow he can put them to death, with unusual generosity he restrains his hand and will not touch them. Revenge was not in his spirit. He was full of gentleness and tenderness. It is well for men of this kind when they have something to do or something to suffer. And perhaps this may account for it, that men have to be very busy or very faithful if they are to avoid being sinful. There are spirits so ardent, so fervent, that unless they have either to do or to bear God's will with a high degree of intensity, they are lacking in brightness and cheerfulness. David was seldom at leisure without falling into mischief. His great sin, his grievous sin was in such manner. It was the time when kings went forth to battle, but David sent Joab to fight against Ammon and he stayed at home. We read that at eventide, "David arose from off his bed and walked upon the roof of his house." He had become luxurious and then it was that temptation came and he fell. His second great offense was very much after the same order. He had subdued all his enemies. The rebellion of Absalom was put down with a strong hand. All was quiet within and without—and then Satan moved him to number the people. He thought, "I am the king of a great country and I should like to know how many subjects I have. I should like to know how many troops I have. Joab, go and take a census and bring it to me, that I may understand how great I am."

And then it was that God sent His servant to warn him that He would chasten him for his pride of heart. And He gave him the choice of three chastisements—one of which must fall upon the people. David was like a

sword, which if hung up on a wall, would soon gather rust, but when he was moved to fight the Master's battle, he was of wondrous keen temper and could cut to the dividing asunder of the joints and the marrow! Let us dread, then, ease and repose—

"For, more the treacherous calm I dread
Than tempests hanging over head."

Let us be afraid of having nothing to do and be thankful for something to *suffer* if we have not something to do actively, for let us alone and the best of us will corrode! And if I am addressing any man who has lately given up business and is enjoying repose, I would urge upon him the wisdom of seeking some service for Christ which would engage his faculties, for it is true of Christians as well as other people, that—

"Satan always mischief finds,
For idle hands to do."

Our text tonight exhibits David in the time of his trouble. He is here so admirable and his conduct is here so commendable, that I hold him up as an example to all. There are four things in this transaction which we all ought to copy. The first was the *absence of resentment* from the heart of David. The second was *his entire resignation to the divine will.* The third was *his expectancy from God, alone.* And the fourth was *his looking to the bright side and still having hope*.

I. First, then, ADMIRE DAVID AND THEN TRY TO COPY HIM IN THIS RESPECT. We read you the story just now. [The exposition was always **read first,** but **printed** at the **end** of the sermon.] Now the attack of Shimei upon David was very cowardly. David had been king for many years but you never hear a word from Shimei while the king was on his throne and in power. This man was skulking in the farthest corners of the land, no doubt often biting his tongue, but having too much sense to use it against the powerful king. But now that David is fleeing from the palace and his son is pursuing him, eager for his blood, out comes this coward from his skulking place and begins to accuse the king. Those who would not have dared to speak against David before, now abuse him to his face with insulting epithets! It is very hard to bear a cowardly attack. One is very apt to reply and use hard words to one who takes advantage of your position and deals you the coward's blow. Only the coward strikes a man when he is down. It is just possible that somebody here may be suffering from an injury which he knows the person responsible for it would not have dared to inflict in years gone by. That helps to make the blow more cutting—when it comes from a coward's hands.

Besides being so cowardly, it was so brutal. We pity a man that is in distress. When a king has lost his throne; when a father has his own child in rebellion against him, one says, "Whatever may have been his fault, this is not the time to mention them." When the poor heart is bleeding and the man is already suffering the very extremity of misery, who would wish to add a single ounce to the crushing weight that he has to carry? Sympathy and common humanity seem to say, "Be quiet! Hush! Another time, when he mounts again to prosperity, then, if it is necessary, let us faithfully rebuke him for his faults, but not now. It is not seemly." If this dog of a Shimei must fly at David when he is suffering,

most surely Satan, himself, must have set him on to aggravate to the last degree the miseries of David! And yet David has not one hard word to say against him. No, he becomes his advocate, bears with the brutal attack—cowardly as it was—betrays no temper, but peacefully, calmly, gratefully spares the life which was in his hands!

Moreover, remember that the attack was especially a false one. He called David a bloody man and accused him of having destroyed the house of Saul. Nothing could have been more false, for when Saul was in David's power on two occasions, once in the cave and once when he lay asleep on the slope of the mountain, David did not put out his hand to touch the Lord's anointed! When Saul and Jonathan were slain on Gilboa, David sincerely mourned and wrote that pathetic elegy—the song which he bade them learn to sing in mourning for Saul who fell on the high places. And afterwards, when the Amalekite came with the crown of Saul, hoping to be rewarded, David had him put to death on the spot! When wicked men came with the head of Ishbosheth, hoping to gratify David, he slew them both for the murder. Moreover, he sought out Mephibosheth and though he was lame in both his feet and could not stand, he bade him sit at his table and did him honor. So far from being a bloody man, he had, on the contrary, even though hunted by Saul and his blood had been sought by the leader of that house, yet had he never returned evil for evil.

It is very hard to be reproached for what you do not do. I do not know how, but somehow the falseness of an accusation does put a degree of sting into it. I have heard of a woman who was charged with a certain degree of dishonesty. Her minister said to her, "You need not be so grieved about it if it is not true." "No, sir," she said, "I should not be grieved about it, if it were not true, but there's the point about it, it *is* true." And just so, if we were sensible, we should only feel those charges that are true—and the edge would be taken off others when we knew our conscience did not justify them. But it does not happen to be so. We do not hold the scales well. We feel that it is a very cruel thing to have things laid to our charge that we knew nothing of—and when our whole life has been in one direction—to have it laid to our door that we act quite contrary to that is a very stinging thing. Shimei, I suppose, could not have uttered anything that could sting David more to the quick than when he said to him, "You are a bloody man and have destroyed the house of Saul." Yet David did not put out his hand to him. He said, "Let him alone! Let him curse." Generously he allowed him to escape unscathed, though Shimei cast stones and dirt upon him.

Sometimes the way in which a thing is put is more cutting than the thing itself. For Shimei did not merely speak his charge against David, but he put it in the bitterest way, "Come out, come out!" as though he scorned him! And then he threw stones and dirt at him, as though he did not mind him now, as though he thought David the very dust beneath his feet and called him the offscouring of all things. Few among us can bear scorn. I suppose that a bitter sarcasm often stings where a down-

right charge, however false, might not have done so. A little bit of ridicule, with malice in it, will often wound, and little do we know how many may have gone with broken hearts all their days through unkind words that have been spoken, perhaps half in jest, but which, being taken in earnest, have made terrible wounds in the soul. Yet David would not be provoked by this man's lies nor by the tones in which he spoke them—but like a true king, all royal as he was, he said—"Let him alone. Let him curse. It is hard to bear, but I will bear it."

Now remember that David *could very easily have put an end to all this*. It was in his power to put an end to Shimei at once. "Off with his head," said Abishai—and there would have been the end of the argument. Sometimes we are very patient with things we cannot cure. It is good sound doctrine, "What can't be cured, must be endured." And, "Stooping down as needs he must, who cannot sit upright." If you cannot prevent, you may as well forgive—every fool will adopt that unless he is a strange fool, indeed! But David could take this fellow's head off and that in a moment, and yet he said, "Let him alone. Let him curse." And this makes a splendid example. If you can revenge yourself, DON'T. If you could do it as easily as open your hand, keep it shut! If one bitter word could end the argument, ask for divine grace to spare that bitter word.

Reflect, too, that *David was urged by others to put an end to this man*. Sometimes we readily follow advice, especially when there is something that we like in the advice. And who among us would not like the advice? I confess on reading the chapter, that if I had been in Abishai's case, I am afraid I should have taken his head off first, and asked permission afterwards. I am afraid it would have been very bad and wicked, but in such a case as that, when my dear king for whom I had lived and would have died—such a blessed king as David—was scoffed at by such a dog as that—who would not have said, "Off with his head!" and have thought he did him too much honor in those rough days? Yet David said, "No, we must not follow bad advice, we must not let the zeal of earnest friends lead us too fast." If they are too fast, we must be too slow. In all matters of vengeance, if others would go forward, we must draw back and say, "Christ has bidden us forgive even to seventy times seven," and so will we do. Remember this is under the old dispensation, when the law of God said, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," and so on—and, therefore, David might have been more excused if he had avenged himself! But he seems to have caught, like a prophet, the light of the coming time, and spared the man as Christ would have spared him, if He had been there. In this he is to be copied by us all!

To gather all up in one, beloved, if the trouble that comes to you, comes to you as a second cause, don't look at the second cause so as to quarrel with it and don't say, "I would not mind if it had not been So and So." That is why God selected So-and-So to chasten you, for when a father wants to make a child smart, he gets his heaviest rod! And so does God. He has taken up that instrument which will make you smart and cry out most! It is always foolish for us to fret about the second cause. If you threaten a dog with a stick, he bites the stick—but if he were a sen-

sible dog—he would bite you, only he does not know any better and so he bites the stick! And if we rebel against the second cause we are in error. If there is anyone we should complain against, it would be God who uses the instrument! But as we cannot and would not if we could complain against Him, it is best for us to say as David did, "Let him alone! Let him curse! The Lord has ordered him. The Lord has ordered him."

Now don't we tonight say, "I could have borne that other trial if God had sent that"? Well, *accept your present trial* and oh, if you are vexed with So-and-So, forgive him! There is a higher hand than his in this matter. It is a rough knife that you have been pruned with, but it is the gardener that used the knife—and your God is using this affliction for your good. Don't look at the affliction as much as at the end and at the design of God.

It was very beautiful for David to make excuses for Shimei. Notice how he puts it. "Well, there is Absalom, my son—he is seeking my life. No wonder that this man should! He is no relation of mine! I could not expect love from him. And then, moreover," he said, "he is a Benjamite. Now God has been pleased to put me, David, into the place of Saul that was a Benjamite, and of course this man sympathizes with the tribe that has lost the royal crown." David put his finger on the secret. "The man has been a sufferer through me, therefore he is angry, and he is estranged from me. I could not expect gentle treatment from him and I have unconsciously, without intending to injure him, taken away some authority from the family to which he belongs and, therefore, I can somewhat shut my eyes to his hard treatment of me and, at any rate, I will show that God is using him as an instrument and will freely forgive him." Now I am talking very simply and upon simple conduct, but I am sorrowfully conscious that a great many Christian people need to be preached to about giving lessons to others. As soon as ever a child learns to say, "Our Father, which are in heaven," which is a little infant's prayer—he is taught to say, "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us"—and yet I find that some who have been Christians for years—at least they say they have—if they get a little put out about some insignificant trifle, take a long time to get their feathers smooth again! Perhaps it is something they need hardly have noticed, and yet they will go fretting about it day after day! Oh, let us be men and women, and let us be Christian men and women, and let us be able to forbear! "In many things we offend all." "It is necessary that offenses come, but woe unto that man by whom the offense came." I think it is equal woe unto that man who will not let the offense go away. Someone says, "I suppose somebody must have been offended here." I am sure I don't know of anybody, but if the cap fits, let them wear it. May we always learn to forgive as we hope to be forgiven!

II. Now the second thing is this—DAVID'S COMPLETE RESIGNATION TO THE DIVINE WILL. "It is enough for me that the Lord has bidden him," or, as in the 10th verse, "Let him curse, because the Lord has said unto him, 'Curse David.'" David felt very keenly the wicked act of his en-

emy, but he felt that it was sent for his further chastisement and, therefore, he accepted it willingly. I daresay he said to himself, "I don't deserve this charge. It is a very base one, but if Shimei had known all about me, he might have charged me with something quite as bad as that and he would have been quite correct." When we are called out by graceless men and they slander us, we may say to ourselves, "Well, well, if they did but know us better, and could see our hearts, they could perhaps have said something worse against us—so we will be well content to bear this"; for David, though Shimei did not know about it, had grievously sinned. It does not make Shimei's conduct any better, but David felt, "I have deserved this at the hands of the Lord, or something else if not on this particular occasion." Then feeling it was the Lord, he said to himself, "I do not see the meaning of this, but I am sure there is love in it. Did God ever do anything to His children except in love? I do not see the necessity of it, but I am certain there is wisdom in it. Did the Lord ever do anything to His children that was not right? I do not see the benefit that may come out of it to me, but did God ever exercise His children with fruitless trials?" *Is there not a divine necessity for all chastisements*? It is the Lord—that is enough for David.

Brothers and sisters, is that enough for you? The Lord has done it, shall I open my mouth again when I know my Father did it? Did He take my child? Well, blessed be His name that He loved my little one so well! Did He take my gold? Well, He only lent it to me and a thing borrowed ought to go laughing back to its owner! Let Him take back what He lent. He gives and, blessed be His name, He takes but what He gave! Therefore let Him still be praised! David seems to me, as it were, to have lain down before God under a sense of having done wrong in days gone past and said to Him, "My Father, chasten me just as You will. My rebellious spirit is humbled before You. If it is necessary for my good that I suffer from Your hand, this affliction and a thousand others, go on, go on! Your child may weep, but he will not complain. Your child may suffer, but he will bring no charge against You. What You please to do, it shall be my pleasure to bear. Your pleasure and my pleasure shall be one pleasure henceforth and forevermore. If the Lord has done it, so let it be."

I invite every troubled brother and sister here to *cry for grace from God to be able to see God's hand in every trial and then for grace to, seeing God's hand, submit at once to it! No, not only to submit, but to acquiesce and to rejoice in it!* "It is the LORD, let Him do what seems good to Him." I think there is generally an end to troubles when we get to that, for when the Lord sees we are willing that He should do what He wills, then He takes back His hand and says, "I need not chasten My child—He now submits himself to Me. What would have been effected by My chastisement is already effected and, therefore, I will not chasten him." You know David was not long in the dark after he was condemned to be there. "Well," says the Lord, "if My child does not cry because he is left without a candle, he shall have his candle. Now I have tried him and proved him, he shall come before Me in the light."

What is the *use of our kicking and struggling against the Lord*? What benefit ever comes of our rebellion against Him? The ox and the mule which have no understanding have to be held in with bit and bridle. What comfort ever came to you from your rebellions and hesitancy? And so with self-will and desiring to have your own way—what do you get from these but the scourge? Oh, it is the happiest and most blessed condition to *lie passive in God's hands* and know no will but His—to feel a self-annihilation in which self is not destroyed but is absorbed into God so that we delight in the inner man in the will of God and always say, "Father, Your will be done." This is a hard lesson—far easier to preach about than to practice—and a great deal easier to think of when you have learned it than to carry it out.

I am often reminded of an old friend, Will Richardson, I used to talk with. He, said, "When it is winter time, I think I could mow and reap and fancy if you were only to give Will the sickle and scythe, what a splendid day's work he would do! That is in the winter, but in the summer I have not been half a day at work before I begin to feel that my poor old bones won't stand much more work and to think that I am hardly the man for a farm laborer." Now so it is with our own strength. If we fell back upon the strength of God, we would be strong when we are weak, but when we fancy we are getting stronger, we are very much weaker and might very often measure ourselves in the inverse ratio of what we think!

III. DAVID IS TO BE IMITATED IN ANOTHER RESPECT, NAMELY, THAT HIS EXPECTATION WAS ONLY FROM GOD. Notice the text—"It may be that the LORD will look upon my affliction." There was Abishai ready to take off this man's head, but David said, "It may be that the LORD will look upon my affliction." He thought that when he was in such great trouble, God would surely have pity upon him! Oh, you tried ones, look away, once and for all, from man to your God! "My soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him." There are two ways of going to a place. One is to go round and the other is to go straight. Now the straight road is the shortest way. And there are two ways of getting help. The one is to go round to all your friends and get disappointed—and then at last go to God! The other is to go to God first. That is the shortest way. God can make your friends help you afterwards. Seek first God and His righteousness, and the help of friends will be added afterwards. Straight forward makes the best running. Out of all troubles, the surest deliverance is from God's right hand. Therefore from all troubles, the readiest way to escape is to draw near to God in prayer. Go, not to this friend or that, but pour out your story before God. Remember how the poet puts it—

"Were half the breath thus vainly spent,
To heaven in supplication sent,
Our cheerful song would oftener be,
Hear what the Lord has done for me!"

Human friends fail us! The strongest sinew in an arm of flesh will crack and the most faithful heart will sometimes waver—and when there is most need of our friends, we find that they fail us. But our God is

eternal and omnipotent—who has ever trusted in Him in vain? Where is the man that can say, I looked upon Him and hoped in Him—and I am ashamed of my hope?

The beauty of David's looking alone to God came out in this quite calmly and quietly. He said to himself, "God will get me out of this," therefore he was not angry with Shimei. He did not want his head to be cut off or anything of the sort. "*God will do it.*" Oh, that is the man for life, that is the man for death, that is the man for smooth waters and that is the man for storms who lives upon his God! If a man stays in that frame of mind, what can disturb him? Though the mountains were cast into the midst of the sea and the earth were moved, yet still would he in patience possess his soul and still be calm, for of such a man I may say, "His soul shall dwell at ease, his seed shall inherit the earth." At destruction and famine, he will laugh. God has given His angels charge concerning such a man to keep him in all his ways, for this is the man that dwells in the secret places of the Most High and he shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty! The Lord says of him, "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him. I will set him on high because he has known My name. He has proved it by trusting in Me and Me, alone. Therefore will I never fail him, neither shall he suffer long." "Trust you in the Lord, alone, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength." Gather up your confidences, make them into one confidence and fix them all on Him! Lean not here and there—you will grow crooked in yourself and the staff you lean on shall turn to a spear and pierce you. Lean wholly upon God and, as He is everywhere, you shall stand upright in leaning upon Him. This shall be the uprightness of your ways that you stay yourself on the Rock of Ages. May we learn this lesson! It is a high one. May the Spirit of God teach it to us!

IV. Now the last of the four lessons is this—DAVID LEARNED TO LOOK AT THE BRIGHT SIDE. What is the bright side of trouble? What is the bright side of your trouble, dear friend? Well, I don't know what you would call the bright side, but David considered the bright side of his trouble to be the black side—and I think every man who walks by faith knows that to be so. If you read the text you see it at once, "It may be that the LORD will look on my affliction and will repay me with good for his cursing this day." Much as if he said, "though my affliction is so very bitter, God will pity me." So the black side is the bright one! "This man has cursed me. That will move God to come to my side and defend me." So the black side is the bright one again.

There is a sailor and the tide has ebbed out altogether. "Now," he says, "is the turning." Those that watch at night are glad when it comes to the darkest, because they know it certainly cannot be darker—and they know that daylight is coming soon. The darkest part of the night is that which precedes the day. We have an old saying about the weather, "As the day lengthens, the cold strengthens." And so it does, but soon it will come to an end. The cold will soon yield. Be thankful when you have got into midwinter because you cannot go any deeper. Let us be glad of that. Now if in our blackest parts of sorrow there is brightness, there must be

brightness elsewhere and, indeed, if we were half as inquisitive to find out that which will cheer us, as to discover that of which we may complain, we should soon have reasons of gratitude in the lowest and worst condition! We rummage our affairs to find out something to distress ourselves about, ambitious to multiply our sorrows, diligent to increase our distresses as though our woes were wealth and our sorrows were worth hoarding up! But if we turned that curiosity and inquisitiveness of ours into another channel, we would begin to find that there are diamonds in dark mines, pearls in rough oyster shells, rainbows that deck the brow of the storm and blessings that come to us in the garb of curses! We should soon have cause for joy. I suggest to our friends, therefore, the *blessed habit of trying to find the silver lining of the dark cloud*—to look away from the black surface into the bright gleam so that they may have reason to rejoice in the Most High!

To conclude—David was a glorious man. If instead of having expectation from God he had only had confidence in his fellow men and had gone about always repining and mourning and finding out the dark side of everything—well, he would have been a very small psalmist! In fact, I don't think he could have written a psalm at all, except a poor one. He would have been a poor king—a mere pygmy—and would never have shone out as a saint. Now if you, dear brother and sister, want to shine before God and be among the illustrious elect who the Lord makes as stars in the church's history, *pray for patience towards men and patience towards God*. Pray for bright eyes to find out the light even in the darkness. Pray to always lean wholly upon God and keep yourself upon Him. You will glorify God in that way and you will be the means of bringing others to God. Distrustful preachers do not win souls. Moaning and repining Sunday school teachers will not bring children to Christ. "The joy of the Lord is our strength." The patience which makes us possess our souls gives us the fullness of the blessing of the Lord! May the Lord teach us in that school—we are very foolish. The Lord strengthen us in His grace—we are very weak, and may all of us on earth live quietly and happily the risen life which our Savior did!

Now if I am speaking to any here tonight who are rebellious and do not love the Lord, I would remind them that *there is a cure for these maladies—faith in Jesus Christ!* He that believes in Him shall find the water that flowed from His pierced side to be the double cure of sin. May you have that cure—every one of you—for Jesus' sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 43:1-7.

In this chapter the Lord comforts His people. By His divine foresight He perceives that there are great and varied trials a little way ahead and, therefore, He prepares them for the ordeal. They are to go through rushing waters and flaming fires and He kindly bids them not to be afraid. How often in God's word do we read those tender, gracious words, "*Fear*

not"! Should not the trembling ones listen to the voice of their God and obey it when He says to them "*Fear not*"? It is not right for you who fear God to fear anything else. Once brought to know the Lord, who can harm you? Abiding under the shadow of the Almighty, what danger need you dread? No, rather, be of good comfort and press forward with peaceful confidence, though floods and flames await you!

To encourage His people to rise superior to their fears, the gracious God goes on to issue matchless promises—"*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you.*" Present good—"*I will be with you."* Absent danger—"*they shall not overflow you.*" God stays His people's hearts by His own promises. In proportion to their faith, those promises will lift them up. If you do not believe the promise, you shall not be established by it. But if, with child-like confidence, you accept every Word of God as true, then His word shall be to you the joy of your heart and the delight of your spirit, and you shall be a stranger to fear. The Lord proceeds, after giving those promises, to set before them what He Himself is and what He has done for them, and what they are to Him. He is speaking, of course, to Israel. And He says of Israel, His chosen nation, "*I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you.*" What cause for fear now remains? All believers are of the true Israel. Abraham was the father of the faithful. The faithful, or the believing, are, therefore, Abraham's seed according to the promise! The seed was not after the flesh, else would the children of Ishmael have been the heirs of the covenant, but the true seed was born according to promise and in the power of God, for Isaac was born when his parents were old, by faith in the power of God! Isaac was not the child of flesh, but he was born according to promise, so that we who are not born of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, by His Spirit and according to the divine promise, are the true children of Abraham! We are the spiritual Israel. Though after the flesh Abraham is ignorant of us, and Sarah acknowledges us not, yet are we the true seed of him who was the father of believers. The literal Israel was the type of those chosen and favored ones who by faith are born again according to promise. To these heirs, according to promise, the Lord said, "*I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you.*" Let us now meditate on this passage verse by verse.

Verse 1. *But now thus says the LORD that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name; you are Mine.* "*Fear not,*" is a command of God, and is a command which brings its own power of performance with it. God, who created and formed us, says to us, "Fear not," and a secret whisper is heard in the heart by which that heart is so comforted that fear is driven away. Observe the tender ties that bind our God to His people—Creation, the formation of them for His praise—redemption, the purchase of them for Himself and the calling of them by their name. The Lord remembers the bonds which unite us to Himself even when we forget them. He recollects His eternal love and all the deeds of mercy that have flowed from it. Though our memory is treacherous, and our faith is

feeble, "yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself." Blessed be His holy name!

2. *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.* "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you." The godly have the best company in the worst places in which their lot is cast! God's presence is all that we need even in the deepest floods of tribulation. This He has promised to us. He does not say what He will do for us, but He does tell us that He will be with us—and that is more than enough to meet all our necessities. "When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you." That is a wonderful picture of a man walking through the fire and yet not being burned—but there was a greater wonder that was seen by Moses which may well comfort us. He saw a bush that burned with fire and yet was not consumed! Now a bush in the desert is usually so dry that at the first application of fire, it flames, glows and is speedily gone! Yet you and I who are, spiritually, just as dry and combustible as that bush was naturally, may burn, and burn, and burn and yet we shall not be consumed, because the God who was in the bush is also with us, and in us! "*Neither shall the flame kindle upon you.*" You shall come out of the furnace as the three holy children did, with not so much as the smell of fire upon you, for where God is, all is safe.

3. *For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior: I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you.* "*For I am the Lord your God.*" This is the grandest possible reason for not fearing! Fall back upon this when you have nothing else upon which to rely. If you have no goods, you have a God. If your gourd is withered, your God is still the same as He ever was! "*For I am Jehovah, your God.*" "*I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you.*" And He has given infinitely more than that for us who are now His people, for He gave His only begotten Son that He might redeem us with His precious blood! Now that we have cost Him so much, is it likely that He will ever forsake us? It is not possible!

4. *Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you: therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life.* How sweetly this verse comes home to those whose characters have been disreputable! As soon as they are truly converted to Christ, they become "*honorable.*" "*Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable.*" God does not call His people by their old names of dishonor, but He gives them the title of, "right honorable," and makes them the nobility of His court. "Unto you that believe He is an honor," and you have honor in Him and from Him.

5-7. *Fear not: for I am with you: I will bring your seed from the east, and gather you from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth; even everyone that is called by My name: for I have cre-*

ated him for My glory, I have formed Him; yes, I have made Him. "*Fear not: for I am with you.*" This is the second time that the blessed words, "Fear not," ring out like the notes of the silver trumpet proclaiming the jubilee to poor trembling hearts! "*Fear not, for I am with you.*" The Lord seems to say to each troubled believer, "My honor is pledged to secure your safety. All My attributes are engaged on your behalf right to the end. Yes, I am, Myself, with you, therefore, fear not." "*I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring My sons from far, My daughter from the ends of the earth; everyone that is called by My name.*" Whatever happens, God will be with His church. His own chosen people shall all be gathered in. There shall be no frustration of the divine purpose. From east or west, north or south, all His sons and daughters shall come unto Him, everyone that is called by His name. "*For I have created him for My glory, I have formed him; yes, I have made him.*" And God will be glorified in His people! The object of their creation is the glory of their God, and that end shall, somehow or other, be answered in the Lord's good time. The Lord seems to dwell upon that note of the creation of His children for His own glory. This accounts for many of our troubles and for all our deliverances—it is that God may be glorified by bringing His children through the fires and through the floods. A life that was never tested by trial and trouble would not be a life out of which God would get much glory, but they that do business in the great waters see the works of God and His wonders in the deep, and they give Him praise and, besides, when they come to their desired haven, then they praise the Lord for His goodness and God is thereby glorified!

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WITNESSES FOR GOD
NO. 3165

(Suggested by his being summoned to attend the police court as a witness).

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1875.

"You are My witnesses, says the LORD."
Isaiah 43:10.

IT is some time since I have known what it is to be at leisure. One's time from morning till night is occupied in different departments of the Master's service and it has been peculiarly troublesome to me during the last week to be compelled to spend many hours in a police court. While sitting on the bench this text has again and again occurred to me—"You are My witnesses, says the LORD."

A great trial is going on, of which all worlds constitute the jury—a great trial between the powers of evil and the one perfect Lord of Good. Slanders have been vented against the name and majesty of heaven and plots have been invented with the intent to overthrow holiness and the truths of God. The whole fraternity of hell has stirred up their malicious craftiness to defame the God of heaven and earth. We know which way the suit will be decided, for we know where the truth lies, but lo, these many centuries the matter has been hanging in the balances. Sometimes it has seemed that truth had gained the day, but at other times the powers of evil have come to the front. This trial is still proceeding. Satan brings up his witnesses, ready enough to lie and to establish the teachings of the father of lies and, on the other hand, the Lord brings up His witnesses to bear testimony for truth and righteousness. There are many in this place of whom the text speaks. "You are My witnesses, says the LORD." We are summoned in this great trial of the ages to stand forward as witnesses for God.

Very simply, indeed, let us talk of this matter.

I. At the outset we will take the simple assertion that WE ARE WITNESSES and inquire what sort of witnesses we ought to be? I count it no small honor for the good Lord to call me as a witness in His case. Hence, I, for one, am a willing witness. I need no subpoena to compel me to come forward and bear such witness as I can for the glory of His great name! Such of you as can cheerfully come forward for the Lord should give their attention to the duty of witnesses. Let us see what are the main points of that duty.

First, *let us be present to witness, in our proper place, at the proper time*. I know some Christians who are of a very "retiring" disposition—I believe that is their favorite word. I fear the truth of God would say they are cowardly and, therefore, they are silent when their witness should be borne. They are willing enough to bear testimony when thousands are doing the same and they can shout, "Hosanna," when all the streets are ringing with it—but not so many are prepared to witness for Christ when the hoarse cry of, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" is heard on every side. If we are witnesses for God we are bound to be witnesses to all that we know, but flesh and blood will suggest to us to be out of the way when unpopular truths are in question. Certain brethren find it convenient to insist upon quiet portions of the Word of God and not on truths which might cause them trouble and provoke discussion. That doctrine which is already received, they will affirm because all men agree with them, but the very portion of truth which most needs witnessing is shirked and even looked down upon with disfavor! Let us always be there when there is a witness needed to be browbeaten and abused because he states the unpalatable truth of God! Never pick and choose in truth, or in your witness to it. Or if you must make a choice, vindicate most that truth which is most despised. If you happen to be where men are blaspheming; witness against that blasphemy, calmly but firmly. If you dwell where error is taught, wait till you have a fair opportunity and then stand up for Jesus! I do not say that you are to rush about like a knight errant, fighting with everybody—but when there is a demand for a witness upon any point of truth, be you the man and witness a good confession for Jesus your Lord!

Next, if we are witnesses for God, we should not only be in our place, but *we should be willing to speak up when the time comes*. No redeemed man must be in any degree an unwilling witness for his Lord. It is a pity when truth has to be extracted from us with as much difficulty as a decayed tooth. That is the best wine which flows most freely from the grape and that is the best testimony which a man bears with cheerful spirit because he values the truth in his own soul, and would have others prize it too! The thought that our Lord Jesus was silent for us should prevent our ever being silent towards Him. One word from His mouth in Pilate's Hall would have broken the spell which bound Him to death, but He would not speak it. And now, if one word from our lips would sign our death warrant, if it is a word for truth and Christ, let us speak it and joyfully accept the consequences! God's true children are never born dumb—therefore speak out like a true man. What you know, tell! What God has taught you, teach! What you have learned in the closet, proclaim on the housetop! And what was whispered in your ear in communion with your God, blaze it abroad before all men! Speak up, speak up for Jesus!

It is required of the Lord's witnesses that they speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Every witness in the court is sworn to do that, and every child of God is bound by the most solemn obliga-

tions to his Lord to do the same. Our God never requires a man to tell a lie for Him. The Jesuits have held the theory that the end sanctifies the means. And so those—I was going to say, *diabolical beings*—suppose they are glorifying God when they heap lies, pile on pile! One of the chief qualifications for a priest is to be able to tell a lie without the slightest sign of blushing—and I must give some of them credit for great proficiency in the art. Our Lord would not have us speak falsely for Him or even suppress the truth to serve His cause! Occasions may sometimes arise when you feel—"Well, I don't know. My friend will be annoyed if I confess that truth of God. So I think I will not exactly deny my belief in it, but I will depreciate it as a small matter of very slender importance." Thus you will do evil that good may come! Some say to themselves, "I am in a false position, but had I not better remain in it, for it gives me great opportunities for usefulness. It is true I do not believe in the teaching of my church, but may I not still belong to it? Her catechism and ritual do not represent my views and there are many persons of an opposite way of thinking who are very glad to use the very language which I profess to believe in and express, thereby, the most abominable of dogmas. All this is deplorable, but had I not better put up with it and go on as I am?"

My dear friend, I do not believe that God ever desires any of His people to occupy a position in which they cannot be strictly truthful! And I do not believe that He will justify them in retaining such a position. Whether I am useful or not is not one half as much my business as whether I am faithful and true. Equivocation and suppression of truth cannot serve the cause of God! You are to speak *the truth* for God. He does not want you in one syllable or word to speak anything but the truth. And you are to bring out *all His truth* as far as the Lord has taught it to you. Do not conceal anything on the ground of policy! At the same time do not exalt any one truth out of its fair proportion. If a man's portrait had to be drawn, it would be a mistake to paint his nose and nothing else, or to make that organ so large that you could not see his eyes. Never distort the truth of God. Some doctrines fill up the background of a picture, but were never meant to stand in the front. Still, background, foreground and every part must be truthful. My Lord will not call liars to witness for Him, for they are detestable in His sight!

Remember, also, that *we must be personal witnesses*. A witness the other day got as far as, "And he says to me, says he"—but he was immediately stopped with the sharp rebuke that it was not evidence and could not be listened to. In our courts of law we do not allow secondhand evidence. "No," says the judge, "what did you see yourself, my good man? We need to know *that*." It is so with regard to your witness for God. You must testify what you have seen and felt for yourselves. It is very easy to read biographies of good men and then come forward and talk experience—but it is a very wicked thing to do. Let your experience be your own and your testimony for God be what you have tasted and handled of His good word. There is a vast difference between secondhand spiritual

gossiping experience and the firsthand personal testing and trying of the promise and the Word of God. You cannot tell what power you will have with children if you tell them how the Lord dealt with you when you were a child—and upon the unconverted if you tell them what you have discovered of the folly of sinful pleasures and the emptiness of the world. Nothing is more useful to a young convert than to tell him how *you* found the Savior and what the Savior has been to you. In dealing with those who are doubting and desponding, your own trials and your own deliverances will be the most helpful subjects. Personal experience must furnish you with personal testimony—and this you must never withhold.

In the matter of witnesses, there are great differences between one and another. Two witnesses may speak the truth, but you would far sooner believe one than the other because of the previous character of the witness. Good lawyers do not count heads—they weigh them—and if they have one man of known position and honesty, and he will assert such a thing, they scarcely need to support his evidence, whereas, half a dozen witnesses of rather a shady description will scarcely be able to prove a fact. *In witnessing for God, the holier your character, the better.* It does not do to say one thing with your mouth and another thing with your hand. Your witness for Jesus Christ in the school will be spoiled if at home there is no piety, if in business there is a lack of honesty. If your character is doubtful, you will rather damage than help the good cause. The devil once wanted to be a witness for Christ and some of us would have thought it would be a fine stroke of policy to put the devil into the box and make him speak the truth—but the Lord Jesus Christ would not have it. He said, "Hold your peace and come out of him." The truth of God did not need any assistance from the father of lies! I do not invite the ungodly man to be a witness for Jesus Christ. Unto the wicked, God says, "What have you to do to declare My statutes?" Still, if you are a child of God, the weight of your evidence will be considerably lessened if your character is not pure. For your Lord's sake, then, I beseech you, watch your lives and walk according to His commands. Oh, never let it is said that Christ was wounded by us—by us for whom He died—by us who have leaned our heads upon His bosom! God grant that from first to last we may be mighty witnesses because our character is known and read of all men. May the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies us, help us in this matter!

One thing more. *Every witness should be ready to bear cross examination.* Oh, how some Christians dislike this! Even as to joining a church, I frequently hear my brother ministers say that we should make the way into the church as easy as possible, that we should not question the "dear young friends," and a lot of rubbish of that kind! I, on the other hand, believe that if they cannot give a reason for the hope that is in them, it is time they should learn! And if they cannot face their own Christian brothers and sisters and relate their experience, it is more their minister's fault than theirs! I am not going to gather together a horde of cowardly members, nor excuse any from declaring what the Lord has

done for their souls! There are plenty of churches where young ladies and gentlemen are taken in because they write a very pretty little letter and some friend hopes they are all right, and so they are received—and thus we are inundated with people who never speak for Christ and tremble to call their souls their own! We have *too much of this kid gloved, lavender watered religion*, and for my part I would not care to march through the world with such a regiment of feather bed soldiers! Give me the men who can bear persecution, who are ready to go into the streets and preach Christ at the corners, and are bold to speak a word for Jesus to anybody they shall meet! *We need a race of heroes*—of cowards we already have plenty! Dear friends, we must bear to be cross examined, for the world *will* cross examine us with harsh words, sneers, insinuations, misrepresentations and lies. The more outspoken we are, the more of running the gauntlet we shall have to undergo—but we must be prepared for it. If our grandfathers, not without blood, passed to their thrones and we have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin, shall we speak of Christ with bated breath, or cowardly consent to hold our tongues? "I had as well not be, as live to be in awe of such a thing as I, myself." Is a Christian to be afraid of man and conceal his principles for fear he should be ridiculed? God forbid! Leave shame for those who have no religion, or have a religion which is of no value! Let us be true witnesses for Christ in life and death, worthy of the ancestors that went before us and mindful of the eyes which rest upon us!

II. We will now change the strain and dwell upon the fact that WE HAVE EVIDENCE TO GIVE. Let us inquire to what matters of fact we are able to bear witness?

Let us think a little. Supposing us all to be Christian—we cannot all bear witness to precisely the same facts because there is a growth of experience—but there are some facts to which all of us who know the Lord can bear most positive testimony.

First, we can bear witness to many of the attributes of God, as for instance, that *He is true*. We find Him stating in His word that man is fallen—that his heart is deceitful. Is it so, brothers and sisters? What is your witness about yourselves? If you cannot speak of other people, how do you find it in yourselves? Truly I must bear painfully decided witness to the depravity of my heart! When I saw, or thought I saw, the evil of my nature, I was driven to despair by the sight! And though a sight of Jesus Christ has given me peace, yet I can never forget how vile my nature is. It only needs that God should withdraw His grace and as the floods drowned the entire world, so would the deeps of our depravity drown everything gracious within us! We know that God has spoken the truth there because facts in our own case prove it. The Lord has promised that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall have eternal life. We have believed in Jesus Christ—have we found that new life has been bestowed to us? Let us speak out. Are we conscious of possessing a heavenly life? If there is anything true in the world, we are sure that this is so! Grace

has changed us. Eyes have we with which we see the invisible! Ears have we with which we hear the eternal! We have learned to realize the things not seen as yet—our faith is "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." There is a spirit life within us. We cannot describe it. We could not make another man who is unconscious of such a life know what it is—but that we have it is a certain fact and we bear willing witness to it! There are some who ridicule religion altogether and have ridiculed this fact among the rest, yet they have no right to do so. There are many of us who are as honest and trustworthy as other people, and almost as sensible. If we were to enter a witness box, our evidence would not be questioned—even those who ridicule us would believe us *there*—why do they not believe us now? Why they should think it proven that there is no such thing as a new life because they have not felt it, I cannot see! Negative evidence is worthless in such a case. If we bear testimony that we have felt it, it is fair that they should accept the testimony, whether they personally know the truth of it or not. At any rate, let us be very, very plain about it and say, "Yes, our God was true in what He said about our fallen state, and God is true in what He says about the renewal of the soul by the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ."

That God is true will also appear in His answering our prayers, His delivering us in time of trial, His fulfilling His promises and in many other ways. Whenever any of these occur to us, let us stand forth as witnesses and say, "Surely the Lord is true."

We ought, also, to bear witness, beloved, to *the love of God*. We have an old proverb that everybody should speak as he finds. Speak of the Lord as you have found Him. I am sure that this is more than I shall ever be able to do to my own satisfaction. My blessed God! Was there ever any like You? If the gods of the heathen were gods, yet were they not worthy to be mentioned in the same day with our blessed God! What love He has lavished upon some of us! I doubt not that all of you who know the Lord will echo my words, but I must say that the Lord surprises me every day with His loving-kindness and His tender mercies! He melts me down by the fires of His grace. I cannot understand why He is so good to me. If He had only pardoned His rebellious child and allowed Him to be a dishwasher in the royal kitchen, I would have kissed His feet with gratitude, but behold, He has said to me, "You are no more a servant, but a son, and if a son, then an heir, and a joint heir with Jesus Christ." If He had only permitted me to have one glimpse of His love, so as to let my soul know that I was not utterly lost, I would have praised Him to all eternity! Instead of which, He has made all His goodness pass before me and proclaimed His glorious name. As to His tenderness to me in providence, His goodness in chastening, His gentleness in restoring me—I am overwhelmed with it! Blessed be His name! You may have what master you like, but He is mine forever! And you may worship what god you please, but I will have none but the Lord! You may praise up your beauties as you please, but my Beloved is altogether lovely!

Again, brothers and sisters, we can testify to our Lord's *wisdom*, can we not? We younger folk cannot do it as well as our elders, but my veteran friends here who are getting into their sixties and seventies delight us when they speak of the wisdom of the Lord. You are living proofs that all the ways of the Lord are wise, for He has overruled all things for your good and here you are, to praise His name! By and by, when life's journey is more nearly over, we shall be able to tell to others yet more of that wisdom and prudence wherein the Lord has abounded towards us. For the present let us testify what we know.

Beloved friends, we can also bear witness to *the immutability of God*. Of course, our span of life is so little at the longest, that we cannot bear much witness to the eternal unchangeableness of Jehovah. Still, take our 25 years of Christian experience—or some of you can take your fifty—has there been any change in your God? We are fickle as the winds that blow, but there certainly has been no change in Him! He loved us and He loves us still! He forgave us and He forgives us still! He chastened us and He chastens us still! And He sustained us and He sustains us still—

"Immutable His will
Tho' dark may be my frame,
His loving heart is still
Eternally the same!
My soul thro' many changes goes,
His love no variation knows."

We have proved this by actual trial. Perhaps in the time of trouble we thought that His love was failing us, but in looking back we confess how wrong we were. There was as much love in the Lord's chastening as in His caresses. We were as much loved when we were hiding under the shadow of His wings as when we were reveling in the light of His countenance. Blessed be His name, He changes not!

Now, brothers and sisters, besides the things which have a manifest respect to God, in which we are witnesses to the character of the Most High, there are other facts to which we testify and one is this—we can witness to *the power of prayer*. As I uttered that last word, my eye caught the glance of a sister below me whom I will not indicate. She and I know how we wrestled together in prayer for a certain sick daughter and how the Lord heard us, so that I rose from my knees and said to her, "Go your way. You will find your daughter recovering when you reach the house." She knows that she found it so and how, since then, in many other ways, God has heard her prayers. I speak to some with whom prayer is an everyday matter—a commerce with God which they do not carry on at certain seasons, but all the year round—and if you do that, answers to prayer become so usual that you forget a large proportion of them and only the more singular abide upon your memory. If a man tells me that God does not hear prayer, I laugh in his face! He might as well tell me that the sun does not shine, or that twice two does not make four! God hears prayer every day and every hour of the day—and I know it—and a man might sooner beat me out of the belief that I exist than out of

this knowledge that God listens to my requests! Upon this point I do not stand alone, for there are thousands who will unite in declaring, "Verily, there is a God that hears prayer!" When I hear brothers and sisters say how amazing it is that God has heard prayer, I think it far more amazing that they should talk so—for surely it is not surprising that God should keep His word! No, these are the commonplace of genuine Christianity—a prayer giving God working in the heart—and a prayer answering God working both in providence and in grace. Brothers and sisters, never be slow to bear your testimony to a prayer hearing God.

We are also quite clear upon *the efficacy of the gospel*. Where the gospel is truly preached, there will be results and where the gospel is believed, it is the power of God unto salvation. Some here present are witnesses to that. You have taught a class in the school and you have seen the boys or girls converted to God. There are brothers in connection with this church who have evangelized the lowest parts of London, and they have seen those regions abound in precious fruit unto God! Others have introduced the gospel to the utterly fallen and they have seen them reclaimed. The manhood which appeared extinct has become bright! The womanhood which seemed to be crushed out has shone like a precious jewel! God's gospel has done wonders! It is not remarkable that a minister gets skeptical if he never sees conversions. The proof of the gospel lies in what it does. If it does not save men from sinning, if it does not lift up the fallen, if it does not give light and joy to the despairing, then surely it lacks the evidences of its divine mission—for even Jesus Christ, Himself, gave to His own mission this as the proof—"The deaf hear, the blind see, the lepers are cleansed, the poor have the gospel preached to them." If these things are not true, now, we may doubt whether the gospel which we preach is the gospel of Jesus Christ. But we can bear witness and, oh, how joyfully we do it—that the gospel has not lost its power!

Another point. As God's witness we can speak to *the sweetness of near communion with Him*—a theme upon which I hardly dare to trust my wandering tongue. Oh, brothers and sisters, there is nothing like the joy which comes of high fellowship with God. Mr. Aitken told us the other afternoon that he would give us a recipe for being miserable. I think his words were—"be half and half Christians." He said, "If you are a worldling, you will get some sort of pleasure—you will get the painted bubble, though it will soon burst, but you will get that. And if you are a genuine, thoroughgoing Christian you will get the joy of the Lord. But if you are a sort of neither this nor the other, you will get nothing." Have you never seen little boys, when they go to bathe in the morning, stand up to their knees shivering? Of course they shiver! The way to get warm is to plunge in head first. Some professors stand in very shallow water and they shiver and cry—

"'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought"—

and so on. Oh, my brothers and sisters give yourself up wholly to Christ, and the joy of the Lord will be yours as it is ours! These are some of the things we can speak of.

III. Very briefly, in the third place. When a witness is called for one side he is against the other side—so we also must remember that OUR EVIDENCE CONDEMNS THE OTHER SIDE.

We are witnesses *against sin*. Sin comes with a painted face like Jezebel, but we witness that she is a destroyer and must die. The pleasures of sin are but a masquerade of misery. Happy are they who never drink of the cup which this siren presents. May God grant that none of our young friends may try the pleasures of vice, for they are as deadly hemlock. Those who have been converted in later life bear very sorrowful witness that sin is misery and that the wages of sin is death.

We bear witness also *against self*. Many say with the proverb, "Self is the man"—self will save! Self is righteous! But our witness is that self has no strength to perform his own resolutions, that self is a ragged beggar when he thinks himself a king—that self is emptiness and vanity, deceit and death! We bear that witness now and we always shall have to bear it!

We bear our witness *against unbelief*. Is there any Christian here who has ever gained anything by being unbelieving? Has any child of God ever escaped from trouble by mistrusting the faithfulness of the Lord? No. We have been losers all round by our unbelief, but never gainers. Unbelief is a sorry cheat. Mr. Bunyan says that doubt was taken and condemned to be hung, but he very rightly said that he broke out of prison, "for he was a nimble jack." The only part of "Pilgrim's Progress" that I felt inclined to find fault with was where Mr. Greatheart cut Giant Despair's head off—for to my knowledge he is still alive. But Bunyan sets that right by saying in his rhyme—

"Sin can rebuild his castle, make it remain,
And make despair, the giant, live again!"

Oh, that wretched unbelief! Brethren, let your witness against it be clear and distinct!

Moreover, we bear testimony *against Satan*, whom we know to be a deceiver, a liar and a murderer. Evil is never good, nor dare we give place to it in order to turn it to useful ends. We must resist the evil one, remain steadfast in the faith and always witness that he is the deadly foe of the soul, whatever disguise he may assume.

IV. In closing, let me say that there are times when our witness is peculiarly valuable. Do you ask—And when is that? I reply, Your witness will be precious when others are sinfully silent. If you live in a place where there are few earnest Christians, and error abounds, be faithful, my brother, my sister. Your light is needed where lamps are few. You need not find fault with others, for that will not help the matter. If the place is dark, shine the more. If error prevails, hold forth the truth. There is no argument against error equal to the truth of God advocated, delighted in and practiced! Testimony becomes more precious as it becomes scarcer. You might have held your tongue, perhaps, had advocates been

plentiful, but now that they are so few, be doubly earnest like your divine Lord to bear witness to the truth!

Witnesses become valuable, again, in times of persecution. Have you been made to suffer for Christ's sake? Brother, sister, be glad, for, "so persecuted they the prophets that were before you." If you can be patient, if you can bear ridicule without resentment, if, being reviled, you do not revile again, you have a grand opportunity! The world looks on a man under scoffing and ridicule to observe how he behaves. And if he conducts himself like a Christian, it feels his power and respects his consistency. Give way a little, and you will have to give way more—and be despised! But adherence to principle commands respect. Put your foot down! Stand firmly where God would have you stand, and your testimony will gather value from the very ridicule which is poured upon it.

My Brothers and sisters, *your testimony will be none the less valuable because you are poor*. Nothing does the gospel more honor than the godly lives of humble Christians. It honors the gospel when a man both wears a coronet and prays, but how few have done so! The poor man who is happy, contented, thankful and trustful is one of God's nobility, and the church of God honors him! We rejoice to see such men standing in the witness box to declare the loving kindness of the Lord!

Testimony becomes all the weightier as we grow older. People pay more attention to the words of experienced men. It is natural and right that they should do so. As years creep upon us, we ought to be all the more earnest that our testimony for God should be clear, solid and *frequent*. An aged Christian who has little or nothing to say for his Master is a sad drawback to young beginners. I very greatly disapprove the example of some who have long been professors, but who still remain babes in Christ, if they are in Christ at all. It is a great pity to see the head white with the sunlight of heaven, and yet so little of heaven in the daily conversation. Rise up, you grave and reverend sires, and declare the faithfulness of our God!

Very choice, too, are the testimonies of the sick. It is a great trial when those whom we love are continually suffering. We wish we could bear their pains awhile and give them respite, yet no greater blessing can come to a man's house than an afflicted child of God. The tried ones go so deep, they speak so sincerely and so touchingly. There is no nonsense about their religion. Racking pain very soon drives away illusions, and pretenses and shams do not stand before the solemn reality of continued sickness. Witnesses in the furnace of affliction are powerful indeed! We hear no songs in the night till breasts are pierced with the thorn. If there were not some who, like the Arab divers, plunge deep into the depths of sorrow, we should have fewer pearls but there are such and their testimonies are precious. When your turn and mine comes to go upstairs awhile and preach from our beds, God grant that we may deliver gracious sermons!

Lastly, *there is something peculiarly valuable about the testimony of the dying saint*. The Lord might well say to these, "You are My witnesses."

Some of us remember testimonies that we were privileged to gather up from dying men's lips and they have been great strengtheners to our faith. I remember a brother who used to walk out to preach in the villages, a man of very little talent, but with a great heart. I hardly know any word of witness more powerful than the utterances of his last hours. He was blinded by disease, and when he heard a friend's voice he addressed him thus—

"And when you see my eye strings break,
How sweet my minutes roll!
A mortal paleness on my cheek,
But glory in my soul!"

His tones of joy added deep solemnity to his words.

Oh, those sweet testimonies of the dying, how we store them up! Children talk of Jesus in their last hours as wisely as old men. Mothers and fathers leave witnesses behind them precious as gems. But I refrain—you and I will go soon—may divine grace enable us to expire with a glad witness on our tongues!

Alas, I recollect as I finish that some of you are not witnesses for God, for you know nothing about Him! Remember, if you are not witnesses for God, you will be prisoners at His bar and you must either occupy the witness box for God, or else take the prisoner's place—to be tried and found guilty! Oh, sinners, I wish you would try our God, whose witnesses we are! If we had found Him untrue, we would tell you! If we had found that Christ could not save, we would tell you. If we had found that God could not pardon, we would tell you! If religion made us miserable, we would tell you, or you would find it out! If God could not be trusted in providence and did not hear prayer, we would tell you, for we hope we would not maintain a lie! But we have no such disclosures to make! We bear our willing testimony for God! Remember, it is written, "Him that comes to Me, I will in nowise cast out." Go and test the veracity of that promise and God bless you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 CHRONICLES 21:1-8.

Verse 1. *And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.* Israel had greatly offended and grieved God, and it was to be punished. God punished one sin by another—the sin of David works for the chastisement of a sinful people.

2. *And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan; and bring the number of them to me, that I may know it.* He had gotten proud. He had begun to depend upon the number of his people. In truth, it was a large population under his sway—five millions or more—and he who had been a shepherd lad, who in his early youth had trusted in his God—now thinking himself a great man, somewhat in the spirit of Nebuchadnezzar, begins to say, "Behold, this great kingdom that I have gathered and founded."

3. *And Joab answered, The LORD make His people an hundred times as many more as they are: but, my lord, the king, are they not all my lord's servants? Why, then, does my lord require this thing? Why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel?* It adds greatly to a wrong action if we are checked in it—and especially if we are checked in it by a man who has not any conscience to spare, but yet, notwithstanding his roughness, such as Joab had, nevertheless expostulates with you, "Why do this?" The people generally understood that when they were numbered, it was with a view to taxing them, it was with a view of showing David's sovereignty over them. Now David was not their sovereign, the Lord God was their King—David was but the viceroy—and when he began to count them as though they were his own, it was a source of great indignation to the Most High. I am afraid when you and I begin to count up what we have done, begin to reckon upon how much we have given, or how much we have effected for God, we begin to appropriate a measure of glory to ourselves. We had better leave that alone, for although pride may not seem a great sin in the eyes of men, it is assuredly that which brings the utmost wrath from the Most High! He cannot endure pride, especially in those whom He has lifted up. He took David from the sheepfold—and if David has now become great—David must be brought down again.

4-6. *Nevertheless the king's word prevailed against Joab. Therefore Joab departed and went throughout all Israel, and came to Jerusalem. And Joab gave the sum of the number of the people unto David. And all they of Israel were a thousand thousand and an hundred thousand men that drew sword; and Judah was four hundred threescore and ten thousand men that drew sword. But Levi and Benjamin counted he not among them: for the king's word was abominable to Joab.* So he did no more of it than he could possibly help.

7, 8. *And God was displeased with this thing; therefore He smote Israel. And David cried unto God, I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing: but now I beseech You, do away the iniquity of Your servant; for I have done very foolishly.* We read that David's heart smote him. Although he had gone wrong, he was, nevertheless, a good man, and when an ambitious man sins, it is a great sin, but it is not long that he continues in it—his conscience is awakened—the Spirit of God is in him. David's heart smote him. That is a terrible blow when your own heart smites you! If you never feel any other person smiting you, you will feel that.

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"A GREATER THAN SOLOMON"
NO. 3166

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1909,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 29, 1873.

"The queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon: and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here." Matthew 12:42.

WE cannot tell exactly who the queen of the South was, or exactly where Sheba lay. The expression used is Yemen, the south. Yemen is the name of a part of Arabia Felix and it would appear from the spices which the queen brought with her that she came from that region. At the same time, the Ethiopians claim her as having been their queen. They say that she was converted through her conversations with Solomon, that afterwards the faith of God was preserved in the country, and hence that that famous Ethiopian, who was a eunuch of great authority under Candace in later times, was a proselyte to the Jewish faith on account of that faith existing in Ethiopia. We do not know. It may have been so and it is possible that the supposition of her having come from Arabia—and the supposition of her having come from Ethiopia may both be true—for it appears that the two countries were at one time under the same government, both shores of the Red Sea making up in far distant ages one empire. And she may have been the queen of both.

Very extraordinary are the stories which tradition has handed down with regard to her—some of them not to be repeated—others of them, when repeated, not at all ministering to the profit of the hearer. They tell us of many things with which she tried Solomon. Among the rest there is a tale of her bringing some flowers, artificial flowers most beautifully made, so that no one could detect them and, putting before Solomon the real and the manufactured, she asked him which were the true flowers. The wise king simply ordered that the windows should be opened and he observed to which flowers the bees flew—and at once knew which were the true flowers of the gardens! Many other things are reported concerning attempts she made to test him, but the king in every case, of course, came off triumphant. Scripture has omitted these because they would be of no spiritual use to us—and the book was not written to minister to curiosity, but to be helpful to the salvation of our souls.

This evening all that we shall have to say about her will hang upon this fact—that she came from the very ends of the earth, from a far off and remote country—to hear the wisdom of Solomon. And that in this she rebukes persons who lived in the age of Christ and, I also think we

had better come to make it practical, and say that she rebukes many of us.

The points in which she rebukes us, or some of us, will be six. I will mention them one by one.

I. The first is this. *Her interest in Solomon was readily awakened*. She heard different reports concerning him and she took an interest in them. She heard that he was the wisest of kings. Then she thought within herself, "I would like to know wherein he is wise, and be a partaker of his wisdom." She was told that he was the richest of monarchs. Then she thought, "I would like to see something of his glory—the vast magnificence with which he surrounds himself." Some talked about that wonderful house which he had built for his God—the temple, a building so glorious that none had ever rivaled it, and she said, "I should like to see it." They spoke of the mighty stones which he had moved from afar, and squared and fashioned and dropped into their places without the use of hammer or engraving tools and she wondered how this was done. His wisdom, his wealth and his various building works, no doubt, were told to her again and again. And she sought out persons who could tell her yet more, gathered up all the information possible and took an interest in it. I do not see so very much that is commendable in that except that it shows that she was a woman of mind—a woman of intelligence—that while many of her day would have passed the matter over with, "Well, it may be so, but it is nothing to me," or would have made it a nine days wonder. She, on the other hand, had her whole mind stirred by it, thought it over, and laid it to heart.

Here is the point, however, at which the Savior aimed when He said that she would rise up in judgment against many, "For," He said, "she *took an interest in Solomon, but you take no interest in Christ*." A greater than Solomon was in the streets of Jerusalem, but the mass of the people cared not who He was! He went up and down the sacred land proclaiming the gospel—the bulk of the people took some interest in the bread and the fish with which He fed them, but not in the doctrine which He taught! And while He claimed to be divine, and asserted Himself to be the Son of David and the King of the Jews—and also to be the Son of God, God over all, blessed forever—great crowds turned away from Him as though it was nothing at all to them and utterly despised Him. Here was a woman, a stranger, a foreigner—not of Jewish race—and yet her inquiring mind rendered her inquisitive about the great king whose scepter of peace was swayed over so wide a territory! And here were those who were of the same race as Jesus, who saw Him at their doors and heard Him in their streets—and yet they passed Him by as though it were a mere trifle with which they had no concern!

Now, in the present day, Jesus Christ is not here. *He is risen and gone back to His Father. But His gospel is with us, and every day it is proclaimed*. What multitudes gather together on the Sabbath, but out of the great city of London how comparatively few are those multitudes, for the mass of our fellow citizens do not attend the means of grace at all. It

seems to be no matter of curiosity to them to know who the Savior is, or how they can be saved by Him. It is enough to make the heart bleed to think that next door to places where the gospel is proclaimed with the greatest power there will be found persons who actually never enter within the place where it is preached—and who have no care to enter, and who, if pressed to go and hear the word, would say that they did not care to do so! Nor is it merely those that stay away. The worst of it is that many who *do come* yet come carelessly. Perhaps many of you are well acquainted with the letter of the gospel, but you have never inquired into the *spirit* of it. You know that Christ is a Savior, but yet you do not know what it is to be saved! You hear that faith is the great instrument of salvation but you have no faith and do not practically know what faith is. You have never bestirred yourselves to make inquiry! You have not set yourselves down doggedly to search into Scripture and see what is the truth of God. You have not turned over page after page to find what there is for you, or promise after promise to see what promise you might lay hold of and claim as your own. You have not stirred, though God is at your doors, though Christ is close to you, though the kingdom of God has come near unto you! You are content to sit and listen to the gospel which is more precious than diamonds, and yet treat it as though it were a common thing!

What would the dying give if they could have their Sabbaths back again? What would the damned in hell give if they could hear the gospel once more? What would we, any of us, give in the day of judgment if we could once more stand where mercy could deal with us and where the silver scepter could be extended to us with the blessed invitation, "Believe and live"? Ah, it seems to you, perhaps, child's play to preach and to listen to sermons, but a day will come when this will be the most solemn work of all! The greatest events of history are not the battles of the conquerors, not the changes of dynasties, but the preaching or the non-preaching of the gospel—the putting of the candle into the candlestick, or the taking of the candlestick out of its place! The most important points in English history are the points where shone the light of Christ's cross, or the eras wherein that light was dimmed by superstition! And *to every unconverted person here the most important thing is, if he did but know it, that he is still within mercy's reach*—he is still where he may look to Jesus and be saved—he is still where he is wooed and entreated to turn from the error of his ways that he may live!

But, alas, it does not seem so to the most of men. They are all excited about a racehorse or about a famous trial at law! They are all concerned to talk about the rise and fall of markets and even such silly things as the petty gossips of a street, or the little jangles of a family circle. All these are thought worthy of immortal souls—but that the eternal God bowed the heavens and came down to save men, that the infinite became an infant, that the ever blessed stooped to be spit upon and to be despised and rejected of men, and that on the cross He offered up a propitia-

tory sacrifice for human guilt—ah, this seems to be a mere trifle, a thing for poor religious people to think over, but not for your great wits and your smart intellects, not a subject worthy of the young man who is in the prime of his abilities, or worthy of the thoughtful man who is accustomed to revolve great themes in his mind! O queen of Sheba, you do condemn this listless generation! We can scarcely get a hearing for Christ, the most of us who are Christ's servants, and those of us who do win a hearing have to strain our brain and tax our powers. Whereas if men were in their senses, they would be glad to hear Jesus preached in the humblest tone, and by the most illiterate of His ambassadors! Now we must seek for illustrations and parables and proverbs and goodly words, or else men's ears are like the adder's ears that are deaf and stopped. Oh, if they were but wise—they would be glad to learn about Jesus Christ even if the gospel were put in the dullest form! And they would be pleased to find Him to be their Savior *whoever* might conduct them to Him!

Thus you see, then, first of all, the queen of Sheba condemns many for lack of interest in the gospel.

II. Secondly, she equally *condemns many for their lack of candor in judging about the Savior*. She was a candid woman. There was a rumor about Solomon. Well, it is probable that she did not believe all the rumor as it came to her. In fact, she told Solomon she did not believe it. It seemed too good to be true, too great for her to receive it all. She knew, as we do, that things that travel generally, like snowballs, grow bigger as they roll, and that many a thing which is a Niagara ten thousand miles away would dribble into a very small lake if it were anywhere nearer home. Travelers proverbially take considerable license and we are obliged, and we usually do, perhaps, too much diminish their reports in order to get at the truth. Now, this woman was so candid that she desired to hear more, and whenever a Phoenician boat touched on her shore, she would inquire of those great navigators what they knew concerning the prince who was in alliance with Hiram, their king. Whenever a caravan came from the east, having crossed Solomon's territory to go south, she would get hold of the most intelligent persons of the caravan to learn a little more. And she weighed and judged and estimated. She was not prejudiced. While she would not swallow everything she was told, neither would she reject all, and say, "I won't believe a word of it."

Oh, that men were candid toward the gospel of Jesus Christ! But the mass of men are prejudiced—prejudiced against the Savior and against their own salvation. Men sit and make up their minds what the gospel ought to be, and then they do not come to hear what it is but to judge what is preached by their own preconceived notions. Many are prejudiced by their education. The errors of their father they endorse and the mistakes of their mother seem to be a heritage entailed upon them. They are not manly enough to *think*. Oh, a great change would come over religious opinion in England if people were not led by that absurd idea that they ought to be just what their parents were! If we once could grow a

race of men and women that would read the Scriptures for themselves, and judge of doctrines for themselves, we would have grand times again! The most of men do not think. They want somebody to do their thinking for them and they go to the place of worship simply to suck in the thoughts of other people—not to judge for themselves! Oh, a sorry matter it is to have a set of followers of that sort! A far greater thing it is to be surrounded by independent spirits who have bowed themselves personally before the shrine of the truth of God—sought for themselves to know what the truth of God is—asked for themselves the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and so have shaken themselves clear of prejudice and come into the clear light of God!

I am certain that if many who are now skeptics could but, by God's good help, consider the questions which now they think they have decided, they would alter their decision. I would like some men to think a little about the fact that there are hundreds and even thousands of men in this world of good repute—honest, sober men, the very best witnesses that a lawyer would desire to put into the box, whom everybody would believe—who all bear testimony that Jesus Christ has been most precious to them! Without any discrepancy in their statements, they declare that He gave peace to them when their conscience was disturbed, that He has cured in them the love of sin and incited them to seek after holiness. Now, it would be strange if all these people were mistaken! There must be *something* in their testimony—and *every candid man ought to accept it as such* and then go on to try for himself whether it is so or not! The queen of Sheba had not many witnesses. Perhaps some of them were not very reliable. But about Christ we have all the prophets, the apostles, all the saints that followed after them and we have the witness and testimony of hundreds at the present day who are all rejoicing in Christ and who find Him to be precious to their souls! I do pray you, dear hearers, *if you do not know the gospel, never rest until you do!* And in your search after the gospel, lay aside everything which would give a twist to your judgment. WEIGH AND PROVE AND TEST. "To the law and to the testimony." If what you hear preached is not according to that word, it is because there is no light of God in it. Be as judicious and as candid in weighing the evidences as was this queen of Sheba!

III. But now again, thirdly, the queen is to be commended and she judges us because *after having her curiosity aroused, and having candidly weighed evidence, she proceeded to make personal investigation.* She did not send an ambassador to see if it were true. That might have helped her, but it would not have satisfied her. Neither did she want to pick up further evidence from others. But, as long as the distance was, she set off to see for herself! There is nothing like that. If a man wants to know, he had better sift the evidence himself! "Seeing," she said, "is believing. I will try this matter and if I find it so, all very well—my assurance will be doubly sure."

Now, in the matter of the things of Jesus Christ, it is hard to bring men to test Him themselves, and yet there is no other way of knowing Him. As I have already said, the queen of Sheba might have known something about Solomon by sending an ambassador, but we cannot know Christ to any purpose by sending the best possible proxy. We must go to Him ourselves. Now every man shall be commended, as well as the queen of Sheba, who shall say in himself, "I hear that faith in Jesus Christ quiets the conscience. My conscience is disturbed, so I will go and see what reason there is to trust in Christ. I will see who He is and what He has done. If I spend night after night in searching it out, I will find out what this plan of salvation is which, it is said, affords this peace. And I will try it for myself."

O, beloved, I am not afraid of what the result would be! It has never been my misfortune, yet, to meet with one who said, "I sought the Savior and I have not found Him," or, "finding Him I did not find peace to my spirit," No, and it shall not be so. *No one that trusts in Him shall be condemned*. There is the matter of faith in prayer, too. You are told repeatedly that there is a prayer hearing God, that answers to prayer are received. Now, the best way about that is not to read an article against prayer, or to study a book on it, or to weigh theoretically the likelihood or the unlikelihood of the case, but to try it—*try it for yourselves!* And those who have resorted to God's mercy seat in prayer have unanimously been compelled to bear witness that there is a power in prayer. "Whether or not God can renew my soul if I go and confess my sin to Him is a question, but it is a question I mean to have solved." Every wise man will say that. "Whether or not there is power in the gospel of Christ to lift me up from the ruins of the Fall and make me a new man, may be a question—but it is a question that I will try for myself. I will not leave it to the opinion of this or that. The sneer of the skeptic shall not make me doubt it and the assurance of the confident professor shall not make me certain of it. I will go and try for myself and see."

I wish you would even come and try Christ with your hard questions, as this queen of Sheba did Solomon. *Come and see whether He can forgive great sins. Come and see whether He can help you in great trials. Come and bring to Him your great doubts and your grievous distresses. Come and tell Him of your despair and your horrible thoughts, and the blasphemous questions that creep through your mind. Come and see whether He is a Savior able to save you.* It will be a new thing if He shall have to say, "You are beyond My power. You have sinned beyond the reach of My love." Come and try Him, I say, with your hardest question and most difficult case—and you shall only prove the truth of His word—"Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." The queen of Sheba went for herself, and that is the point. Come see for yourselves. May the Spirit of God help you to do so.

IV. The fourth point in which she deserves our imitation is this—that in coming to Solomon *she was not to be deterred by great difficulties*. She was a queen. Must she leave her government? How can that be done?

Suppose while she was away there should be a rebellion, and a riot? Great lords and counselors might object to the absence of the supreme power, and there might come serious damage to the state through the absence of the royal authority. Never mind! She would waive that, and she considered that she could afford to run that risk if she might but know something of the wisdom of Solomon. Then it was a very long journey. Our Lord called it the ends of the earth, and journeys in those days were far longer than now—when they had to travel across deserts—places where there were no roads, scarcely a goat path. This great woman had to gather together a whole train of servants, for she could not travel as an ordinary person might. She must take with her, in fact, a very great army of attendants—and it might be that the tribes through whose territory she passed would rise in arms against her! She might be waylaid by robbers, or if not by ordinary robbers because her train was too strong, then the very strength of her train would provoke the hostility of the various kings through whose territory she passed.

She must have been a bold woman to undertake such a journey. It must have been extremely expensive and wondrously hazardous. And yet, whatever it might cost her, she was so enamored of wisdom, so fond of that which instructs the mind that she must go to hear for herself the wisdom of Solomon! But nowadays, oh, how little a thing keeps men from seeking the wisdom of Christ who is far greater than Solomon! To go up to the house of God to hear about Him is sometimes wonderfully difficult. Persons go out on Monday to business who cannot go out on Sunday. It is raining on Sunday and it is very curious how rain on Sunday will keep some people in—their health is so weak—though the same rain on Monday does not affect them at all in that particular way! Have you never observed how some persons appear to be periodically ill on Sundays? That seems to be a favorite day for being ill! And then they will say they cannot walk so far and they would object to ride, the objection probably being to going at all! And then you will hear persons say, "Well, I found that I must stay at home with this child," or, "I had something that must be done in the family." You do not make those excuses if there is going to be a party to which you are invited, or if there is some festival to be held. Then they make up their mind to go. To go and hear some attractive man, or to hear the voice of some sweet singer—that may be managed! But to go and hear of Jesus Christ, well, they cannot—they cannot manage it. It is too difficult. There is a lion in the way—they cannot do it.

And then, after they have heard of Christ, when it comes to following Him, you will hear them say, "Do you know, if I were really to believe the gospel and follow Christ, why, my friends would altogether forsake me! I could not do it. I should sink in society. I should not be admitted into the circles where I am now received with admiration!" One man says, "I do not see how I could carry on my trade." Another says, "My mother would persecute me." Another observes, "I am sure my father and my brothers would ridicule me out of it. It could not be." They cannot make any jour-

ney to go to Jesus. They cannot bear any risks for Jesus, though the queen of Sheba could risk everything to hear the wisdom of Solomon! Oh, in those old days when Christ was preached on the sly, down in the dark catacombs of Rome, servants at the peril of their lives stole away from their masters' houses at the dead of night to hear the gospel preached! And in later times of persecution, every man that went to hear a sermon went knowing that if he were caught—imprisonment, the rack and perhaps death would be the result—yet they chose to go! They hungered and thirsted after the bread of life! Then they followed the preacher—secret signals being given—and listened to him wherever the congregation was summoned.

Do not those people put us to the blush? But now, when we have next to nothing to suffer—for really, persecution has become almost a myth compared with what it used to be when Smithfield's stakes became fiery chariots for God's Elijahs—now we find soft beings that do not dare to think! Oh, *I would scorn to be what some people are—the slaves of their neighbors and their friends!* They are always asking, "What will Mrs. Grundy say? What will fashion think about it? What will the neighbors think of it?" Why, to a brave spirit it might almost tempt us to do—I was going to say to do *wrong*, to escape from the shackles of always being bound by custom! But certainly in the doing right, he is not worthy of the name of man—and never shall be called a Christian—who is always putting such difficulties as these before himself and fearing the face of his fellow man! God grant us grace to be willing to lose everything if we may find Christ—and to sacrifice all esteem and friendship if we may but be honest and faithful servants of our great Lord and Master!

V. Now, there is another point in which the queen of Sheba is to be greatly admired. I will be brief upon it and it was this—that *when she came to Solomon and had seen his wisdom, she was quick to acknowledge what she had learned*. She said to Solomon that there was no spirit left in her at the sight of what she had seen and that the half had not been told her.

Now here I shall speak rather to Christians who know Christ than to others. My dear friends, there is among you who know the Lord a great deal too much reserved—quietness about what you know. I do not like a man who is so expressive that he says a great deal more than he knows. There are some such. On the other hand, it is an injurious thing to know much of the things of God, but to be anxious to conceal rather than to publish! If our religion had any lies in it, it might be well to hide it away. If our religion tended to sin, we might well be so ashamed of it as never to mention it. But since the telling of the gospel can never do anybody any hurt—it must always do good since there is nothing in our religion we need to blush at, since there is everything in it of which we may glory and in which we may boast—*we cannot too often publish abroad what we know concerning our dear Lord and Master*. And I ask my dear brothers and sisters here. I ask them very gently, and pray that their conscience may give the answer—do you not think, dear friends, that sometimes you

have been too quiet about the things of God? In your own family circle, for instance, have you not said a great deal less than you ought to have said about the Master? "I have been afraid of being noticeable," says one. A very proper fear, too, for some people—but that fear may be run too hard until we might be afraid of another thing, namely, "I was afraid of being cowardly." Do you not think that oftentimes when we say to ourselves, "I didn't want to intrude," the English of it is that we had not the courage to speak, or we thought it the easiest thing to hold our tongue? And may not it really be that we have not zeal enough? And if we had more love to Christ we would often speak where now we are very quiet? When you have weighed the things concerning Christ and, above all, have tasted them and tested them for yourself, *is it not due to the Lord Jesus that you should bear your testimony*?

There has been a great trial going on about the Savior, Jesus Christ, for many a day. Some say, "He is a good man." "No," say others, "but He deceives the people." Some say, "He is the Son of God." Others say, "No, He is not." Now, if you know, and know by the best possible means, namely, by personal knowledge—by experience, by testing and trying—do not stand back, but go into court! Take your place as a witness and bear your evidence, for when the Lord Jesus Christ comes in the glory of His Father, with all His holy angels with Him, I for one shall feel it a very sweet thing to be able to say, "There He is! There He is! They mocked Him, they despised Him, they called Him impostor. They said that He was not divine—they would not have Him for their Savior. But I was accustomed to stand up and say I knew Him to be the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely." I think when I rise from my grave it will be no small consolation to feel, "I was on His side. I was always on His side. I stood up for Him. It was with a poor feeble testimony that was marred in a thousand ways, but still I was on His side." I should like—oh, my brothers and sisters, I would have all of you to be so bearing your witness for Jesus—so lovingly, so wisely, so continually, so honestly, so completely that when the Lord came, you, too, may be able to say, "I did not deny Him before men. I was not ashamed of Him. I did confess Him"—for then, remember, His promise is He will confess you before His Father and before the holy angels! When you shall come up ashamed, as it were, and trembling, and the question will be asked, "Who is this man? Does anybody know him?" and you feel in your soul, as it were, as if you expected to be unknown and to be driven into banishment, Christ will say, "O My Father, I knew him. I knew him. Angels, listen! I knew him. This poor man confessed me in baptism." "This poor woman used to confess Me before her neighbors in the court." This merchant lost some of his trade because he followed Me so closely." "This little child acknowledged Me, though her father mocked Me." This young woman was accustomed to follow My rules and laws, and to live near to Me though all around her were godless and Christless." O, beloved, do imitate, then,

the queen of Sheba—what you know, tell out! Admit it and glorify the greater than Solomon about it!

VI. The last point about her was this—that *after Solomon had told her all that she asked, she gave to Solomon so great a treasure that, rich as he was, it is said he had never had such a treasure before, or even afterwards—she brought to him such costly precious things and she gave them freely*. He gave her abundance in return. In the exchange, I do not suppose she was a loser, but still her heart was so full of thankfulness for what she had learned that she could not but make an offering unto the king who had been her instructor. I wish all Christians would imitate her in this. If we have salvation from Christ, let us never count the giving of our substance to Him to be any hardship. Let us not need to be pressed to give, or begged to give, or incited to give by the example of other people—let us do it conscientiously, out of love to Him, doing it as unto Him.

I heard of a gentleman some time ago who gave a sum of money to a chapel and said to his minister that he might put that down as the widow's mite, but his minister said, "No, sir, I don't think I would like to take so much as that from you." "How is that, sir?" "Why," said the minister, "if you had given me only half the widow's mite that would satisfy me." "What do you mean?" "Well," he said, "if you would give me £50,000 that would satisfy me well. That is half the widow's mite." "How so, sir?" "Why," he said, "to my knowledge you are worth a hundred thousand pounds. The widow's mite was *all that she had*. I won't take as much as *that* from you. I shall be quite satisfied if you will give half the widow's mite." I thought the man who called his offering by that sacred name, "the widow's mite," deserved the rebuke that he received! Though we have not to give all we have as she did, we should give till we feel it—and I think that we do not give much until we begin to feel the pinch—until we feel it! We have not done much for a friend if we have only given him our excess. True love proves itself when it comes to something like self-denial, but how few of God's servants ever reach to self-denial for Jesus? They could not remember, if they sat down, that they ever denied themselves a penny's worth of anything to eat or drink, or denied themselves a pound's worth of finery, or a comfort in their homes, or anything else for the sake of Christ! We should do better if we could get to feel that we love Christ so much that we could not give too much to Him.

Oh, dear brothers and sisters, I invite you all—and I ask that I may be able myself—to give to our Lord, who is greater than Solomon, our whole being, every power of thought and expression, every faculty of affection or of judgment—all that we are and all that we have, for if we gave Christ our gold and nothing more, He would not accept it! He wants us to live from morning's light to evening's shade for Him—to eat and drink and sleep to His glory—to do all to His honor. This is the obligation of the Christian and this his truest privilege. May the Spirit of God help us rise to this, so that when we came to see king Solomon and learn His wisdom, and behold the splendor of His palace, we may feel that He has got

our hearts to be entirely His own, His portion and His treasure, forever and forever!

God bless you, dear friends, this night, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *MATTHEW 12:38-42.*

Verses 38, 39. *Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from You. But He answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of the prophet Jonas.* The Pharisees change their manner, but they are in pursuit of the same object. How hopeless had the religionists of that age become! Nothing would convince them. They manifested their hate of the Lord Jesus by ignoring all the wonders He had worked. What further signs could they seek than those He had already given? Pretty inquirers these! They treat all the miracles of our Lord as if they had never occurred! Well might the Lord call them, "evil and adulterous," since they were so given to personal lasciviousness and were spiritually so untrue to God. We have those among us now who are so brazen as to treat all the achievements of evangelical doctrines as if they were nothing, and talk to us as if no result had followed the preaching of the gospel. There is need of great patience to deal wisely with such.

40. *For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.* The great sign of our Lord's mission is His resurrection and His preparing a gospel of salvation for the heathen. His life is well symbolized by that of *Jonah*. They cast our Lord overboard, even as the sailors did the man of God. The sacrifice of Jonah calmed the sea for the mariners—our Lord's death made peace for us. Our Lord was a while in the heart of the earth as Jonah was in the depth of the sea but He rose again, and His ministry was full of the power of His resurrection. As Jonah's ministry was certified by his restoration from the sea, so is our Lord's ministry attested by His rising from the dead. The man who had come back from death and burial in the sea commanded the attention of all Nineveh, and so does the risen Savior demand and deserve the obedient faith of all to whom His message comes!

41. *The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold, a greater than Jonas is here.* The heathen of Nineveh were convinced by the sign of a prophet restored from burial in the sea. And moved by that event, they repented at his preaching. Without quibble or delay they put the whole city in mourning and pleaded with God to turn from His anger. Jesus came with a clearer command of repentance, and a brighter promise of deliverance—but He spoke to stubborn hearts. Our Lord reminds the Pharisees of this and, as they were the most Jewish of

Jews, they were touched to the quick by the fact that heathens perceived what Israel did not understand, and that Ninevites repented while Jews were hardened!

All men will rise at the judgment— "*The men of Nineveh shall rise.*" The lives of penitents will condemn those who did not repent! The Ninevites will *condemn* the Jews "*because they repented at the preaching of Jonas.*" And the Jews did not. Those who heard Jonah and repented will be swift witnesses against those who heard Jesus and refused His testimony.

The standing witness to our Lord is His resurrection from the dead. God grant that every one of us, believing that unquestionable fact, may be so assured of His mission, that we may repent and believe the gospel.

RESURRECTION is one proof. In fact, it is THE SIGN, although, as we shall see, it is supplemented by another. The two will convince us or condemn us.

42. *The queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.* The second sign of our Lord's mission is HIS KINGLY WISDOM. As the fame of Solomon brought *the queen of the South from the uttermost parts of the earth*, so does the doctrine of our Lord command attention from the utmost isles of the sea. If Israel perceives not His glorious wisdom, Ethiopia and Seba shall hear of it and come bowing before Him. The queen of Sheba will rise again, and will "*rise up"* as a witness against unbelieving Jews, for she journeyed far to hear Solomon, while they would not hear the Son of God, Himself, who came into their midst. The superlative excellence of His wisdom stands for our Lord as a sign which can never be effectually disputed. What other teaching meets all the needs of men? Who else has revealed such grace and truth? He is infinitely greater than Solomon, who from a moral point of view exhibited a sorrowful littleness. Who but the Son of God could have made known the Father as He has done?

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THE CHRISTIAN'S HELMET
NO. 3167

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 1909,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1866.

"And for a helmet, the hope of salvation."
1 Thessalonians 5:8.

THE very mention of a helmet may well seem to REMIND EVERY CHRISTIAN HERE THAT HE IS A SOLDIER.

I. If you were not soldiers, you would not need armor. But being soldiers, you need to he clad from head to foot in armor of proof. I suppose every Christian here knows, as a matter of theory, that he is a Christian soldier and that he has been enlisted under the banner of the cross to fight against the powers of darkness until he wins the victory. But we all need to have our memories refreshed upon this matter, for soldiering, in time of war, at any rate, is not a very pleasant occupation—and the flesh constantly attempts to give it over. That "we have no abiding city here," is a truth of God which we all know and yet the most of us try to make the earth as comfortable for ourselves as if it were to be our abiding residence! We are all soldiers—we know that—but still, too many Christians act as if they could be the friends of the world and the friends of God at the same time. Now, Christian, remember once and for all that you are a soldier! Did you dream, young man, that as soon as you were baptized and added to the church, the conflict was all over? Ah, it was then but just beginning! Like Caesar, you then crossed the crossroads and declared war against your deadly enemy. You drew your sword—you did not sheathe it. Your proper note on joining the church is not one of congratulation, as though the victory were won, but one of *preparation*—for now the trumpet sounds and the fight begins! You are a soldier at all times, Christian! You ought to sit even at your table as a soldier sits and you should go out especially into the world as a soldier goes out. Never take off your armor, for if you do, in some unguarded moment you may meet with serious wounds! But *keep your armor always about you and be watchful*, for you are always in the midst of enemies wherever you may be! And even when the persons who surround you are your friends, there are still evil spirits, unseen of men, who watch for your tripping—and you must not put up your sword, for you are to wrestle against principalities, powers and spiritual wickedness in high places—against whom you must always be on the watch. You are a soldier, Christian—remember that!

Nor are you a soldier in barracks, or at home, but *you are a soldier in an enemy's country*. Your place is either in the trenches or else in the

thick of the battle! You who are sick are like soldiers in the trenches. You are patiently hoping and quietly waiting, as it were, upon the ramparts, looking for the time to come. But others of you, out in business and engaged in the concerns of life, are like soldiers marching in a long file to the conflict, like the housemen dashing on to the front of the battle. More or less, according to your circumstances, you are all exposed to the foe and that at every period of life!

Where are you, let me ask, but *in the country of an enemy who never gives any quarter*? If you fall, it is death! The world never forgives the Christian—it hates him with a perfect hatred and it longs to hurt him. Only let the world see you commit half a stumble and they will soon report and magnify it! What might be done by other men without observation, if it were done by a Christian, would be noticed, reported and misrepresented. The world understands that you are its natural antagonist. Satan perceives in you a representative of his old enemy, the Lord Jesus, and you may rest assured that he will never give you quarter if once he gets an opportunity of destroying you! Mind the enemy, mind the enemy, for he is one of a malicious spirit!

You have to fight with one, too, *who never yet made a truce*. *You* may come to terms and negotiate, but the powers of evil never do. *You* may hang out the white flag if you like. The foe may seem, for a time, as though he gave you credit, but never give your foe any credit! He hates you when he seems to love you best. "Dread the Greeks, even when they bring you gifts," said the tradition of old—and let the Christian dread the world most when it puts on its softest speeches! Stand, then, upon your guard, you warriors of the cross, when least you fear, the cringing foe will come behind you and stab you under the pretense of friendship! Your Master was betrayed with a kiss, and so will you be unless you watch unto prayer.

You have to do with an enemy *who never can make any peace with you, nor can you ever make any peace with him*. If you become at peace with sin, sin has conquered you—and it is impossible, unless you give up the fight and yield your neck to the everlasting bondage—that there should ever be peace for so much as a moment. Oh, Christian, see how guarded you ought to be! How necessary to be clothed with your armor! How necessary to have it of the right kind, to keep it bright and to wear it constantly! You are a soldier, a soldier in battle, a soldier in the enemy's country, a soldier with a cruel and malicious enemy who knows neither truce nor negotiation, and who gives no quarter, but will fight with you till you die! Heaven is the land where your sword should be sheathed—there shall you hang the banner high—but here we wrestle with the foe and must do so till we cross the torrent of death. Right up to the river's edge must the conflict be waged; foot by foot and inch by inch must all the land to Canaan's happy shore be won. Not a step can be taken without conflict and strife—but once there, you may lay aside your helmet and put on your crown, put away your sword, and take your palm branch—your fingers shall no longer need to learn to war, but your

hearts shall learn the music of the happy songsters in the skies! This, then, is the first thought—that you are a soldier.

II. But the second thought is BEING A SOLDIER, LOOK TO YOUR HEAD.

Soldiers, look to your heads! A wound in the head is a serious matter. The head, being a vital part, we need to be well protected there. The heart needs to be guarded with the breastplate, but the head needs to be protected quite as much, for even if a man should be true hearted, yet if a shot should go through his brain he would not be worth much as a soldier—his body would spread over the plain. The head must be taken care of. There are a great many Christian people who never have any trouble with their heads at all. There are certain religionists who get their hearts warmed and then they think that that is enough. Now, give me above everything else a good warm heart, but oh, to have that warm heart coupled with a head that is well taken care of! Do you know that a hot head and a hot heart together do a deal of mischief, but with a hot heart and a cold brain you may do a world of service to the Master. Have right doctrine in the head and then set the soul on fire and you will soon win the world! There is no standing in that man's way whose head and heart are both right—but to neglect the head has been a serious mischief with many Christians. They have been almost powerless for usefulness because they have not taken care of their brains. They have got to heaven, but they have not got many victories on the road because their brains have been out of order. They have never been able to clearly understand the doctrines—they have not been able to give a reason for the hope that is in them. They have not, in fact, looked well to the helmet which was to cover their heads!

The text refers us to our head because it speaks of a helmet—and a helmet is of no use to any part except the head. Among other reasons why we should preserve the head in the day of battle, let us give these—*the head is peculiarly liable to the temptations of Satan, of self and of fame*. It is not easy, you know, to stand on a high pinnacle without the brain beginning to reel. And if God takes a man and puts him on a high pinnacle of usefulness, he had need to have his head taken care of. If a brother is possessed of a considerable amount of wealth, there is a great danger in that wealth unless there is a wealth of divine grace as well as a wealth of gold. If a man is well spoken of, his sphere may not be very large, but if everybody praises him, he will also need to have his head well protected—for the little praise, even though it should come from fools—would be too much for a fool. If a man can stand commendation, he can stand anything. The severest trial which a Christian has to bear is probably the trial which comes from his kind but inconsiderate friends who would puff him up, if they could, by telling him what a fine fellow he is. If your friends will not do this, you will probably have a friend within who will do it for you—and if you should forget it, the devil will not! "What a great sermon you gave us this morning, Mr. Bunyan," said a friend where John had been preaching. "You are too late," said Bunyan,

"the devil told me that before I came out of the pulpit." Yes, and he will be sure to do it—and hence the need of having a helmet to put on the head so that when you are successful, when you are getting on in life, when friends are speaking well of you—you may not get intoxicated with it! Oh, to have a good, cool helmet to put on your brain when it begins to get a little hot with praise, so that you may still stand fast and not be borne down by vanity! O vanity, vanity, vanity, how many you have slain! How many who then seemed upon the very brink of greatness have stumbled upon this stumbling-block—men who seemed as though they would enter heaven—but a little bit of honor, some glittering bribe, a golden gift has turned them aside and they fail! Take care of your heads, brothers and sisters!

And is not *the head liable to attacks from skepticism*? People who have no brains are not often troubled with doubts, but people who have brains have probably felt that whether they resolved to use them or not, the brains would use themselves. It is very good of our good fathers to tell us not to read dangerous books, very good of them, indeed! But we do read them for all that—and though we sometimes tell the young folks not to read this and that heretical treatise, and we wish they would take our advice—yet somehow or other they get hold of such things and will ponder them. Brothers and sisters, I believe that in such times as these, when everything is so free, and when discussion is so common—we must expect that our young fellows will look at a great many things which they had better leave alone—and their heads will be endangered thereby, for the bullets of skepticism threaten to go right through their brains! Well, what then? As we cannot take Christians out of the way of the bullets, we should give them a helmet to preserve them from them! He who has a hope of salvation—a good hope that he is saved, a hope that he shall see the face of Christ with joy at last—is not afraid of all the quibbles of skepticism! He may hear them all and for a moment be staggered by them, as a soldier might be who had a sudden shock or even a wound, but after a while he recovers and feels sound enough to enter into the conflict again. And the Christian can say—

"Let all the forms that men devise
Assail my faith with treacherous art—
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart."

It has been very well observed that a man is not often a very thorough democrat after he gets a little money in the bank. Well, I think it is very likely that when a man gets a little stake in his country, he begins to be, to the merest extent, conservative. As soon as ever a man gets a stake in Christianity and feels that he has got salvation in Jesus Christ, he gets to be very, very conservative of the old fashioned truth of God. He cannot give up the Bible, then, because it is a broad land of wealth to him! He cannot give up Christ, for He is *his* Savior, *his* salvation. He cannot give up a single promise because that promise is so dear to his own soul. The helmet of salvation, then, will preserve the head in times of skepticism!

The head, again, is very greatly in danger *from the attacks of personal unbelief*. Who among us has not doubted his own interest in Christ?

Happy are you who are free from such trouble! But there are seasons with some of us when we turn our title deeds over and we are sometimes afraid lest they should not be genuine. There are times when if we could, we would give a world to know that we are Christ's, for at times we cannot—

"Read our title clear
To mansions in the skies."

Well, beloved, this is very dangerous to our heads, but the man who has got the helmet of a right, sound, God given hope of salvation—who has received from God the Holy Spirit a helmet which I am going to describe, by and by—when these doubts and fears come, they may distress him for a little while, but he knows the smell of gunpowder and he is not afraid! In the midst of all of Satan's accusations, or the rising up of his old corruptions, or the threats of the flesh and of the world, he stands calm and unmoved because he wears as a helmet, the hope of salvation!

Nor are these all the dangers to which the head is exposed. *Some persons are attacked by threats from the world*. The world brings down its double handled sword with a tremendous blow upon the heads of many Christians. "You will suffer the loss of all things for Christ if you are such a fanatic as to do as you do. You will be poor, your children will need bread, your wife will be worse than a widow if you are such a fool." "Ah," says the Christian, "but I have a hope of salvation!" And the blow, when it comes, does not go through his head, but just falls on the helmet and the world's sword gets blunted. "I can afford to be poor," said Dr. Gill, when one of his subscribers threatened to give up his seat and would not attend if the doctor preached such and such a doctrine. So says the Christian, "I can afford to be poor. I can afford to be despised. I have in heaven a better and more enduring substance." So, by the use of this blessed helmet he is not destroyed by the threats of the world!

We want our young people to wear this helmet, too, *because of the errors of the times*. The errors of the times are many. We have to deal not merely with skepticism, but with superstition. They are tempted on the one side; they are tempted on the other. This and that you will have cried up. "Lo here," and "Lo there!" And there will be many misled who are not the people of God. "If it were possible, they would deceive the very elect"—but the elect are not deceived because their heads are not vulnerable to these errors, for they wear the hope of salvation and they are not afraid of all the "its" or the "isms" in the world. The man knows he is saved. Once you get to know Christ personally and that He loved you and gave Himself for you—and then rejoice that you are forgiven and justified through Him—the world will count you stupid and obstinate, but you will stand firm and be able to resist all its sarcasm and its ridicule. He who has made a refuge of Jesus Christ may stand safe whatever errors may invade the land!

They tell us that the church of God is in great danger and that Popery will spread over the land altogether. I believe it will, but that it will spread over the *church of God*—no—I know far better than that! The church of God can never be in danger! Every man in whom is the life of

God would be as ready to die tomorrow for the truth as our forefathers were in the Marian Days! Rest assured there would still be found men and women to stand in the burning piles if the times required them—and our prisons would not long be without heavenly minded tenants if the truth needed to be defended by suffering, even unto death! There *is* danger, great danger! There never was such danger in modern times of Popery spreading over the land as now. But there is no danger to the man who has his helmet on! No, let the arrows fly thick as hail and let the foes have all political power and all the *prestige* of antiquity that they may—a little body of true hearted Christians will still stand out at the thick of the onslaught and cut their way to glory and to victory through whole hosts because their heads are guarded with the heavenly helmet of the hope of salvation! Soldiers, then, take care of your heads! I will say no more on that point.

III. God has provided a covering for your heads, let us therefore now CONSIDER THE HELMET WITH WHICH HE WOULD HAVE YOUR HEADS PROTECTED.

"The hope of salvation!" This is not the hope I spoke about this morning, for that was the hope that salvation was possible. This helmet is made up of an actual hope that, being already saved in Christ Jesus, you should abide unto eternal life. It is a personal hope, founded upon personal conviction—and is worked in us by the Holy Spirit.

To begin, then, describing this helmet, *Who is its giver?* You ask our friend, the soldier where he gets his uniforms, and he answers that he gets them from the government stores. He gets his uniforms from Her Majesty. And that is how we must get our helmets. If any of you construct helmets of hope for yourselves, they will be of no use to you in the day of battle! The true helmet of hope must come from the heavenly arsenal! You must go to the divine storehouse, for unto God belongs salvation and the hope of salvation must be given to you by His free grace. A hope of salvation is not purchasable. Our great King does not sell His armor, but gives it freely to all who enlist. They take the shilling and accept faith. They trust Christ and they are enlisted—and then the armor is given them gratis. From head to foot they are arrayed by grace!

Do you ask, *who is the Maker of this helmet*? Weapons are valued often according to the maker. A known maker gets his own price for his articles. Armorers of old took much trouble with the ancient helmets because a man's life might depend upon that very useful means of defense. So we have here the name of God the Holy Spirit upon this helmet! A hope of salvation is the work of God the Holy Spirit in our soul. It is the Spirit who brings us to Jesus, shows us our need of Him and gives us faith in Him—and it is that same Spirit who enables us to hope that we shall endure to the end and enter into eternal life. Be not satisfied with a hope which is natural, but have a hope that is supernatural! Rest not satisfied with that which is made in the workshop of nature. Go not to those who buy and sell for themselves, but go to the blessed Spirit, who gives freely and upbraids not!

Or would you inquire, further, *of what metal this helmet is made*? That it is made of hope, we are told, but it is of the utmost consequence that it is a good hope! Beware of getting a base hope, a helmet made of worthless metal. There were some helmets they used to wear in the olden times which looked very well, but they were of no more use than brown paper hats. And when a soldier goes into the fight with one of those on, the sword went through his skull. Get a good helmet, one made of the right metal. This is what a Christian's hope is made of—he believes that Christ came into the world to save sinners. He trusts Christ to save him and he hopes that when Christ comes, he shall reign with Him. He believes that when the trumpet sounds, he shall rise with Christ and that in heaven he shall have a secure dwelling place at the right hand of the Father. This hope is made up of proper and fitting deductions from certain truthful statements. That Christ died for *sinners* is true. That He died to save all who trust in Him is true. That *I* trust Him is true. Therefore that I am saved is true! And, being saved, that I shall inherit all His promises is a matter of course!

Some people have a hope, but they do not know where they get it from, nor do they know a reason for it. When some people die, you hear it said, "I hope, I hope he is gone to heaven." Well, I wish he may have gone, but I dare not say of some that I hope so, because hope must have a *reason*. An anchor is of no use without its barb. It must be able to hold fast. It must have, at any rate, the modern anchor—some weight about it with which it can hold to the bottom. Hope must have its barb, too! It must have its reason, it must have its weight. If I say I hope such and such, I am foolish for hoping it if I have not a reason for hoping. If you were to say you hoped the person sitting next to you would give you a thousand pound note, it would be a most absurd hope! You may wish it if you like, but what ground have you for the hope? But if somebody owes you a thousand pounds and you have his acknowledgment of the debt, you may then very well say that you hope it will be paid, for you have a legitimate right to expect it. Such is the Christian's hope! God has promised to save those who believe. Lord, I believe *You*—You have promised to save me, and I hope you will—I *know* You will! The Christian's hope is not a fancy, not a silly desire. It did not spring up in the night, like Jonah's gourd, and it will not wither in a night. The Christian's hope is something that will bear a crack from a club, or a cut from a sharp sword. It is made of good metal. John Bunyan said of a certain sword that it was "a true Jerusalem blade"—and I may call this a true Jerusalem helmet and he that wears it need not fear!

Having shown the metal of which the helmet is made, let me now describe *the strength of the helmet*. It is so strong that he who wears it is invulnerable under all sorts of assaults. He may stagger under a blow, but he cannot be hurt by it. Recollect what David said. All the troubles in the world once set on David and began to beat him—and they gave him many terrible blows. They thought they had certainly ruined him. David was bleeding and was full of wounds. He half thought he would die and

he tells us, himself, that he would have fainted only he had a bottle of cordial with him called *faith*. He says, "I had fainted if I had not believed." But just at the time when they thought he would faint and die, suddenly the old hero that slew Goliath made all his enemies fly before him as he cried, "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope you in God." And he laid about him right and left, as he should. "I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance and my God." "Hope you in God," Christian! Oh that blessed word, HOPE! You know what the New Zealanders call hope? They call it in their language, "the swimming thought," because it always swims. You cannot drown it—it always keeps its head above the wave! When you think you have drowned the Christian's hope, up it comes, all dripping from the brine, and cries again, "Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him!" Hope is the nightingale that sings in the night. Faith is the lark that mounts up towards heaven, but hope is the nightingale that cheers the valley in the darkness! Oh, Christian, be thankful that you have so strong a helmet as this which can bear all assaults and can keep you uninjured in the midst of the fray!

This hope of salvation *is a helmet which will not come off*. It is of main importance, you know, to have a helmet that will not be knocked off the first thing in the fight. That is why our policemen are dressed differently from what they used to be, because their hats used to get knocked off the very first thing. So it will be with some people's helmets if they have a commonplace hope—but the Christian wears a helmet that he cannot get off. There was once a good soldier of Jesus Christ—this soldier happened to be a woman, however, and some women are the best soldiers Christ ever had—they are His true Amazons! This good woman had been much attacked by a skeptical person and when she was very much confused with some of his knotty questions, she turned round and said to him, "I cannot answer you, sir, but neither can you answer me, for I have a something within me that you cannot understand which makes me feel that I could not give up what I know of Christ for all the world." You see, he could not get her helmet off—and the devil himself cannot drag the Christian's helmet off when he has once got it fairly buckled on. The world can neither give nor take away the hope of a Christian! It comes from God and He will never withdraw it, for His gifts and calling are without repentance. Once let this helmet be put on and He will never remove it, but we shall hope on and hope always until we shall see His face at the last!

I should like to go round among this regiment, as the commanding officers sometimes do, to have a look at you. This helmet is an old fashioned kind of armor and in the old days the lieutenants and other officials, when they went round the regiment, used to look not only to see that the men had their helmets, but to see that they had oiled them, for in those times they used to oil their helmets to make them shine and to keep the various joints, buckles and so on, in good order. No rust was ever allowed on the helmets and it is said that when the soldiers marched out with their bronze helmets and their white plumes, they

shone most brilliantly in the sun. David speaks, you know, of "anointing the shield." He was speaking of a bronze shield which had to be anointed with oil. Now, when God anoints His people's hope—when He gives them the oil of joy, their hope begins to shine bright in the light of the Savior's countenance—and what a fine array of soldiers they then are! Satan trembles at the gleaming of their swords—he cannot endure to look upon their helmets. But some of you do not keep your hope clear—you do not keep it bright. It gets rusty out of use and then before long it gets to sit uncomfortably upon you and you get weary with the fight. O Holy Spirit, anoint our heads with fresh oil and let Your saints go forth tonight terrible as an army with banners!

Do not let it be overlooked that *the helmet was generally considered to be a place of honor*. The man put his plume in his helmet. He frequently wore his crest there and in the thick of the fight the captain's plume was seen in the midst of the smoke and dust of battle—and the men pressed to the place where they saw it. Now, the Christian's hope is his honor and his glory. I must not be ashamed of my hope! I must wear it for beauty and for dignity and he who has a right good hope will be a leader to others. Others will see it and will fight with renewed courage. And where he hews a lane of the foes, they will follow him, even as he follows his Lord and Master who has overcome and sits down upon His Father's throne! I hope there are many Christians here who keep their helmets bright—and that there are many more who desire to have such helmets to protect themselves and to grace their profession.

IV. YET THERE ARE SOME HERE WHO HAVE NO HELMETS. The reason is obvious. They are not Christ's soldiers.

Of course the Lord Jesus does not provide anybody with armor but those in His service. But Satan knows how to give you a helmet, too. His helmets are very potent ones. Though the sword of the Spirit can go right through them, nothing else can. He can give and has given some of you a headpiece that covers your entire skull—a thick headpiece of indifference, so that no matter what is preached, you do not care. "What do I care?" you say—and that is your helmet.

Then he puts a piece in the front of the helmet called *a brazen forehead and a brow of brass*. "What do I care?" That is your cry. Then he takes care to fit the helmet right over your eyes so that you cannot see—yes, though hell itself is before you, you do not see it! "What do I care?" Then he also knows how so to fit the helmet that it acts as a gag to your mouth so that you never pray. You can swear through it, but you cannot pray! Still you stick to your old cry, "What do I care?"

Ah, it is not very likely that any sword of mine will get at your head! Arguments will not move you, for that is a question that cannot very well be argued—"What do I care?" It is all very well for you to say that, but oh, I pray God the Holy Spirit to get at your head, notwithstanding that horrible helmet, for if not, God has a way of dealing with such as you are—when you come to die, you will sing another song! When you come to lie there upon that bed of sickness and the grim day of eternity is in view,

you will not be able to say quite as gaily as you do now, "What do I care?" And when the trumpet rings through earth and heaven and your body starts up from your grave—and you see the great judge upon His throne—you will not be able to say, then, "What do I care?" Your head will then be bare to the pitiless tempest of divine wrath! Bareheaded, you must be exposed to the everlasting storm that shall descend upon you. And when the great angel binds you up with your fellows in bundles to burn, you will *then* feel that you are not able to say, "What do I care?" for cares will come upon you like a wild deluge when you are banished from His presence and all hope is gone!

Oh, I wish you would take off that helmet! May God grant you grace to unbuckle it tonight, never to put it on again! Do care. You are not a fool, my friend, are you? It is only a fool who says, "What do I care?" *Surely you care about your soul! Surely hell is worth escaping from! Surely heaven is worth winning! Surely that cross on which our Savior died is worth thinking of! Surely that poor soul of yours is worth caring about*! Do, I pray you, think, and not go hastily on. Oh, may Jesus Christ, who died for such as you are, bring you to trust Him! And then, unbuckling all that evil armor of, "What do I care?" you will bow before His cross and kiss His hands—and He will put upon you the golden helmet of a hope of salvation and you will rise, one of the King's own soldiers, to fight His battles and win an immortal wreath of everlasting victory! May it is so with every one of us!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-28.

Verses 1, 2. *But of the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night.* It will be a great surprise to the wicked. It will take them by surprise. Just at that moment when they least expect it, Christ will come, and as the thief comes to destroy and to kill, so will the coming of Christ be the death of their carnal ease—the destruction of their earthly hopes!

3. *For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.* A terrible text that—"They shall not escape." They shall not escape by their own power or force or wisdom! They shall not escape even by the annihilation which they might well desire, but which shall not come to them. They shall not escape.

4. *But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.* You know that Christ will come. You expect the dissolution of this present state. To you, therefore, it will come as one who calls at daytime. You cannot know the hour. You must not know it. But since you know that He will come, and come to your joy—and since you are in the light, you look with gladness to that coming!

5, 6. *You are all the children of light and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep as do others.* If

we were children of the night, sleep is a proper occupation for the night; but as we are the children of the day, let us not sleep, as others.

6. *But let us watch and be sober*. Watchfulness and sobriety are appropriate duties for the day. To be always serving our Lord with constancy and to keep ourselves from the fascinations of the world which make men's minds drunk—may these two things be our daily care.

7. *For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that are drunk are drunk in the night*. There are a few who have reached to such a pitch of shameless idleness that they sleep in the day. And there are others who have come to such a state of debauchery that they are drunk in the day. But this is not the common way of things, nor even in the judgment of the most licentious of the world is this at all a proper state of things. "They that sleep, sleep in the night. They that are drunk are drunk in the night." Let us who are of the day be sober, and let us of course be awake, but let us be more than awake, since watchfulness is here joined to wakefulness and watchfulness in a soldier requires that his armor be on. So Paul pushes the parallel a little farther.

8. *But let us who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation*. Soldiers, when they sleep, take off their armor. But in the day when they are awake and on their guard they wear their armor and are ready for the fray. See how much is involved in Christian wakefulness. God help us to carry out every virtue to its legitimate consequences—not to be wakeful after a fashion, but wakeful after God's fashion!

9. *For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ*. In making us children of light, he gave evidence that our appointment was for the light—that His eternal ordinances were that through the light of gospel grace we should, by and by, enter into the light of eternal glory. "God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."

10. *Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him*. They who have served their day and generation, when they sleep, are not parted from their Lord. They become not the children of the darkness by that fact, for He died for us, that whether we wake or sleep we should live together with Him. Whether we are living here or living there, we shall still live together with Him.

11. *Therefore comfort yourselves together and edify one another, just as you also are doing*. The more of this the better; Christian people should constantly converse with one another for mutual edification.

12, 13. *And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake*. You see, in the church of old they edified one another, but for all that, they did not cast off God's ordinance of Christian ministry. There was rule in the church, then, as there should be now—and the apostle, when he speaks of this individual edification, this mutual instruction—does not forget to notice those who were the pastors of the flock. He says, "Know them which labor among

you and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake."

13. *And be at peace among yourselves.* How can a church prosper if it is not?

14-16. *Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man, but always follow that which is good both among yourselves, and to all men. Rejoice evermore.* Here follows a string of Christian precepts—a golden chain. "Rejoice evermore."

17-19. *Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit.* Do not despise His operations, either in yourselves or in your brethren. Do not quench Him by neglect, much less by open opposition!

20-22. *Despise not prophesying. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil.* Not from that which other people choose to *think* evil, but from all real evil whatever it is—even from the very shadow that it casts and the shape which it assumes!

23-26. *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calls you, who also will do it. Brethren, pray for us. Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.* Give one another a hearty shake of the hands. That is the western interpretation of the eastern form. Outward forms differ. The inward sense abides the same. Let brotherly love continue in a hearty friendliness among yourselves.

27, 28. *I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*

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THE SCARLET LINE IN THE WINDOW
NO. 3168

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"She bound the scarlet line in the window."
Joshua 2:21.

EVERY little incident in a remarkable conversion like that of the harlot Rahab is worthy of notice. The Apostle James selected her as an illustration of the fact that faith is always attended by good works, and he asks, "Was she not justified by works when she had received the messengers?" while Paul quotes her as an instance of justification by faith, and says, "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not." If both these eminent apostles found an illustration of an important doctrine in her life, we may surely do the same. If the hiding of the spies under the flax had some significance, so also had the hanging out of the scarlet line.

The two spies whom Rahab had concealed made an agreement with her that she should hang out a scarlet line in the window by which she had let them down, that they might know, in the day of battle, the house in which she dwelt. She fulfilled their request and displayed the chosen emblem. In connection with that scarlet line, I observe four things.

I. First, I see here AN OBEDIENT BELIEVER.

She was told to tie the scarlet thread in the window and she did it—there was *exact obedience*. It was not merely *a* thread, *a* line, but the *scarlet line*. She did not substitute a blue, or a green, or a white line. The order was this scarlet line, not another, and she took that particular one. Obedience to God will be very much seen in small matters. Love always delights to attend to the little things and thereby makes the little things great. I have heard of a Puritan who was charged with being too precise, but his answer was excellent, "I serve a precise God." The Lord our God is a jealous God and He is very jealous of His commands. It appeared a little mistake that Moses made when he struck the rock instead of speaking to it, and yet he could not enter into the promised rest because of his offense! A small action may involve a great principle and it is for us to be very cautious and careful, searching out what the Master's will is, and then never halting or hesitating for any reason whatever, but doing His will as soon as we know it. Christian life should be a mosaic of minute obediences. The soldiers of Christ should be famous for their exact discipline.

I commend scrupulous obedience to all of you and especially to those young people who have lately made a profession of their faith in Christ. Do not be as your fathers were, for the generation which is now going off the stage neither reads its Bible nor cares to know the Lord's will. If people searched the Scriptures, we would find them come together in union—but the least read book in all the world, in proportion to its circulation, is the Word of God. It is distributed everywhere, but it is scarcely read anywhere with care and attention—and with a sincere resolve to follow its precepts at all hazards. You come and listen to us and we give you little bits taken from it here and there, but you do not get a fair notion of it as a whole. How can you? Ministers make mistakes and you follow them without inquiry. One elects this leader, and another that, to the creation of varieties of opinions and even of sects which ought not to be—and would not be if all stood fast by the standard of the inspired truth of God. If the Bible were but read and prayed over, many errors would die a speedy death and others would be sorely crippled. Had that inspired book been read in the past, many errors would never have arisen! Search, then, the book of God, I pray you—and whatever you find there, be sure to attend to it! At all costs, keep to the Word of God.

Notice, next, that hers was *obedience in a very small matter*. She might have said, "I do not think it is essential to tie a piece of line in my window. Can I not be preserved just as well without it, seeing that I believe in the God of Israel? I have faith and I have shown it by my works by hiding the spies—you cannot suppose for a moment that I shall perish simply because I have not complied with a regulation about a scarlet line!" In this way many, nowadays, inquire whether they may not omit those duties which they consider to be nonessential to salvation. Now this is a question which I never intend to answer for anybody else because I never intend to ask it on my own account! Whether or not a believer will perish because some known duty or Scriptural ordinance is neglected, is a question which only selfishness would raise! Are we only to do that which will procure our progress, or secure our salvation? Are we so grossly selfish as that? Does a loving child say, "If I refuse to do my father's will, shall I not still be my father's child? Shall I not still be fed and clothed by him?" Only an evil child would talk thus! The true son inquires, "What would my father have me do? I will do it cheerfully for his sake. What does my father forbid? For what he forbids shall be hateful to me." Rise above all questions concerning essential and nonessential and learn to *obey in all things*—if it is only tying a scarlet thread in the window, or washing in water, do as you are bid—and in nothing rebel against the Word of the Lord!

Remember, too, that this small matter of obedience, as some call it, had *an important symbolical significance*. I am not sure that the spies meant by it that the scarlet thread would be the same to Rahab as the blood on the lintel and on the two side posts had been to Israel in Egypt,

but it does strike me as being very probable. Those two men were so acquainted with the Passover, the sprinkling of the blood and the consequent preservation of all in this house that it was very natural that they should give Rahab a sign akin to the token which God had ordained for His people Israel when His angel passed them by in the day of doom. Therefore, trifling as the color of the cord might seem, it had a deep significance—and even so the commands of God, which are little in themselves—are great in symbolic teaching. Great errors have come into the Christian church by the alteration of simple points in God's commands and, therefore, since a little thing in the sign may involve a great thing in the substance, it becomes us to cultivate exact obedience!

"Oh," says one, "but I fear we shall always be in error." Assuredly we shall unless we endeavor to avoid it! Unless we give abundant attention to the Word of God, we shall fall into mistakes beyond number! Errors are unavoidable if we do not study our perfect Chart, even as it is certain that a man will lose his way if he never inquires about it. At any rate, we need not rush into mistakes by omitting to use our judgment and to inform our understanding. Ask the Lord to teach you by His Holy Spirit and you will not be taught wrongly. Commit yourself to His instruction and be willing to do what He teaches you—and you will not go amiss.

This woman's obedience also arose out of real faith and was the exponent of that faith, for when she tied the scarlet line in the window, she expressed her confidence in the fact that Jericho would be destroyed and that she would be saved because she had received a promise to that effect. She would not have hidden the spies if she had not believed in their God! And after having done so, if her faith had failed her, she would not have agreed with the covenant requirement to hang the scarlet line in the window. Beloved, obey in faith! The obedience of the slave is worth little. The obedience of the child is precious, for it is the fruit of love. That keeping of God's commands which comes of slavish fear lacks the very heart of obedience, for love is absent, but, as God's dear children, resting alone in Jesus and confiding in your Father's promise, feel that *because you believe you must obey*, not because you dread hell or expect to win heaven through any works of your own—but because you have believed in Jesus to the salvation of your soul and, therefore, it is your joy to do His bidding.

Thus I have enlarged upon the first point of the text, that in the hanging out of the scarlet line, I discern an obedient believer.

II. Now, secondly, I see here AN APPROPRIATED COVENANT.

These men had made a covenant with her that she would have her life spared, and the lives of her family, if she concealed their secret and if she tied a scarlet line in the window. As she tied up that line she did, as it were, say, "I claim the covenant that you have made with me." Beloved, let us speak about this for a moment, for we need more and more to be

able to appropriate covenant blessings. How do we appropriate Jesus? *By simple faith*. Faith is the hand which touches the head of the great sacrifice and lays sin upon it, that sin may no longer lie upon the sinner. Faith grasps Jesus as the bread of life and makes that bread to be our own, that we may feed upon it and may live forever. Thus the grand thing for appropriating Christ is to obtain faith and to gain more and more faith. Do you remember when you first tied a scarlet line in your window and said, "Christ is mine"? I remember the very hour and the precise spot, but many cannot tell the moment or the occasion—nor need they agitate themselves about it if they still continue to tie that line in its place! Still, you do remember that there was such a time when you could say, "Jesus is mine." You apprehended Christ because He *had* apprehended you. If such an hour as that has never come to you, may it come even now! Jesus Christ can save you, but He must be appropriated, or He will be no Savior to you. Remember that God the Holy Spirit, Himself, though He is the author of faith, cannot believe for you—you must personally believe for yourself.

Certain persons talk very much of repentance as the gift of the Holy Spirit—their witness would be true if they would not exaggerate it so as to leave the impression on men's minds that the Holy Spirit repents and that the sinner has little or nothing to do with it, for that is not true! It is clear that the Holy Spirit has nothing to repent of—repentance is an act of the repenting sinner's own soul—and faith, a personal exercise of the heart, "for with the heart man believes unto righteousness." If we do not, ourselves, repent and believe, Christ is not ours and we are none of His and neither shall we obtain any benefit from His life and death. Tie the scarlet line in your window, for it will not be tied there for you—you must do it with your own hands. And I do pray that even now you may have boldness through Christ to say, "Yes, Jesus shall be mine. I dare with humble confidence to appropriate Him for myself, since He is given freely to poor needy sinners—and I am such a sinner."

Faith is the first and grandest way of tying the scarlet line in the window, but let your faith follow on in *the use of the ordinances and means of grace*, for these assist her in laying hold upon Jesus. I have often found it most blessed to sit at the communion table and feel, while I ate the bread and drank the wine, that faith was in active exercise, so that I said to myself, "Yes, as certainly as this bread is put into my mouth and goes into my bodily system, so as to become a part of myself, so that nobody can ever take it away—even so I have by faith believed on and received into my soul the incarnate God and in that way He has become mine so that none can separate Him from me, or me from Him." The ordinance itself will not give you Christ, but often does the symbol blessedly enable the soul to realize Jesus and contemplate Him so as to partake of Him. In that draught of wine, so typical of His blood, how often has our soul said, "I rest entirely upon the Redeemer's bloody sacrifice. His

substitutionary pangs, griefs and merits are all my trust before God and I receive them as my sole reliance for the remission of sin, and take them into my very self, just as I drink of this cup and thereby the juice of the vine courses through my veins." Continue, beloved friends, thus to appropriate Jesus Christ and let every communion season be a tying of the scarlet line afresh in the window!

Let *your whole life* be a course of action correspondent to the belief that Christ is yours. I am afraid many believers live as though Jesus Christ did not belong to them at all, nor yet the blessings of the covenant. Do you think that we would be so desponding when we have losses in business if we really believed that all things are ours? And if we had tied the scarlet line in the window and appropriated all things as ours in Christ? Do you think we would be so soon flustered and made to doubt whether we are saved or not in times of temptation, if our faith took a firm grip of Christ and tied the scarlet line in the window fast and firm by claiming the covenant of grace as ours? Beloved, some of you have only appropriated a part of Christ! You believe you are pardoned, but you scarcely know that you are justified! You are justified and covered with His righteousness, but you have not laid hold upon the sanctification which Jesus gives you. You have a measure of grace, but you have not yet believed that Christ can sanctify you wholly—spirit, soul and body. We are stinted and stunted, lean and lethargic because of our failure to grasp with holy confidence the infinite treasure which is stored up in our all sufficient Lord! He is ours and all things are ours in Him! "According to your faith be it unto you," is the rule of that great house over which Christ presides. This woman took the covenant which she had made with these men to be hers and showed that she did so by tying the scarlet line in the window. The covenant of grace was made with her and she knew it—and believed it, in like manner! O brothers and sisters in Christ, by a living faith grasp the promises of God and claim them as your own!

Here let me also say, *let us do this by displaying a corresponding restfulness*. After Rahab had tied the line in her window, we do not read that she did anything else except bring her father, her mother and her brethren under her roof. She did not make preparations to defend the house against the siege. There is no notification that she appealed to the king to have a special guard to protect that part of the wall. I do not believe that she had a solitary fear or a moment's terror—the scarlet line was in the window and she felt secure! She had appropriated the promise and she believed it would not be broken. It is a high privilege to dwell peaceably and quietly in the finished work of Christ—and in the sure immutable promise of God, who cannot lie. Why fret yourselves and question yourselves, and go about with a thousand anxieties when salvation's work was finished on the accursed tree and Christ has gone into glory and has carried His perfect work before His Father's face? Why mourn and sus-

pect your safety when the Lord has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Him? We who have believed enter into rest! The peace of God is ours, so let us, by our resting, show that we have tied the scarlet line in our window, have claimed the finished work of Christ and, therefore, rest henceforth from our own works as God did from His!

III. Thirdly, I see here AN OPEN DECLARATION.

Rahab tied the scarlet line, not in some secret part of the house, but *in the window*. It was her public declaration of faith. I do not say that everybody understood what she meant by that—only those understood it that were in on the secret with her—and that sufficed. She hung out the red signal from the window where it could be seen by those who needed to see it. It was not that she was ostentatious and wished to attract attention—but she was bound to make a public sign and she did it. Now, some of you believe in my Lord Jesus and yet you have never united with His people. You are resting in Him, but you are mightily afraid that anybody should know it. Be not ashamed of Jesus! The wonder is that He is not ashamed of you! If He was not ashamed to take upon Him your nature and die for you, you need never blush to acknowledge His name! Come forward, you trembling ones! Tie the scarlet line in your window and say, "We are His, and we confess it."

Let it be *a scarlet line* that you tie in the window, however—namely an avowal of true faith in His precious blood, a declaration of confidence in atonement by blood—for there are some who profess a sort of faith, but it is not faith in the substitution of Christ. It is unfashionable, nowadays, to believe in the old doctrine of atonement; modern "culture" has canceled it or altered it in such a way that no real atonement is left. There are many who are too advanced to avow the old fashioned gospel, but as for us, we tie forever the scarlet line in our window and stand by the truth once delivered to the saints! Our declaration of faith is that we believe in the real and literal substitution of Christ who died, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." In the midst of a thousand new gospels—none of them worth the breath that utters them—we hold to that ancient gospel of the Prophet Isaiah, "the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed." Beloved believer, if the doctrine of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and His substitutionary atonement is your hope, acknowledge it! Acknowledge it boldly and let there be no mistake about it in these evil times! Tie the scarlet line in your window and if nobody else will see it, your brothers and sisters will and be encouraged. If nobody else will be pleased with it, your God will smile upon you and you will be a sweet savor unto Him. No man that I know of saw the blood upon the lintel and the two side posts, at the dead of night, in the land of Egypt, for there were none abroad to look upon it—but God saw it, and it is written—"When I see the blood, I will pass over you." When God sees our simple confidence in His dear Son and

perceives us resting upon His word without the admixture of human reason and opinion, then, beloved, He will accept us in the Beloved and our house shall stand when others fall!

Every Christian ought to make his faith in the precious blood visible in many ways. It ought to be manifest in our common conversation. If we are resting in the blood of Jesus, we ought not to be able to talk a quarter of an hour without thoughtful persons perceiving that we are followers of Jesus. I have heard of a man who was so entertaining and instructive in his conversation that it was said that you could not stand under an archway for five minutes with him, to get out of the rain, without learning something from him. Every Christian ought to be of this sort in a higher style—so that you cannot be with him many minutes without perceiving him to be a man of God. Of course in the church of Christ, the Christian ought to hang a scarlet line out of his door at once and let his fellow worshipers see that he is decided and resolute for the Lord, his God—and he ought to do the same in his business. Customers should soon see that in your shop the common tricks of the trade are detested! The scarlet line is over this door. In the house, the mistress in the management of her servants, the master as a husband and as a father should be known to be better than others. There is a certain sect of people called, "the peculiar people." I wish we were all peculiar people in this respect, that the blood mark set us apart as not our own, but bought with a price! The Lord grant that it may be so with us!

IV. The last point is this. Here was A DEDICATED HOUSE—a house with a scarlet line in its window.

Coming here, the other afternoon, and walking down one of the back streets, I amused myself by observing how many houses were insured. I noticed the marks of the different insurance companies. There was *the sun* on one, with his bright face looking down upon us, as much as to say, "There shall be no loss here." The *globe, the star, the Phoenix*—all were there as seals of safety. Now there was only one house in Jericho that was insured—and that had for its symbol and mark of insurance a scarlet line tied in the window! What a mercy it is when houses are insured by the grace of God and dedicated to the Lord—the very houses and much more—the inhabitants of those houses! How can you dedicate a house? I was reading, the other day, that in Cromwell's time you could go down Cheapside at a certain hour in the morning and you would see the blinds down at every house and hear the families singing, all the way along, "for," says an old divine, "in those days, a drawn blind was the scarlet line in the window." People knew, as they passed along, that there was an altar erected to God in that house. I am afraid that there are a great many streets in our towns and cities which you might traverse at any hour of the day and not discover a solitary sign of *family prayer* going on. The practice has gone out of fashion even among many who pro-

fess to be the people of God—and farewell to any progress in godliness till we bring it back again!

I believe that when the house and the church pull together, things are right. But when religion is made to be a thing of the church and not of the house—when the priest is looked to instead of the father, when men cease to be priests in their own houses—then the very sinews of vital godliness have been cut. If I had to give up all weekday services and shut up every place of worship in Christendom from Sunday to Sunday, I would prefer to do that rather than lose the morning and evening gatherings of devout households worshiping God! How much Scotland owes to her family devotions! You need not that I remind you of "The Cotter's Saturday Night." It is the very glory of that country that they worship God in their houses. "There is much formality about it," cries one! Well, was there ever anything good which did not degenerate here and there? But I have witnessed, full many a time, the hearty devotion of morning and evening prayer in the North. I wonder how many houses represented by you come up to Matthew Henry's third standard. He says, "Those who pray do well." You get up to that, I hope. "Those that read the Scriptures and pray, do better. Those that read the Scriptures and pray and sing, do best of all." I think so. This is the scarlet line with the threefold cord to it, and I would that every house hung out that scarlet line as meaning, "This house belongs to King Jesus. The devil need not trouble himself to come here, for the strong man armed keeps his goods in peace."

The beauty of it was that *all inside Rahab's house were saved*. "Come in, dear mother," she said. Who among us could bear the thought of our mother being lost? It breaks our hearts to think of such a thing! My mother lost? Oh, no, that must not be! And your father lost? Oh, have you an unconverted father? I beseech you, give no slumber to your eyelids till you have done all you can to set before him the way of peace and have pleaded for him before God with sighs and tears! And then she said, "Come in, dear brothers and sisters." I delight in Rahab for loving her household. If you have brothers and sisters who are not yet under the scarlet line, pray to God to bring them in that all your house may be dedicated to the Most High and, without exception, all may dwell beneath the blessed blood red token which Infallibly preserves all who are sheltered beneath it!

I leave this point to notice that there are other things besides family prayer which should be like the scarlet line in the house. For instance, there should be in every Christian house a scarlet line put up in *the selecting of the company that is kept*. The Christian should carefully *select his friends and associates*. He should say, "He that tells lies shall not tarry in my sight." As for the drunkard, the swearer and those who use unchaste language, let them be what they may—they shall not visit within our doors—we will not tolerate them! If we are masters of our household, we try to find our children friends whom we should like to be their com-

panions in eternity. Some parents introduce their children to young men and young women who happen to be "very respectable," as they say, but who are worldly and ungodly—and thus they do much to ruin them! It should not be so. Hang the scarlet line over the door and if they do not love that scarlet line, religious conversation will before long make the place too hot for them! If you talk much of Jesus, the frivolous will consider that they have notice to leave and stay away!

A Christian's house should have a scarlet line over *its reading*. I confess to great sorrow whenever I see in a Christian's house, commonly laid about for the use of the girls, that dreadful rubbishing yellow stuff which pollutes every railway bookstall—much of it downright ungodliness and the best of it abominable nonsense—the reading of which is a sheer waste of time! When there are thousands of good and interesting books to be read, it seems a pity that Christian people should give their time to reading trash which cannot profit them. Let the asses have their thistles, I never grudge them! And so I will not say that worldlings should not read such books—they suit them—let them have them. I have never murmured at a farmer when I have seen him going along with his great mash of all manner of garbage to give to his hogs—as long as he did not give me a basin of it for dinner, I was satisfied to let the swine have their food! And there are a great many romances and a vast mass of literature which it is vain to deny to ungodly people, for it is after their nature. But as for us, let us have none of it! I should as soon expect to see the archangel Gabriel feeding out of a hog's trough, as to see one who is a joint heir with Christ finding his pleasure in books that are half lewd and the other half absurd. Hang a scarlet line over your library door as well as everywhere else!

So let it be with *all amusements*. There are some amusements that we cannot say are absolutely bad in themselves, but they lead to evil. They go up to the edge of the precipice—and there are many who only need to get so far and they are sure to fall over. Besides, they make the Christian so like the worldling that nobody could tell which is which! Now, tie the scarlet line up! I would do so even as to what *pictures* I would hang up in my house. I am often sad to see, especially in the houses of the poor—Roman Catholic pictures exhibited on the walls because they happen to be rather pretty and very cheap. Popish publishers have very cleverly managed to get up pictures of the Virgin and the lying fable of her assumption to heaven and all sorts of legends of saints. And being brightly colored and sold very much under cost, these vile things have been introduced into thousands of houses. I have seen to my horror a picture of God the Father represented as an old man—a conception almost too hideous to mention—yet the picture is hung up in the cottages of England! Whereas the Lord has declared that we should make no image of Him, or represent Him in any way—and even the attempt is blasphemous! If you

have a bad picture, no matter how good a work of art it is, burn it! And if you have a bad book, no matter how much it may be worth, do not sell it for somebody else to read—tear it in pieces!

Let the Christian hang up the scarlet line and make certain that nobody shall be corrupted in mind or body by anything that he tolerates in his house! I may seem to be too severe, but if my Master were to speak out of heaven, He would not rebuke that as a sin on my part—rather He would say that we need to be much more precise and decided about evil things.

Well, you shall do what you please—you have your own liberty—but, "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," and the blood red line shall be in my window! My father's father, do I not remember how, when I was a child, I used to hear his prayers for my grandfather and for me? Well do I remember my father's conversion in answer to my grandfather's prayers. And my father, can I ever forget how he wrestled for us at the mercy seat and God forbid it should happen that in my son's house, in years to come, there should be no altar to my God! I would sooner be without a tent for myself than without an altar for the Lord! Wherever we are, we must hang up the scarlet line! We cannot expect a blessing if we do not. Of course I am not speaking to those who are not fathers or heads of households. If they are servants, they cannot help what is done in the house. If they are underlings who have not the power, they cannot arrange as they would. But I am speaking to those who fear the Lord and can do it. Do, beloved; dedicate your house to God from the attic to the cellar. Let there be nothing even in the cellar which you would be ashamed for Jesus Christ to see. Let there be nothing about the house but what shall be so ordered that if your Lord should come, you could open your door and say, "Come and welcome, Master! There is nothing here that Your servant desires to conceal."

Believe in Jesus, O you who know Him not! And you who know Him, practice what you know. And God bless you! Amen and Amen

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 CHRONICLES 21:9-20.

Verses 9-11. *And the LORD spoke unto Gad, David's seer, saying, Go and tell David, saying, Thus says the LORD, I offer you three things: choose one of them, that I may do it unto you. So Gad came to David and said unto him, Thus says the LORD, Choose.* David was to choose where there was no choice, for everything proposed to him seemed to be equally bitter.

12, 13. *Either three years famine, or three months to be destroyed before your foes, while that the sword of your enemies overtake you, or else three days the sword of the LORD, even the pestilence in the land, and the angel of the LORD destroying throughout all the coasts of Israel. Now*

therefore advise yourself what word I shall bring again to Him that sent me. And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hands the LORD; for very great are His mercies: but let me not fall into the hands of man. It shows how he was broken down. David's proud heart was humbled. He was entirely submissive to the will of God. He wished to fall into the hands of the Lord.

14, 15. *So the LORD sent pestilence upon Israel and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men. And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the LORD beheld.* It is a very beautiful word—the Lord looked steadfastly on what was being done.

15. *And He repented Him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now your hand. And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.* One of the old inhabitants of the land who had escaped destruction, and had his possession on the top of Mount Morah.

16, 17. *And David lifted up his eyes and saw the angel of the LORD stand between the earth and the heavens, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces and said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? Even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed, but as for these sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand, I pray You, O LORD my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on Your people, that they should be plagued.* Here the great heart of the man who had sinned comes out again—he is no tyrant, after all—he is a worthy man to be the viceroy of the Most High. He has the same spirit that Moses had when he cried, "If not, blot my name out of the Book of Life." He offers himself, not the innocent for the guilty, but, indeed, the guilty for the guilty! As far as he can, he will bear the consequences of his sin.

18-20. *Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up and set up an altar unto the LORD on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. And David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spoke in the name of the LORD. And Ornan turned back and saw the angel.* He was busy at his threshing and he saw the angel standing by his own threshing floor .

20. *And his four sons with him hid themselves.* There are great caverns hard by the spot and, no doubt, they ran into one of them.

20-23. *Now Ornan was threshing wheat. And as David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out of the threshing floor and bowed himself to David with his face to the ground. Then David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of this threshing floor, that I may build an altar therein unto the LORD: you shall grant it to me for the full price: that the plague may be stayed from the people. And Ornan said unto David, Take it and let my lord the king do that which is good in his eyes. So, I give you*

the oxen also for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat offering. I give it all. And as we are told in the other narrative, as a king gives to a king, so did Ornan unto David. Probably he had been a king and David had dispossessed him in his conquest of Jebus, but now he proves that he had a royal heart and he offers to give all King David.

24, 25. *And King David said to Ornan, No, but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is yours, for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings without cost. So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight.* Not paid then and there, for he did not carry that amount with him, but fifty shekels of silver were paid that moment to bind their bargain according to the narrative in the 2nd book of Samuel.

26, 27. *And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD; and He answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering. And the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword into the sheath thereof.* That God had already done in His own intent and purpose, now He does it actually, just as before Jesus Christ, our great sacrifice, was offered, God, in the eternal purpose, had stayed the sword of vengeance from His redeemed people and then actually did it when Christ, their sacrifice was presented.

28-30. *At that time when David saw that the LORD had answered him in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there. For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt offering, were at that season in the high place at Gibeon. But David could not go before it to inquire of God: for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the LORD.*

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THE BELIEVER'S PRESENT REST
NO. 3169

A SERMON
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"We who have believed do enter into that rest."
Hebrews 4:3.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text are Sermons #866, Volume 15—REST and #2090, Volume 35—A DELICIOUS EXPERIENCE—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THE text does not say that we who have believed *shall* enter into rest. That is a very great truth, but it is not *the t*ruth that is taught here. We "*do* enter into that rest," even in this present life! All who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are already enjoying rest of heart and, in proportion as faith possesses their souls, in that proportion they enjoy perfect rest. It is not a future privilege—it is a matter of present enjoyment. And I pray my brothers and sisters in Christ not to impoverish themselves by making the text apply to the future, but to seek for the spiritual enrichment which God has given them by accepting the text just as the apostle wrote it and so realizing that "we who have believed *do* enter into that rest."

It appears from the connection in which these words appear that the type and pattern of all true rest for men was the rest of God at the end of the six days of creation. After He had worked so wondrously and finished all His creative work, we read that the Lord "rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made." It is not easy for us to understand how the rest of God could ever have been broken, yet there must have been a deeper kind of rest for Him on that seventh day than during the previous six days, for it is expressly said that God did rest then. Into that great mysterious deep we will not try to plunge, but we know that the Lord was pleased, then, to institute the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His own rest and that Sabbath was to be observed by all men—and especially by all the Lord's own people in perpetuity, as if, I think, He would not only commemorate His own rest, but would also indicate that He intended men to be partakers of it.

God's grand ideal of man's happiness was that he could not only work, but that he should also rest. What a wonderful restfulness there seems to be in every part of creation into which man does not come! Go into any part of the country where man is and there you find the plow cutting into the earth and the ox and the donkey and the horse toiling—and you meet

with men and women in sickness and poverty and need. But get away into the woods, traverse the wilds of nature and see how restful everything is there! Note how the birds seem to have little else to do but to sing God's praises. Mark how the very brooks warble as they flow and how all creation that is untouched by man appears to delight in a deep profound calm and peace! Had there been no Fall, the world would have been all restful—there would have been no thorns or thistles to vex and wound and add to man's labor—and no need for us to be always asking for fresh water power and steam power with which to alleviate the burden of the toil of man. Sweat from a weary brow, or the throbbing of a tired brain would have been altogether unknown! Earth would have kept her Sabbath even as God kept His. But sin has come into the world and from that blessed state of rest, man has fallen! Yet God is bringing us back to a rest similar to that—and all who have believed in Jesus have been brought into it. The Sabbath is to them the divine memorial of God's rest, the type of their own and also a continual reminder of the spiritual rest which they have found in Christ!

There is another type of rest given us in the word, namely that of the children of Israel entering into the Promised Land. "If Jesus (that is, Joshua), had given them rest," says the apostle, "then would he not afterward have spoken of another day." All the while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they were constantly moving to and fro, dwelling in tents and enjoying but little comfort. Notwithstanding all the blessings with which God enriched them in the wilderness, it *was* a wilderness, and Moses truly called it, "the waste howling wilderness." They had no rest there and they were always looking forward to the land flowing with milk and honey to where they were journeying. Their eager longing was for a land where they could settle down, build houses, plant vineyards and dwell in quiet resting places. Canaan is, therefore, the type of the rest which God intends to give His people *here*. It is not the type of heaven, except very imperfectly, for in Canaan there were Canaanites to be fought and to be gradually driven out. And there were some that were never driven out. But we thank God that there are no Canaanites to trouble the saints in heaven. Canaan is the true pattern and type of the believer's condition *upon the earth*. We who have believed in Jesus have crossed the Jordan. He has divided it for us and we have entered into rest. It is true that the Canaanites are still in the land, but the Lord also is in the land and, by His grace, we shall surely drive them all out. We ought not to say that we hope to reach Canaan's peaceful shore, by and by—we are on it now! If we have truly believed in Jesus, our condition is rightly typified by the Israelites in Canaan who had obtained their inheritance, for Jesus has obtained His inheritance and God "has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

I. The gist of what I have been endeavoring to say to you is that there is a rest which belongs to all believers *now*! And if they are living as they should live, they are in the enjoyment of it. I shall try, first, to DESCRIBE

THIS REST FROM THE FAMOUS TYPE WHICH IS GIVEN OF THE REST OF GOD.

That rest of God, at the end of the six days of creation, was like the rest which the believer enjoys, for it spoke of *a work that was finished.* I need not refresh your memory with the familiar story of the creation—how the darkness had been divided from the light, how the waters above the firmament had been separated from the waters below the firmament, how the living creatures had begun to swarm in the deeps and how, with rapid wing, the fowls of heaven were cleaving the air. I need not detail to you the springing up of the herb yielding seed after its kind, of the tree yielding fruit after its kind, the creation of cattle, of creeping things, of the beasts of the earth and of man, the masterpiece of God. And you know that when the sun set on the sixth day, God had finished all His work—there remained nothing to be completed. He had placed in the world all the creatures that were necessary to make up the complete circle of existence! There was no deficiency in any one, neither was there a lack of any one. The whole work of creation was finished and, therefore, God rested—He had other work to do—but from that particular work He rested and kept the Sabbath.

Now, can a Christian ever come to that condition? Yes, that is the true condition of every Christian. He sees the work of his own salvation complete—has he done it himself? Oh, no! If he had attempted to do it, he would have failed, and if any part of it had depended upon him, it would never have been accomplished. But the moment a sinner believes in Jesus, if he has been rightly instructed, he hears ringing from the cross of Calvary that gladsome sentence, "It is finished!" And he knows that the atonement is perfect, that the necessary justifying righteousness is completed, that every covenant blessing is secured and guaranteed to him—and that all that was needed in order to lift the sinner from the very gates of hell up to the throne of God has been already worked out and brought in by the great Redeemer, the incarnate Word of God! The worlds were framed by the Word of God and by that same Word of God men are saved. By that word the darkness fled and life came and light—and by that same word the darkness of our ruin has been dispelled and the light and life of our salvation have come to us! Beloved believer, remember that you are not *partly* saved, but you are wholly saved! The robe you wear today does not reach part of the way to cover you, but covers you from head to foot! The washing which the Savior has given you has not washed away a part of your spots, but you are clean every whit! And looking upon the work of your salvation as you receive it from the hands of Jesus, you may rest as God rested and keep a long and blessed Sabbath just as God has kept it! He rested because His creative work was finished—and you may rest because the work of your salvation is also finished!

Another reason why God rested on the seventh day was that not only was the work finished, but *all that was finished was good*. We read that at the conclusion of His six days work, "God saw everything that He had made and, behold, it was very good." And, therefore, He rested. And oh, what rest a believer gets when he looks on the finished work of Jesus Christ! And after examining every part of it, he is able to say of it all, "It is very good." To see Christ's work of covering sin and to note how His substitutionary sacrifice has covered it so completely that even God Himself cannot see it, is indeed, "very good." To realize that Christ has sunk our sins into oblivion, and made them cease to be—this also is, "very good." To look at Christ's justifying righteousness and to mark how perfect it is—not a thread missing, no part of the goodly texture having a flaw in it—this, too, is, "very good," and to see Christ as our Prophet, Priest and King; to view Him in all His relationships and offices—this, too, is, "very good." Yes, beloved, this is the way to get the *Sabbatismos*—the true rest which remains for the people of God! If we examine the work of Christ, both in its completeness and in all its details, as God the Father looked at His works and praised them all—if we let our judgment feel what a strong rock we have on which to build our eternal peace—then, like the ever blessed Jehovah, Himself, we shall rest and enter into His rest. Oh, that God would, by His grace, enable us to do so!

But, on further thinking this subject over, you will remember that God's great rest was not only connected with a work that was finished and a work that was in all respects good, but that *it was also very closely connected with His holiness*, for "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it." And He has said to us, "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy." I speak with the utmost reverence and trembling before the divine Majesty, yet I can truly say that there could have been no real rest even to God, Himself, if it had been conceivable that He could have been unholy. Perfect restfulness necessitates perfect holiness! Sin, which is inconceivable in connection with God, is inconceivable in connection with real rest. Hence, beloved, to make a true Sabbath, there must be a sanctifying of the day—it must be a holy day if it is to be a restful day! It is no use for men to say that they can get a rest by spending the Sabbath in amusement—they never will. There is no perfect rest to our entire manhood except in holiness and holy exercises, alone, can give complete rest to our whole being. Let us always remember this and pant after holiness. Heaven and holiness are twin sisters. As God makes you holy, He will make you happy—and when He has made you perfectly holy, you shall he perfectly happy! No waves of sorrow will ever come where there are no waves of sin. When you have done with sinning, you shall have done with sorrowing—

"There is sweet rest in heaven; there is sweet rest in heaven"—

but it is because there is a blessed absence of all the sin which must forever mar our peace and restfulness!

II. Now, secondly, I am going to DESCRIBE THIS REST FROM MY OWN EXPERIENCE AND FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD'S PEOPLE GENERALLY. "We who have believed do enter into that rest."

First, *we enter into rest concerning all dread of God and all terror on account of past sin.* It is but a little while ago that our sins greatly alarmed us. We knew that God must punish us for them and, therefore, we could not rest. But those sins, which then disturbed us, have been forgiven—we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son—and now, we who have believed, have no dread of punishment, no fear of the wrath to come, for we have entered into rest! I can truly say that this is my condition. Is it not yours, also, my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ? If you really believe in Jesus, it must be!

Next, *we enter into rest concerning all fears as to the future.* As to any trouble we may have in this life, we know that God will overrule it for our good. As to the pangs of death, we know that the Lord will be with us and will sustain us in the valley of death shade and we have no fear of anything that may follow after death, for what can hurt or disturb those of whom Christ has said, "Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory"? We are delivered from all fear of judgment, for who shall condemn those whom God has justified, and whom He will glorify? All dread as to our past sin is gone from us forever! Concerning past sin, our soul is even as a newborn child—we are cleansed from it by the precious blood of Jesus! And as for the future, we have no more dread about it than the angels in heaven have! They know that nothing can ever harm them, for they are God's own chosen ones—and so are we if we are believers in Jesus Christ.

We also now have rest from all our former sinful works. Once we were the slaves of our own evil passions and we were hurried here and there to degrading service by Satan and the lusts of the flesh. But now that the Son of God has made us free, we are free indeed! We find a joyous liberty in the ways of holiness and it is our constant delight to do the will of God. Thrice happy are we who have broken the bonds of sin and are no longer the servants of iniquity. And we are equally free from all servile works for self-salvation. Oh, I pity those poor people who are working to save themselves—those who go to church or chapel and who are kept from this offense, or urged to that other apparent excellence simply because they hope for a reward thereby! Sons of Hagar, Ishmaelite children of the bondwoman, you can never be inheritors of the rest which is the birthright of Isaac and all the children of the freewoman! You must be cast out even as Hagar's son was. But the man who believes in Jesus knows that he is saved, so he has no need to try to save himself. That work is done and done forever! And now we work *from* life, not *for* life! Now we work because *we are saved*, not in order *to be saved!* Now we feel that we have not to win any merit by anything that we do, but that

the infinite merit of Christ has already procured for us full acceptance with God. And what we have to do now is to prove our gratitude to God for the divine work that is already completed. What a blessed thing it is to rest both from the sinful service of Satan and from the servile service of the law!

I trust that many believers here can say that they have now come to *rest from all ambitious, discontented works*. The worldly man is never satisfied—he always wants to be greater, wiser, richer and more highly esteemed than he is. But he who truly believes in Jesus feels that God may do as He likes with him. If I am little, I thank God that He has many little ones whom He greatly loves. And if He makes me great, I thank Him because He will give me grace to bear my greatness with becoming humility. If I am poor, I will bless the Lord that He has promised that at least bread and water shall be given to those who trust Him. If He makes me rich, I will ask Him to give me the grace to use my substance for His glory. It is a blessed thing to come to such a pass as this about all worldly things and leave the disposal of all of them with God.

Some people are always fretting and fuming. They appear to have been born in stormy weather and to be perpetually agitated in mind so that they cannot rest. Only the other day, a gardener I knew of was complaining greatly of the heavy rain which had done some damage to the garden where he was working. A Quaker, who stood by, said to him, "Friend, you ought not to complain of the rain, for if it has not done this garden any good, it has done good to the fields of many of your neighbors. Therefore you ought to be glad on their account and to thank God." And then the good man very wisely added, "I do not think that, after all, we would have the weather any better managed by you than it is by God, if it could be put into your hands." That is the right way to look at all things—they are far better ordered by God than by any man! Christian, you could not order them better if you had the ordering of them, so be perfectly content and say, "Not my will, Lord, but Yours be done." The more faith grows, the more rest grows. But when our faith begins to forget the Lord and we commence to worry and to fret, then our rest goes at once. It is glorious to live exempt from care by the blessed power of prayer—to be able to take every trouble to God and leave it with Him. I know what it means to do so for I have sometimes had a church trouble or a household trouble and I have done my best with it—but bad has been my best and, at last, I have taken it to my God and I have said to Him—"Lord, I will not worry myself about that trouble anymore. I leave it with You—do what You please with it." And I have always found that the tangle has been unraveled when I have done that with it! There would always be a way found for us out of every trouble if we would trust wholly in God and not rely upon ourselves or our fellows!

"We who have believed do enter into rest." I have already incidentally shown you that *the rest of the Christian depends upon his believing*, but I want just now to emphasize that fact. It is not as a doer that you will get

rest, but as a believer! It is not as a professor, it is not as anything else except as a believer that you will obtain rest of heart. My brothers and sisters in Christ, I beseech you to hold fast your faith. There are many things that will tempt you to live by your experience, to live by your feelings and to live by your graces and your attainments—but remember that sentence that is again and again repeated in Scripture, "The just shall live by faith." Be like poor Jack the Huckster, whose one saying was—

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

Do not go an inch beyond that declaration—

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

The moment you go beyond that, you may get some temporary excitement, as they do who profess to be perfect and who, in these modern days, are reviving old fashioned heresies by professing that they are perfectly sanctified, which I venture to say they are not! You may get a delirious joy for a time, but it will evaporate before long. But keeping close to the cross is the thing for me! I remember an old countryman saying to me, long ago, "Depend upon it, my brother, if you or I get one inch above the ground, we get just that inch too high." And I believe it is so. Flat on our faces before the cross of Christ is the place for us—realizing that we are nothing and that Jesus Christ is everything!

"We who have *believed* do enter into rest." Not we who have *felt* this or that. Not we who *think* we are somebodies. But we who know that we are nobodies and hang alone upon Christ! I suppose there never was a more restful period to any of us than when we lay in our mother's bosom and just drank in our life's nourishment from her. And there is never such a restful period to any child of God as when he is just a little babe, hanging on the bosom of his God and drinking in all he needs from the eternal fountains of divine love and life! Oh, to be always such a blessed babe as that, relying upon my God for all the strength I need! Then may I utter Paul's paradox, "When I am weak, then am I strong." Though I am a fool, God is my wisdom! Though I am nothing at all, God is my all in all. This is the way to enter into rest through believing!

Now, lastly, let me remind you, beloved, that *this rest is perfectly consistent with labor*. In verse 11 the apostle says, "Let us labor, therefore, to enter into that rest." It is an extraordinary injunction, but I think he means, let us labor not to labor. Our tendency is to try to *do something* in order to save ourselves. But we must beat that tendency down and look away from self to Christ. Labor to get away from your own labors! Labor to be clean rid of all self-reliance! Labor in your prayers never to depend upon your prayers! Labor in your repentance never to rest upon your repentance and labor in your faith not to trust to your faith, but to trust only to Jesus! When you begin to rest upon your repentance and forget the Savior, away with your repentance! And when you begin to

pray and you depend upon your prayers and forget the Lord Jesus, away with your prayers! When you think you are beginning to grow in grace and you feel, "Now I am somebody," away with such spurious growth as that, for you are only being puffed up with pride and not really growing at all! Labor not to labor; labor to keep down your natural self-righteousness and self-reliance; labor to continue where the publican was and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Labor to get where Mary was, sitting at the Master's feet and learning of Him. Labor not to grow upward in self-esteem, but to grow downward in humiliation—growing continually less and less, and less in your own estimation—and always crowning Christ Lord of all!

Labor also to show your gratitude to God for what He has done for you, and then labor to show your love to men; you must not suppose that when we enter into rest, it means that we are idle. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, "My Father works up to now, and I work." God rests, yet He works. Heaven is a place of rest, but it is not a place of idleness—there is still holy service to be done there, so you Christian people who are perfectly saved, devote all your strength to the winning of others for Christ! Show your love to Jesus by trying to find some of His lost sheep for Him. Awaken yourselves, my brothers and sisters who have entered into rest, and prove to mankind that the grand old Calvinistic doctrine of a finished salvation does not breed sluggishness! Rise, I pray you, and show that the children of the freewoman are not slothful, but that the motive of gratitude to God is a higher and more potent one than the selfish motive of seeking to save yourselves! Let those who want to save themselves go and work for themselves, but as for you who are saved, go and work for Jesus! And let your deeds of holy heroism prove that you are constrained by love to Him to do all that you can to bring others to trust in Him! Now, as some of you are coming to this communion table, may it prove to be a feast of rest to your souls! Sitting, as you will be, in the posture of rest, eating the bread and drinking the wine which are the tokens of the finished work of Christ, may you have real rest in Him! And oh, that some poor sinner who has never believed in Jesus, may do so now, for thus shall he find rest unto his soul! The Lord grant it, for Jesus sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 CORINTHIANS 4.

Verse 1. *Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not.* It is a very high privilege to be called to the work of the Christian ministry. And when the minister remembers what great mercy he has, himself, received, what sins have been forgiven, what favors have been bestowed—he has the very best incentives in all the world to pursue his ministry with diligence and with zeal. "We faint not," says the apostle. We do not hang our harps upon the willows. We do not pray

to be allowed to retire from the battle and give up the strife, but feeling how great has been the mercy of God to our own souls, we are stirred up to press forward with holy zeal to win the victory! We long that others may taste of the same good things on which we have feasted.

2. *But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.* There have, alas, been many preachers who have handled the Word of God in the manner described by the apostle. They have cut and trimmed the truth in order to please their generation—they have kept back *this*, or have made unduly prominent *that*, instead of giving all the truth of God its proper and proportionate prominence in their ministry. But such men have not, after all, won the respect of their hearers. There is an old story told of King John of England that when he was closely pressed by the barons, he wrote to the emperor of Morocco and offered to turn Muslim and take an oath of allegiance to him if he would send an army to help him. And it is said that ever after the emperor of Morocco abhorred and detested the very name of John, for he said he must be an abominable miscreant to be willing to change his religion for the sake of gain! Ah, my brothers, we never gain any respect, even from the world, by seeking after it in this fashion! Be thoroughly honest, especially you who are in the Christian ministry. Be outspoken, blunt and plain—and then, even if men's prejudices condemn you, their consciences will commend you for speaking what you believe to be the truth of God.

3, 4. *But if our gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.* [The following Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon parts of these two verses, are #2304, Volume 39—BLINDED BY SATAN; #2077, Volume 35—THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST and #1663, Volume 28—THE TRUE GOSPEL IS NO HIDDEN GOSPEL—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Without light from above, no man can perceive the beauties either of the gospel or of Christ Himself. Until God the Holy Spirit sheds a spiritual light upon the person, offices and work of Christ, men grope in the dark as blind men do. They see not the truth of God. They are not persuaded of its excellence. Our ministry is to them a veiled ministry, they do not comprehend it. Let those who receive not the gospel see what a miserable state theirs is—they are blinded by "the god of this world." He has such supremacy over their intellects that he has utterly perverted and ruined them!

5. *For we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.* Hence we learn that anything like priestcraft is altogether foreign to the Bible. The "priest" preaches up himself, the extraordinary value of his ordination, the occult influences which flow from his touch, the mysterious power which dwells in baptismal water and in "consecrated" wafers and poured-out wine. This is preaching

themselves with a vengeance! But Christ's apostles preached not themselves—they preached up Christ and Him crucified. Paul wrote, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." And this was the constant theme of all the apostles. If they mentioned themselves at all, they simply said, as Paul does here, "Ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

6. *For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* [See Sermon #1493, Volume 25—THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] There is the very glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, for He is, "very God of very God," and he who will but think of the wondrous mystery of the incarnate deity and the simple but marvelous plan of salvation through Christ's atoning sacrifice will see infinitely more glory, there, than in all God's works in creation or providence. Well does Dr. Watts say—

"The spacious earth and spreading flood
Proclaim the wise and powerful God!
And Your rich glories from afar
Sparkle in every rolling star.
But in Christ's looks a glory stands,
The noblest labor of Your hands,
The pleasing luster of His eyes
Outshines the wonders of the skies."

7. *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellence of the power may be of God, and not of us.* The original might very fairly be rendered, "We have this treasure in oyster shells," for, just as pearls are found in the shells of oysters, so God gives to those who preach the word, the treasure of the gospel, yet they are themselves nothing but the oyster shells, nothing but the earthen vessel in which God pleases to place His priceless treasures. If you have done anything in the service of God, my brother, remember that you are nothing but the oyster shell—it is God's truth that is the pearl in you! So while you are thankful for the honor that He puts upon you, mind that you give Him all the glory. It is well to take the right view of our own imperfections and infirmities, as Paul did when he wrote, "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." The infirmity of the creature leaves more room for the display of the greatness of the Creator, for if God can work such wondrous results by using such poor tools as we are, how great must be His power and skill!

8, 9. *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed. We are perplexed but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.* "We are troubled on every side." There seems to be an allusion here to the Greek wrestling games. Sometimes in wrestling, a man would be gripped by his adversary so that he could scarcely move hand or foot, yet bravely says the apostle, "We are not distressed," or, as the original seems to suggest, "We still have a plan of overcoming our adversaries.

Though they seem to have got us entirely in their power, there is still something that we can do to obtain our release." And he goes even further than that, for he says, "We are perplexed"—it seemed as if there was nothing that he could do, yet he added, "but not in despair"—"not altogether without help," as the marginal reading renders it—for when he could do nothing, God could do everything! The death of creature strength is the birth of omnipotent might!

"Persecuted, but not forsaken"—having no man's face to smile upon him, but still rejoicing in the light of God's countenance. "Cast down"—as if his antagonist had thrown him and he had fallen heavily upon the ground. Yet he says, as he springs up again, "Cast down, but not destroyed." Many a time the Christian wrestler is thrown by his foe, but he never has a final fall. As Paul, when he was stoned at Lystra and left for dead, rose up again, and soon went on with his work, so the Christian, when he has been cast down by trouble, often seems to gain new life and vigor—and to go on to serve his Master even better than he did before!

10. *Always bearing about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.* The apostles were always ready to die for Christ and, therefore, they were enabled to live so much like Christ—imitating His life and being prepared to follow Him even to the death whenever He called them to do so.

11-14. *For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death works in us, but life in you. We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and, therefore, have I spoken; we also believe and, therefore, speak knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us up also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.* There is no possibility of serving God well, especially under great trials and persecutions, without a deeply rooted confidence in the truth of His gospel. Once have a doubt concerning that and the strong sinews of our spiritual manhood are cut! Once begin to question the evidences of our holy religion and you cannot henceforth serve God as you did before! Oh, to be strengthened every day with might in the inner man—to feel that in our own experience we have continually fresh proofs of the truth of the gospel and that, whether we have trials or delights, we are thereby the more firmly rooted in faith, even as the trees are rooted both by the March winds and the April showers—and so rooted in faith that we grow into it and cannot be separated from it because it has become a part of ourselves! Religion is nothing to any of you unless it is woven into the very warp and woof of your being—it must go right into your very soul and become a vital part of you, or else you have never received it in Truth!

15, 16. *For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perishes, yet the inward*

man is renewed day by day. The sickness that crumbles away the body of a Christian often confirms his soul in the faith that he received when he was strong and well. Some of the healthiest hours that God's people ever have are the hours of their sorest sicknesses. God often sends His people fevers to make them well. He sends them losses to make them rich. He takes away their earthly friends to bring them closer to their best friend and He brings them to their wits' end that they may begin to be truly wise! Often, when God strips us of all our worldly possessions, it is the most soul-enriching season we have ever known! But, on the other hand, the day of temporal prosperity has often been a day of spiritual poverty. Adversity has many a time been an angel in disguise, but prosperity has been the devil in a mask! Let us take care that we cleave closely to Christ under both experiences, for then both of them shall be sanctified to us.

17. *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* Notice the antithesis here. "Light affliction"—a "weight of glory." "Affliction" is not set in contrast with peace, or freedom from affliction, but with "glory." The "light affliction" is "for a moment"—the "weight of glory" is "eternal." And then, as if this were not enough, the apostle has to exhaust all ordinary powers of speech in order to adequately express the contrast between the, "light affliction" and the, "weight of glory." It is "far more exceeding"—not only a soul brim full of bliss and overflowing, but far more than that if there can be such a thing—"a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

18. *While we look not at the things which are seen*. Alas for us if we did!

18. *But at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal.* Temporal and temporary! See how they melt away, one after another!

18. *But the things which are not seen are eternal.* [See Sermon #1380, Volume 23—VANITIES AND VERITIES—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The substance is beyond the river. The shadows are here. God help us to look for the substance and to claim it as our own—and let none of us try to grasp the shadows which would be worthless if we could ever hold them in our hands!

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THE NOVELTIES OF DIVINE MERCY
NO. 3170

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1909.
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"His compassions...are new every morning: great is Your faithfulness."
Lamentations 3:22, 23.

THE book of the Lamentations of Jeremiah is very sorrowful. When you look upon the dragons, owls, pelicans and bitterns of the wilderness, you have a fit picture of his mournful state. He was full of grief, like a bottle needing vent. His heart was ready to burst with wormwood and with gall.

But the whole current changes when the prophet brings to his remembrance the mercy of God! No sooner does he think of the compassions of the Most High than at once he takes his harp from the willows and begins to sing as joyously as ever that sweet singer of Israel, David, sang before him. And, truly, if we, too, instead of harping upon our miseries, would but reflect upon our mercies, we would exchange our mournful dirges for songs of joy!

It is true that God's people are a tried people, but it is equally true that God's grace is equal to their trials! It is quite true that through much tribulation they enter the kingdom of heaven, but then they *do* enter—and the thought of the kingdom that is coming sustains them in their present tribulation! They wade through the waters of woe, often breast deep, but the billows do not, *and shall not*, go over them! They shall still be able to sing even in the midst of the tempest. I would suggest to any here who are in the habit of complaining—and I would remind you that it is a very bad habit—and to any of you who have become chronic murmurers, that this temper of mind is exceedingly sinful. While, on the other hand, the remembrance of God's mercy and grateful talk about it is a virtuous habit—one which is honoring to God as well as strengthening and profitable to our own souls. Imitate Jeremiah, then, and if you can find no comfort in your present outward circumstances, meditate upon the unfailing mercies of God!

What a blessed word that is which the prophet here uses, "compassions"! David uses the word, "pity," more frequently, but he means the same thing. It is a humbling word, though exceedingly consolatory. I have often felt very deeply chastened in my own soul at the remembrance of the text, "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." What? Is this the Lord's attitude towards even the strong-

est and the best of saints? Does God only *pity* them? Yes, it is even so—those that do exploits, those that lead the van in the day of battle, those to whom we look up with respect and admiration, God looks upon with infinite love—but that love still takes the form of *pity*. He can see their weakness where we only see their strength. He can discover their defects where we merely admire the work of the Holy Spirit in them. And, therefore, He regards them with pity. Yet it is a Father's pity, the pity of a Father who smiles at the weakness of the child, knowing that the attempt which it is making, though a feeble one, will educate it for something better! And foreseeing that it will, by and by, outgrow its weakness and be able to do greater things.

God has compassion for the best of His people, but it is compassion prompted by love. It is not the pity that is akin to scorn, but the pity which melts from love, as the honey drops from the honeycomb. I would again ask our dear friends who are tried and troubled to think of the infinite pity of God towards them. He has smitten you, but still, not as hard as He might have done! Out of pity He has stayed His hand. He has spoken sharply to you through your own conscience, but if He had spoken as loudly as your sins deserved, there would have been loud thunderclaps instead of gentle admonitions! He has withered your gourds, but if He had done to you what stern justice might have demanded, it would not have been the gourd that would have withered, but you, yourself, would have wasted away!

Admire the compassion of God toward you! Even if one child in your family is sick, they are not all sick. If the Lord has taken away one of your friends by death, there are many other friends still left to cheer and comfort you. You have had heavy losses in business, but you are not bankrupt. You are not in good health, but still, you have not been stricken with the diseases which have attacked some others—your pain is bearable. It is true that the weather is dull and heavy to your spirit, but it is not the blackness of "the valley of the shadow of death." Take heart even in the midst of affliction and chastisement, for the compassion of God is still to be seen!

Moved by such thoughts as these, the prophet penned the remarkable words before us, "His compassions are new every morning: great is Your faithfulness." I have been admiring the first sentence of the text which suggests to me *the novelties of divine mercy.* And as I speak upon it, I mean to get you to preach to yourselves, to wake up your recollections, to ask you to turn over a few pages in your old notebooks, to make you look at your diaries and remember what God has done for you since you first savingly knew His name.

I. First, then, I want to remind you that GOD'S MERCIES ARE ALWAYS NOVELTIES—"They are new every morning."

The water that is in the cistern may be sufficient for a long time, but if it is stored, it will not remain fresh. It may have been fresh the first

morning it flowed into the cistern, but it will not be fresh tomorrow. And the longer it lasts, the more stagnant it will become. But the water that gushes from the spring head is always fresh! I drank of it when I was a boy. I went to it in the prime of manhood. I stoop to drink of it now that my hair is turning gray and it is still as fresh and sparkling as ever. God is not the cistern, but the fountain! Our treasures which we lay up on earth are the stagnant pools, but the treasure which God gives us from heaven, in providence and in grace, is the crystal fountain which wells up from the eternal deeps and is always fresh and always new! There are no gray hairs upon the angel of the covenant, no wrinkles upon His brow. I may say of Him what the spouse in Solomon's Song says of her Beloved, "His locks are bushy, and black as a raven." Mercy is as old as eternity and is always God's darling attribute, yet it is always young, active and bright and fair! Mercy is not a tree that yields its fruit but once in the year—our trees bear such fruit as that which may be stored through the winter and kept till, perhaps, it becomes rotten. But the mercy of God is like the tree of life which bears its fruit every month—at all times and at all seasons we may have a share of the compassions of God—and we shall find that "they are new every morning."

The thought that God's mercy is always new is a pleasing one, but that it is new every morning is very amazing. If you had to preach year after year, as some of us do, you would find it no small difficulty to have something new to say every Sunday. But God has something new for us every morning! I suppose the writers in our newspapers often have to exercise their brains to give us something new every day, but God, with the greatest ease, sends to the many millions of His people something new every morning! He does not need to repeat Himself. If He sends the same mercy, there is something about it which shows it to be fresh and new. God never gives us old money that has been worn and defaced—His mercy always comes to us fresh from the mint with all the brightness and clearness of new coinage! "His compassions are new every morning." Not only *some* mornings, but EVERY morning from the first of January to the last of December! God never has to stay His hand, He never has to pause to think of something fresh. His mercies come to us freely, spontaneously, "new every morning." Let us think for a little while what this means.

In the first place, every morning brings a new mercy because *every morning ends the night*. The night is the time of danger and dismay. Why do we ask, concerning the sick one, "How did he pass the night?" We seldom inquire, "How did he pass the day?" Is it not because somehow or other we connect the night with the idea of insecurity and danger? We wear the image of death upon our faces while we sleep—and how slight the difference is between a sleeping man and a dead man is plain to all beholders. Every morning we may say, "What a mercy that our bed did not become our tomb! What a mercy that in the night we were not

alarmed with fire, that our couch was not consumed and ourselves in it—that the house was not broken into by wicked men, that no convulsions of nature terrified us, that no cry of anguish, like the shrieks that woke up every parent in Egypt, was heard in our house because our child was dying!" Such cries have been heard by some of us and we have had dreadful nights which we shall never forget! Let us live as long as we may, but every morning in which we wake without such alarms and tears, or after a quiet, restful night in which God has given to His beloved, sleep, we have had a new mercy and we may at once look up to the Lord, and say, "We praise You that another night is gone! Your mercies are new every morning."

But every morning also brings a new mercy because *every morning ushers in another day*. That is a new reason for praise, for we have no right to an hour, or even a minute, much less to a day. To the sinner, especially, it is a great mercy to have another day of grace, another opportunity for repentance, a new reprieve from death, a little more space in which to escape from hell and fly to heaven. Ah, soul, suppose you had never seen the light of another rising sun but had heard, instead thereof, the dreadful sentence, "Depart, accursed one, into the darkness which shall never be pierced by a ray of light"? How terrible would have been your portion! So what a mercy it is that you are still spared!

The Christian may thank God that he has another day in which he may walk with God as Enoch did, another day in which he may trust God as Abraham did, another day in which he may work for Christ as Paul did, another day in which he may reap the gospel harvest, another day in which he may gather pearls for Immanuel's crown, another day in which he may be ripening for glory, another day in which he may hold communion with his Lord, another day in which he may be making advances in the blessed pilgrimage towards the Celestial City! God gives us our days—may He teach us their value, for they are pearls of great price. And then as each new morning breaks, we may truly say to Him, "Your mercies are new every morning, for the morning has brought us another day."

Further, a new mercy comes to us each morning, at least to the most of us, because *each morning brings supplies for the day*. I have often thought to myself, "What a mercy it is to know that when I wake there is a breakfast provided for me!" There are many, alas, who do not know from where their first meal in the day is to come. That is a sorrowful thing, and a very trying discipline—but it is certainly not the case with the most of us, for we always have enough for the next day in our cupboard. When we rise in the morning, we are not quite like the sparrows who have to seek their food. They begin to chirp as soon as they wake—there is nothing in their barn, yet they sing, as Luther understood then—

"Mortal, cease from care and sorrow,
God provides for the morrow."

Then they set to work to find their daily bread and find it they do, for God feeds the fowls of heaven—and your day's provision is waiting for you! There is the manna for you outside the camp and you know where to gather it. As you do so, remember the mercy of the Lord and bless His holy name!

But you say that you have not all you could wish to have and, therefore, you are not happy. Ah, dear friends, let us all obey the apostle's injunction, "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." And let us all learn the lesson of which the apostle wrote, "I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."

Let me again remind you—because I am afraid some of you, especially those of you who have abundance, do not always remember it—that you are daily dependent upon God's providence, that you as much receive your daily bread from God as if the ravens brought it, that you as certainly obtain all that you receive from the hand of God as if it dropped from the clouds, or as if the wind brought you quails! Be thankful, then, that as each day brings to your household fresh needs for daily bread, clothing and shelter, God is also pleased to give such mercies as you need every morning.

In spiritual things, my brothers and sisters in Christ, how richly may the text be illustrated! "His compassions are new every morning," because *every morning I commit fresh sins*. Strange creature that I am, I can scarcely open my eyes to the light before my complex nature begins to display the darkness that still lingers within me! Miserable mass of humanity that I am by nature, I can hardly breathe without offending in the thoughts and imaginations of my heart. And even though I may watch my eyes, guard my tongue and keep the members of my body pure, yet still my heart goes a wandering and my tongue, before long, speaks idle words! Yet the mercy is that with the new sin, there always comes the new pardon, for "His compassions are new every morning." So, before we leave our bedchamber, we go afresh to the—

"Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins"—

and once again we wash and are clean! When we go forth to our business and tug and toil to earn an honest living, we are all too prone to wander from our God—yet even then we may still think of our blessed Master who girded Himself with a towel, poured water into a basin and washed His disciples' feet—and then said that they were clean every whit. We are like those disciples, for our daily pollutions need a daily cleansing. We have been once washed in the precious blood of Jesus and we are clean in the sight of God, but we need to be daily cleansed from our daily defilements—and every morning brings us this divine grace.

Then, we scarcely leave our bedchamber, no, we do not leave it, before *the new morning brings new temptations*. Some mornings especially bring us temptations that we have never experienced before, insinuations gain an entrance into our mind which never perplexed us till that moment. We scarcely know how to deal with them—and young Christians, especially, are often staggered when these diabolical shafts are winging their way towards them! Then, when we go downstairs to begin the duties of the day, we do not know how long we shall be before we shall be sorely tempted to sin. If we did but know at what hour the tempter would come, we might be on the watch for him, but lo, Satan and sin come like a thief in the night! The time when a child of God is most likely to be tempted to sin is when he is in the holiest frame of mind. You may think that is an odd remark, but I make it as the result of my own experience. I have often found that when I have been nearest to God in prayer, or when I have most enjoyed a service, I have just then been met by somebody who said something gross, or wicked, or unkind. And I have been tempted to answer and perhaps *have* answered in a way for which I have afterwards been sorry. If you are like I, beloved, you know that after having been lifted up by some ecstatic experience, you are not well prepared to meet these contrary individuals—so that in your moments of highest joy, something may occur to cause your feet to trip!

Well, now, it is such a mercy for me to remember that when I begin each new morning, though I cannot tell what temptations may come to me, I do know that God's mercies are new every morning and, therefore, that there will be fresh grace to enable me to resist the fresh temptations! We may rest assured that we shall be taken with no temptation but such as is common to man—and that God will, with the temptation, also make a way of escape for us. Put on the whole gospel armor and then let the shafts of the tempter fall where they may—they shall not wound you. Or if a wound is received by you between the joints of your harnesses, there is a tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations—and a heavenly hand shall reach down with those healing leaves that your wounds may be healed. Let us be glad, then, that there is daily grace to enable us to overcome daily temptations!

We do not completely know, when we wake in the morning, what will be the particular tasks of the day, for *each new day brings new duties*. Even though we should know completely, as we do know in part, the service appointed for the day, yet it would be a sad thing to wake up to new duties and new responsibilities if we had not also, new strength with which to discharge them. Every day brings a new duty, or it may be an old duty in a new shape, cast in another mold. All that I did yesterday cannot exonerate me if I am idle today—and all the service that I did for my Master a year ago will not excuse me if I waste this year. I must take each hour of time on the wing and I must seek to get wealth from it as it passes by me. This is your consolation, beloved, that there shall be daily

strength given to you for the daily duty to which God calls you! Depend upon it, if God will allow us to work or fight for Him, He will not let us go in our own strength or at our own charges, but He will provide His soldiers with suitable weapons—and He will provide the workers in His vineyard with the best tools for their service. There is daily grace, then, for daily duties.

I might go on to mention that *each day will bring its trials, anxieties and necessities*, but I should also have to remind you that each morning brings the promise, "As your *days*"—note that the word is in the plural, not, as so many misquote it, "As your day," but, "As your *days*, so shall your strength be." As long as days shall last and till time shall be swallowed up in eternity, God's compassions shall be new every morning—to meet our new needs, our new relations, our new responsibilities, our new temptations and our new sins!

II. Now, I will try to illustrate this subject in another light, for this text is like a kaleidoscope—you may turn it as many times as you will and there will constantly be a fresh form of beauty to be seen. Remember, therefore, that SOMETIMES THE MERCIES WE RECEIVE ARE ACTUALLY NEW IN THEMSELVES.

You must all have had certain periods in your lives when new mercies were bestowed upon you. I cannot mention them all, but just think of the Ebenezers, the stones of help, all along your pathway—and the stones of Bethel that you have set up after some distinguishing favors which have made such days and nights memorable to you. Such mercies as these have been new in a peculiarly special sense.

Sometimes the mercy is *new in substance*—you have received what you never received before. At other times the mercy is not so much new in substance as it is *new in the way of its coming*. I am sure that yesterday, when after praying for the last two or three months that God would remember the various works we have in hand—and we received a thousand pounds for the Stockwell Orphanage from some unknown donor—I felt that it was a new mercy of a very special character! Money has been sent to me, many times, for the Lord's work under my charge, but it has each time been sent in a different way, or in a different form—and each time it has well near overwhelmed me! When I heard of the generous gift yesterday, I was sitting with a dear brother who had just been saying to me, "My dear friend, there are some people who say, 'Our Brother Spurgeon does not know where to stop—he is always going on from one good thing to another—if he should make a failure, it would be a very dreadful thing!' Now," said my friend, "don't you think it would be a great catastrophe? What a large amount is required for the College!" And then he mentioned other things and closed by saying, "Suppose there should be a failure in the income?" I said, "I never suppose any such thing! I have no purpose to see and no end to gain, and no motive in carrying on

all these institutions, but God's glory. I was forced into these works against my will and God cannot leave me—He must carry on the work and I am persuaded that He will do so—my motive is Jehovah Jireh." Just at that moment, the post came and the letter was opened which told me about the thousand pounds. My friend said, "My dear brother, let us kneel down and praise the Lord for His mercy." And so we did. And with many tears he thanked God, oh, in such a warmhearted manner—and he evidently felt how foolish it was to talk about things failing that are undertaken for God, because God is sure to help us! My friend said it was a blessed means of divine grace to him and that he would remember that day as one of the choice days in his life in which God had showed that He would help those who, in His name, undertake work for the poor and needy and try to aid His cause. Well now, was not that a new mercy? It was not a new thing for us to receive help, but the mercy came in a new way—and it is in such a fashion as this that God's mercies "are new every morning."

Then sometimes, when you do not get the mercy in exactly a new way, yet *it seems new to you because you are in a new condition*. You have more knowledge and can better comprehend the value of the mercy. You have more experience and can better understand your own need of the mercy. The mercy which comes to a young man of 20 has a special brightness about it—the mercy which comes to the same man at 70 may not have so much sparkle about it, but there will be, I think, if the man is a full grown Christian—and age is not always identical with growth in grace—a deeper and more solemn sense of obligation when the mercy comes to him. As we advance in life, the glitter of our thoughts may depart, but the solid gold of them will remain and increase and multiply—that is to say if we really grow mature in spirit as well as old in years. The Lord grant that we may! I am sure that the light in which the aged Christian man regards a mercy is, in some respects, a different light from that in which the young man regards it. The babe in grace is very grateful for God's mercy and sees that the mercy is very precious. But the full grown man in Christ Jesus has a gratitude of a far richer and deeper kind. Thus, this mercy of God is new to us because we see it in a new light and it finds us in a new state.

III. Now, thirdly, to come to the practical point of my discourse, I want to ask this question—As GOD'S MERCIES ARE NEW EVERY MORNING, WHAT THEN?

Then I call upon you for *new praise*. I ask in the name of Jesus Christ whose new mercies you and I, my brothers and sisters, are always receiving, that our hearts and our lips should praise Him hour by hour, and even moment by moment! Weave new crowns for Christ! Sing new sonnets in honor of His blessed person and of the mercies which so constantly flow to us from Him—

"Your mercy, my God, is the theme of my song,

The joy of my heart, and the boast of my tongue!
Your free grace alone, from the first to the last
Has won my affections and bound my soul fast.
Great Father of mercies! Your goodness I own,
And the covenant love of Your crucified Son!
All praise to the Spirit, whose whisper divine
Seals mercy, pardon and righteousness mine!"

I ask you not merely for praise in words, but for *praise in new actions* which shall speak far more loudly than words. Be not content with what you have already done for God, but out of gratitude to Him be constantly doing something new if it is possible. As the soldier seeks to be always pressing forward, so let us be always trying to do more and more for God. Let us be even as the eagle when he soars to the skies, continually circling higher and higher. God grant that we may not rest on our laurels, saying, "We did such and such when we were young," or, "We gave so much yesterday to the cause of God," but, as the new mercies continue to come to us, let there constantly be on our part new returns of service for God.

And I ask not only for new actions, but also for *new faith*. Let every new mercy confirm our confidence in the God of mercy! All these compassions of our covenant keeping God are so many swift witnesses against our unbelief. All these loving-kindnesses of the Lord are so many strong evidences for the confirmation of our confidence in Him. God may well say to us, "At what time have I been false to you? Have I received you for a season and then cast you away? Have I been slack in blessing you? Have I stinted you in mercy? Have I withheld My loving-kindness from you?" You dare not say that God has been stingy towards you! His mercies have been "new every morning." Shall God, then, have to say to you, "You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifice: but you have made Me to serve with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities"? Let not the Lord have to upbraid us thus but let our grateful inquiry be, "What shall we render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards us?" And so let us give Him new praise, new gratitude and new service to prove our gratitude!

I ask you, then, for new confidence in God. Or if you cannot mount so high as that, at any rate I ask all here who have proved the faithfulness of God to offer to Him *new prayers*. If you have already been heard by Him, pray to Him again. The beggar in the street says to you, "Help me this time and I will never ask you to help me again." Talk not like that, O you who beg at God's door of mercy, but—

"From His mercy draw a plea,
And ask Him still for more!"

"Open your mouth wide and I will fill it," is the Lord's gracious exhortation and promise! Spread your wings and soar away to the very throne of

God and then *expect* that He will still exceed your faith and do for you exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or even think!

Gathering up much matter into a little space, I ask of all Christians the exercise of a holy ingenuity in inventing *new plans for honoring Christ*. I ask the exercise of a holy perseverance in carrying those plans into action. I ask for the blazing of a holy zeal every morning to make the carrying out of those plans to be always earnest and fervent so that as the Lord's loving-kindnesses are new every morning, so also may be our grateful recollections and our loving service!

IV. I have no time left for speaking at length upon the second sentence of the text, GREAT IS YOUR FAITHFULNESS, though I had intended to do so. I shall, therefore, only utter these few remarks upon it.

"Great is Your faithfulness," so great that *there has never been an exception to it*. You have never, O Lord, at any time acted towards any of Your people otherwise than according to Truth and righteousness! A man may be quite honest and upright, and yet if he conducts an extensive business, it will be very difficult for him to escape a charge of having sometimes overstepped the mark. He may never have done so, but still, it will be very difficult, especially if he has many employees, for him to escape the charge of having done so. But our God has had thousands of millions of people to deal with throughout all ages and yet there stands not beneath the cape of heaven, nor yet above the stars, nor in hell itself, a single soul who can say that God, in any transaction, has ever dealt with him otherwise than according to absolute faithfulness!

But, further than that, *no item in the whole roll of divine promises to us has been unfulfilled by God*. Old Joshua said to the children of Israel, "Not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you." If a man makes many promises, I will defy him to keep them all, because even if he is both able and willing to keep them, yet he will not always be able to remember them. But God remembers every promise that He ever made and He takes care to honor each of those promises in the experience of those who believe in Him! They who trust in the Lord shall find Him to be faithful, not only in great things, but also in little things! While He keeps the oath of His covenant fast forever, His faintest word shall abide firm and steadfast, and the least truth which He has ever declared shall never grow dim.

The glory of God's faithfulness is that *no sin of man has ever made Him unfaithful*. Unbelief is a most damning thing and yet, even though we believe not, God abides faithful! His children may rebel against His law and they may wander far from His statutes. And He may chastise them with many stripes, yet He said, "My loving-kindness will I not utterly take away from them, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail." God's saints may fall under the cloud of His displeasure and provoke the Most High by their transgressions—yet He will have compassion upon them, will turn unto them and say—"I, even I, am He that blots out their transgres-

sions for My own sake, and will not remember their sins." So no sin of man can make God unfaithful—

"Let us, then, with gladsome mind,
Praise the Lord, for He is kind—
For His mercies shall endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure."

And, once again, *no crisis that can by any possibility ever arise can compel God to be unfaithful to His people*. Even though the whole world should go to wreck and ruin, yet He would still bear up the pillars of His people's hope. When His saints cannot be safe *under* heaven, He will take them up *to* heaven. When He shall bid the great fountains of fire leap up to consume this world and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, if we are alive and remain at the coming of the Son of Man, we shall be caught up together with the Lord in the air! God provided an ark for Noah before He sent the deluge. And He had a mountain refuge ready for Lot before He destroyed Sodom. If David must be driven from the court of Saul, he shall be sheltered in Engedi. And if, by and by, the Philistines shall come up against the land, God will still take care of His servant! At the worst pinch, God will always be there—you may reckon it as certain that He has never forgotten His people! When the clock strikes and the bell tolls the hour, God will arise for their defense and show Himself to be strong on behalf of all those who put their trust in Him!

Settle it in your minds, beloved, that God cannot lie! Believe every man to be a liar if you must, but never believe that God can fail you! If you speak in your soul after this fashion, "Sometimes I see the wicked prosper and I am in tribulation and distress. And my spirit says, 'Has God forgotten me? Will He give all the good things to those who curse Him and cause His people to be chastened forever?'" Say that to yourself very softly and then add, "Yet, though all things seem thus contrary to the Lord's people, I know that God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart." Say with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him…The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Say with old Eli, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him." "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." "Trust in the Lord and do good; so shall you dwell in the land and verily you shall be fed." "Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which has great recompense of reward." Hold to your faith as the ancient warrior hung to his shield, for therein lies your safety. God help you to cling to him! When you cannot rejoice in the light of His countenance, trust in the shadow of His wings and even there, like David, you shall find a safe retreat!

Here I leave the subject with you for your private meditations. And I pray God to quicken in every one of His people a life of holy joy and confidence. Oh, that all of you whom I am addressing knew at least *something* of the experiences of God's people! You who only live the life of

sense and have no faith in Jesus, little know what I mean, for though I have talked largely of the sorrows of God's people, yet the joys of faith are unspeakable! One drop of God's love would sweeten a sea of gall. Yes, I was almost about to say that even the pangs of hell would lose their bitterness if a drop of the love of Christ could once flow there and be tasted by those who are lost!

Christian, you already know what it is to find roses among the thorns and to prove your pangs and your sufferings to be soul enriching things—messengers from the King bringing you to His banquet of wine—and leading you to the discovery of the treasures which He has laid up for you. You know this, so tell it to the ungodly and perhaps their mouths will be set to watering after the good things of Christ's table! When they once long for them, they shall have them, for Christ never refuses a hungry one. And if there is such an one here, a poor, empty, destitute soul, remember, dear friend, that mercy's door stands always open and that Christ, the host of the Gospel Inn, stands always ready to receive every soul that comes, having written this gracious promise over the door of the Inn, "Him that came to Me I will in no wise cast out."

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A VOICE WITH FOUR MESSAGES
NO. 3171

A SERMON
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"And He said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind, an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake, a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire, a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entrance of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What are you doing here, Elijah?"
1 Kings 19:11-13.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon, upon verses 12 and 13, is #1668, Volume 28—
THE STILL SMALL VOICE—
Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THERE may be a great deal more teaching in what Elijah saw and heard in the cave than I shall be able to bring out this evening. Indeed, I shall not attempt to exhaust the very wonderful practical sermon which was preached to the prophet on the side of Mount Horeb, but in the still small voice I hear four messages.

I. And first, THERE WAS A MESSAGE TO ELIJAH HIMSELF.

He had, apparently, conceived the idea that the whole nation of Israel would be converted from idolatry by one grand display of divine power. If it could once be indisputably proved that Baal was not God and that Jehovah, alone, was God, then he thought that, surely, the people would be convinced and would loyally return to their old covenant with the one living and true God. But he found that it was not so. Although the fire of the Lord had fallen from heaven and had consumed Elijah's sacrifice, burned up the very stones of the altar and licked up the water in the trench. And although the people had cried out, "Jehovah is God! Jehovah is God!" yet for all that, they forsook not Baal, nor the other idols that had been set up in the groves and on the high places—the sun-god was still worshiped and the God who made the sun was forgotten!

Elijah seems to have also thought that a display of terrible severity was necessary to bring these people back to their allegiance to Jehovah. Hence he took the prophets of Baal and the prophets of the groves and slew them at the brook Kishon, not allowing any of them to escape. It must have been stern work for him to be the executioner of God's justice, but he did it with a sacred zest, feeling that he was only slaying those

who were the enemies of God—and that every blow he struck at those idolatrous priests was struck for the honor and glory of Jehovah! Yet that stern severity did not succeed as Elijah had expected it would. And one result of it was that Jezebel sent to threaten him with death. I think that possibly Elijah desired that God would inflict upon the people some still severer judgment. Yet I know not what calamities he would have had them suffer, for there had already been dire distress through the three years of drought! But even this had not driven the people from their idolatry. Perhaps Elijah would have had fire and sword sent among them to drive them from their idols and bring them back to the worship of Jehovah.

But God here teaches Elijah that this is not His way of working. He does use the wind, the earthquake and the fire when He pleases, but these are not His most effective instruments. He does not do His mightiest works by them, but in quite another way—by a still small voice! Thus the Lord practically said to Elijah, "Gentler means must be tried with these rebellious people. My glory will be promoted among them by other methods than you have as yet used, or than I have used by you as My servant. I have let them see that I am Lord and Master of the terrible forces of nature. I have convinced them that I am a great God who can smite them as much as I please, but I have not thereby won their hearts—there must be other methods used. The still small voice must be tried."

You have, perhaps, noticed that Elijah's later ministry—although it still remained one of fire and although his was still the voice that cried in the wilderness as John the Baptist's was afterwards to do, "Make straight in the desert a highway for our God"—became, on the whole, much more gentle and tender. He seems to have devoted himself to the work of perpetuating the ministry among the people by founding schools for the young men who were called the sons of the prophets. They evidently recognized him as their master and head, as they recognized Elisha after Elijah had been carried up to heaven. The still small voice of prophetic teaching was to be tried! Judgments had apparently failed, for the hard hearts of the people had not been softened and subdued. Men had been terrified, but they had not been converted. They had been frightened out of their sins for a time, but they had speedily returned to them as swine that might be washed would soon be again wallowing in the mire! Satan had been dislodged from them for a little while, but he had returned and brought other devils with him—and so made his possession of them the more secure. Now other methods were to be tried—gentler, softer, quieter methods which would prove to be more efficient. I think that was the message of God to Elijah through the still small voice.

II. Secondly, if I understand that voice aright, THERE WAS A MESSAGE IN IT TO ALL GOD'S MINISTERS.

To all of us who preach the word, or who try to teach it in any way, God seems to say, "Do not trust in great displays of force, in tremendous demonstrations of power—trust rather in the still soft influences of the

distilling dew of God's Spirit and the gentle rain of the gospel. Preach the word to the sons and daughters of men." There is a temptation which assails all of us who preach to want to do some great thing. We fancy that if we could preach such a famous sermon as Jonathan Edwards delivered when he spoke of sinners in the hands of an angry God, when the people felt as though the very seats whereon they sat moved under them—and some of them even stood up and grasped the pillars of the building in their terror—we fancy that if we could but preach in such a style as that, then we should have lived to some purpose. Or we think that if we had the eloquence of Whitefield and could go and stand, as he did, on Kennington Common, and preach to twenty thousand people at a time—then we should have accomplished something worthy of our highest ambition! Or it may be that we have some famous sermons of which we think a good deal. Possibly there is a fine peroration, like the grand *finale* of the Crystal Palace fireworks—or there may be a great display of oratory all through the discourse. Or if we have been wise enough to leave out all that sort of thing, we may have tried to make the sermon one that would convince the judgment of our hearers, or force its way into their understandings by its sheer sledgehammer power—and we have hoped by preaching thus—to see our congregations converted.

Now, if we have been long in the ministry, and if the Lord has given us true spiritual apprehension, we must have discovered how futile all such hopes and expectations are! There may be a great wind blowing while we are preaching such sermons, but the Lord is not in the wind. There may be a great earthquake and the people may shake and quake with terror, but the Lord is not in the earthquake! Our pulpit may be lurid with the fire of coming judgment, but the Lord is not in the fire. It is true that we are to preach the terror of the Lord, but like Paul, because we know the terror of the Lord, we are to "*persuade* men." Persuasiveness is to be one of the dominant notes in our preaching because of the terrible side of the truth of God. We are not to conceal the threats that we find in the Word of God, for the gentle, loving Savior uttered very terrible words concerning the wrath to come, the worm that never dies and the fire that never can be quenched. At the same time, *our main reliance must not be on that style of preaching*, and our expectation of blessing must not depend upon our heaping up words full of alarm and terror and expressions intended to set forth the woes and horrors of impending judgment, for after all, we may alarm our hearers until they can be no longer alarmed! And we may make them weep in terror until they can weep no more! But instead of doing so, they may even scoff at that which once so greatly disturbed them.

But the preaching of Jesus Christ and Him crucified never loses its power! The telling over and over again of—

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

never becomes a mere repetition if with warm heart and loving spirit we still cry to our hearers, "Behold the Lamb of God which took away the sin

of the world." There may be no excitement in our congregation, no sensation may be created by our preaching, but the Lord will be in it! He always has been in such preaching as that and He always will be. A preached Savior must mean saved sinners before long, but even where sinners are not saved, if we faithfully, lovingly and earnestly preach the gospel to them, we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that perish as well as in them that are saved! So let us still be content to go on, and on, and on, and on—preaching Jesus Christ—praying for the Spirit of God to rest upon us while we tell over and over and over again how the Son of God loved us and gave Himself for us, asking the faithful to pray that God will bless the word, seeking to make our own lives to be more like the life of Him whom we preach and trying by all lawful means to be the instruments that God will bless in saving at least some of our hearers! And we shall succeed in such a ministry as this if we have faith in God and faith in the message we are sent to deliver, for the Lord is still in the ministry of the still small voice! There have been many kinds of ministries in this world, but where has God ever been except in the ministry of the truth as it is in Jesus? There have been ministries of learning, ministries of eloquence, ministries of philosophy and ministries that have made a fair show in the flesh—but, as a general rule—souls have not been saved by them. The true soul winning ministries are the ministries of the still small voice, the ministries that proclaim the redeeming grace and dying love of Jesus! And where those ministries are exercised, seeking souls will recognize the voice of God and give heed to it. So there was a message in the still small voice to every preacher of the Word of God!

III. I think there was also, in that still small voice, A MESSAGE TO THE WHOLE CHURCH OF GOD.

The Lord was not in the wind, nor in the fire, nor in the earthquake—but He was in the still small voice. Let us learn from this fact not to desire to see any great judgments fall upon any country, nor to see any extraordinary displays of divine power abroad in the world with the idea that thereby God's kingdom will come. We sometimes grow dissatisfied because God's cause is not advancing as fast as we think it ought to advance. Foreign missions are not as successful as we should like to see them and home missions do not prosper as we think they should. Then we remember the times when the cholera was rife in London and, remembering that the people seemed to be tenderer in spirit, then, and more willing to listen to the gospel, we have almost wished that some such visitation as that would come again to awaken the callous inhabitants of this sinful city and nation! Yet we must not cherish such a wish as that, for after all, the good that comes in that way is more apparent than real—and after the apparent softening, there often comes a hardening of the heart against the truth. We have sometimes looked upon the nations of the earth and as we have seen them besotted with idolatry and given up to gross error, we have wondered, if war broke out, or pestilence, or there was some other form of the rod of God, whether there might not, *then,* be fresh doors opened for the preaching of the word, and

whether the people might not be more willing to listen to it when it was preached. It has, no doubt, been so in certain cases in the past, but let us not, even in our hearts, ever desire such calamities and chastisements to happen! But let us still place our confidence where the confidence of the early Christian church was placed—in the Spirit of God working through the preaching of the gospel by earnest, faithful men who had proved its power in their own hearts and lives!

A further lesson to the Lord's people in the still small voice is this. It appears from what God said to Elijah that there was a work going on in Israel of which the prophet knew nothing. There were 7,000 people whose knees had never been bent in the worship of the sun god and whose lips had never kissed the idol. It is doubtless true today that there are thousands of whom we know nothing who are not partakers in the idolatry which causes us such sorrow of heart. What an accursed thing it is that idolatry of various kinds is so rampant today in this and other lands! O God of Elijah, put an end to it right speedily, we implore You! Yet, all the while that vile idolatry was spreading in Israel, the worship of the true God was being retained by 7,000 faithful souls—though Elijah did not know that there was even one beside himself! How were they won to Jehovah? Certainly not by Elijah's impressive demonstration on the top of Carmel, for they were loyal to the Lord *before* that. Possibly they were not converted even by the three years drought—what, then, had made them so different from the bulk of their countrymen? The secret movement of the Spirit of God upon their hearts! Perhaps also the loving teaching of mothers by the fireside, the gracious influence of godly men and women upon their companions and of the worshipers of Jehovah upon men of the world who saw in them what they knew they did not themselves possess—and who so admired it that they inquired how they might also obtain such beauty of character—all these things had helped to range these 7,000 idol haters on the side of Jehovah. The still small voice had been doing for Israel what Elijah could not do!

Brothers and sisters, a similar process is going on now! And I want to refresh your memories concerning it. Sometimes as we carefully examine the organized Christianity of the present day, we cannot discover any progress at all. It is a great pity and a cause for great sorrow that there should not be any visible progress. But for all that, let us hope that there is an underground work going on—a secret work of God's grace proceeding in the hearts and lives of those by whom we are surrounded, although we can see no signs of it. You who put leaven in your bread know that you do not hear it making a noise during the night, but the leaven is working effectually although it is working silently. There is still an open Bible in our land and in many other lands besides. And so long as that is the case, you need not fear that Protestantism will die out, or that the lamp of the truth of God will be put out! There is also more than an open Bible in this and other lands—there are many praying people who will take no rest and give God no rest until they see His cause and kingdom

prospering in the earth! [There is a very remarkable Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon this subject which ought to be widely circulated in these days of "arrested progress." See Sermon #2189, Volume 37—A CALL TO PRAYER AND TESTIMONY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] You may not know them and they may not be among the great ones of this world, but there are many who are crying day and night unto God for the preservation and the spread of His Truth! There are eyes that are weeping over sin and there are hearts that are near unto breaking for the longing that they have for the coming of the Redeemer's kingdom. There are persons whose names will never be known to fame—some of the very poorest on the earth who, nevertheless, are speaking softly with their voices for Jesus and who are also speaking very powerfully by their lives for Jesus—as servants in the household, as toilers in the workshop, as poor humble bedridden sufferers who patiently endure great pain and privation because the Lord gives them the grace to bear it for His sake!

I believe in the power of these still small voices and I pray that the church of God may never get the idea that she is to depend upon certain great orators and distinguished ministers. I fear that many of our friends across the Atlantic have fallen into most serious mistakes with regard to this matter, for when certain of their great preachers are absent, their places of worship are closed just as if God had gone away to the country or the seaside because Mr. So-and-So or Dr. So-and-So had gone there. I pray that you, dear friends, may never put such confidence in any of us as to think that God could not work just as well by other people if He pleased to do so, or to imagine that we must come to you with most elaborately prepared sermons and always charm your ears with brilliant oratory. As for myself, I abhor all oratory or eloquence except that which comes straight from the heart! The church of Jesus Christ has been greatly injured by the highly polished sermons and speeches of famous orators. But let us, brothers, always speak in the language that our heart prompts us to use. Let our very soul run over at our lips as it pours itself out like the gushing stream from an ever flowing spring—for this is the best kind of eloquence with which we can plead with sinners to forsake their sins and turn to the living God! Let us be willing to be accounted weak and to have our speech called contemptible, as Paul's was, for God may then be pleased to bless us as He will not do in any other way.

The point I want to emphasize is this, that the reliance of the church, under God, must not be upon the voices that ring out, far and wide, like a peal of bells, nor upon the tongues that give forth the sweet music that pleases the ear! We must rely upon the gospel, itself—upon the gospel simply stated; upon the gospel taught in the Sunday school; the gospel explained at the family altar; the gospel lived and loved by holy men and women! It is that which will do the work of God effectually and accomplish His glorious purposes of grace. And I would have all of you who are thus seeking to serve your Savior, believe that His blessing will rest upon your service even though it may only seem to be as a still small voice! You, my dear sisters, may not be able to preach a sermon, but you may

do what is far better that that! The loving words that you may speak to your children; the helpful hymns that you may teach them as they gather around you; your evening prayer with them as you lay them down to sleep and your own holy example will all be the still small voice in which God will speak to them! And you servant maids who help in caring for the children, and you who teach in the day schools, and you who are anywhere brought into contact with your fellow men, can, by your words and by your actions, bear most important messages for God even though, in the judgment of mankind, you may be only like a still small voice that seems to have but little force in it! I wish the whole church of Christ would realize that her greatest victories have usually been accomplished by those who did not seem, from a human standpoint, competent for the task and that she may still expect to see the grandest results coming to her by the use of ordinary means, by ordinary persons devoutly exercising, in the name of God, their ordinary functions in an ordinary way—the workers being, however, under the gracious influence of the divine Spirit from whom all true power must come!

IV. I shall now conclude my discourse by using the text in a fourth way. I believe there was, in that still small voice, A MESSAGE TO SINNERS.

Now, in the scene which is here sketched by the inspired pen, you have many things that you may well consider. The prophet saw how the great and strong wind split the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces. He felt the earth reel beneath him and saw the valleys lifted to the hills—and the hills sunk into deep glens by the mighty forces of the earthquake. And he saw the forests on the hillsides all ablaze with fire—but God was not revealed to him in any of those terrible sights. It was only when the still small voice came that God spoke to him! And it is the same in many of those terrors that some seeking souls experience. Human nature is there. The devil is often there. But very frequently God is not there in any saving sense—so you need not, any of you, wish to feel those terrors! It is a great mercy when God brings His people to Himself by a smoother road than that. I know that some are brought to Him by that rough road and if they are, they may be thankful that they are brought to Him in any manner rather than left to perish in their sins. Yet if God, in His great tenderness to others, brings them to Himself gently, why should they regret it? Should they not be perfectly satisfied and even be doubly grateful to be saved without having to endure such trying experiences as many others have had? Beloved friends, do not crave these experiences for yourselves, otherwise you may thereby provoke God to anger and He may chasten you in His hot displeasure. You are refusing to do what He bids you do, namely, trust His dear Son, Jesus Christ, and you are wanting Him to make you have these horrible feelings, which, if you did have them, you would be only too thankful to lose!

Let me further say to you that if any of you have felt these dreadful terrors, I implore you not to place any reliance upon them! You will make

a fatal mistake if you suppose that you are saved simply because you have been driven almost to despair! There can be no more insecure foundation for a hope of heaven than to think that you are saved because you have realized that you were lost! It would be a very absurd idea for a man to conclude that he was in health because he had felt that he was ill, or for another to fancy that he was rich because he had felt that he was poor. There is a remorse which is near akin to repentance, but it is not the fruit of the grace of God. There is a sense of sin which arises, not from the work of the Spirit of God, but from a man's own conscience—from conscience awakened, yet still unenlightened by God the Holy Spirit! There are few things more terrible than the awakened conscience of a man who still remains unbelieving. Yet some have had that dreadful experience and have even ventured to suppose that they were saved because they had passed through such a period of alarm and horror. If any of you have thus suffered, do not place any reliance upon that experience!

When the still small voice, in which God is, really comes to you, do you know how it will come? Probably in the same way that it came to Elijah. It will address you personally so that you will begin to feel the personal bearing of the truths of God to which you have been listening Sabbath after Sabbath. As the still small voice said to the prophet, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" So will the truth begin to question you and you will then hear every sermon for yourself—not for other people. When you read the Bible, you will read it for yourself, to find out what it says *to you*—and through the truth recorded there, God will speak to your soul.

But, at first, that still small voice will not comfort you any more than it comforted Elijah. It will put searching questions to you concerning your character and conduct. It will make you look at your past life and cause you to sorrow over it. It will make you look at your present life and cause you to blush as you see how sinful it is. It will also make you remember how many years you have wasted in living for yourself and vanity—and not living unto God. The still small voice will make you realize at what a distance you are from God and what a change must be worked in you before you can be put among His children. It will also make you cast a glance forward to your future life and cause you to tremble at the prospect that lies before you! It will remind you that if you remain unconverted, you will go from bad to worse, you will pile sin upon sin, and your heart will get harder and harder until you are given up to final impenitence!

After this stern message it will be a blessed thing for you if the still small voice gives you some measure of hope. It may be that there is nothing striking about what you are now feeling. It is no alarming sickness that you have had, it is no wonderful dream that has come to you in your sleep, it is no singular providence that you have experienced—but some way or other, wherever you are, you feel ill at ease—you are troubled in spirit and cannot rest. Oh, what a blessed unrest that is which drives a sinner away from his sins! What a sweet bitter that is which makes a sin-

ful soul sick of the world and makes it hunger and thirst after Christ! I pray the Lord to give this unrest and this hunger and thirst to many of you. I have known some who have had this experience so severely that they could not rest in the workshop—they have done their work, it is true—but it was with many a sigh between. Their very meals have seemed to lose the zest they once possessed. When they slept at night, their sleep was unrestful. And when they woke, their sorrow was still upon them. They felt that they could not endure themselves unless they could get right with God. That is the effect of the still small voice when God is in it!

That voice will, before long, probably change its note in addressing some of you, for it will talk to you about redeeming grace and dying love. It will speak to you about the sinner's Savior, the Savior *for you*—and you will be conscious of a blessed, gentle, persuasive influence inclining you to hear about Jesus, making you attentive to the word and moving you to wish to believe in Jesus as your own personal Savior. And that voice will check you if you begin even to look back toward sin with any desire to return to it! And it will stir up within you more and more holy aspirations till, at last, it will lead you to really look to Jesus and live! And when you have looked to Him, all your life long you will continue to hear that voice—even when others do not hear it, you will. If you attempt to put out your hand to iniquity, you will draw it back with a start because of the warning that voice will utter. Oftentimes when others are busy only about the world, your mind will be soaring away to heaven because that voice will be weaning you from the earth and wooing you to be up and away to your Father's house above!

That still small voice will often tell you what to do. "You shall hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk you in it.'" If you happen to be where you cannot listen to the ministry of the word, or are not profited by it, that voice will speak to you. As you read the Scriptures, that voice will speak to you with such power as no other voice ever had over your soul, for after all, it is the voice of Jesus! It is the voice of everlasting love! It is the voice that said upon Calvary, "It is finished!" It is the voice that said, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It is the voice that pleads in heaven, "Father, I will that they, also, whom you have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory."

Do not, dear friends, be listening for any other voices! Do not be expecting to have any other revelation beside that which is recorded in this blessed book! You not only have Moses and the prophets, you also have Jesus and the apostles, so listen to them! Let the still small voice reveal the truth to you and ask not for any other message. This is the all sufficient guide for you with the illumination of the Holy Spirit, so do not seek for any other! If you have been saved by it, I charge you to obey it in every jot and tittle. Alter no ordinance of God and forget none of His precepts, but follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Wherever you see the print

of His pierced feet, there put down your own feet. Do as He did. Be as He was. And then, soon, you shall be where He is! May His blessed Spirit and His still small voice be with you till you shall see His face without a veil between you, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 Kings 19.

Verse 1. *And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword.* Jezebel was the chief patroness of the idolatrous prophets and, therefore, you may imagine how her wrath was stirred when her husband told her what Elijah had done to the men who ate at her table!

2, 3. *Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more, also, if I make not your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time. And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.* This is the man who could fearlessly face the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of the groves—and slay all of them at the Brook Kishon—the dauntless Prophet of Fire who dared to call king Ahab the troubler of Israel! Yet now he trembles before a woman's threats and arises and flees for his life! Verily, the best of men are but men at the best! And the strongest of men are weak as water when once the power of God is withdrawn from them. The high strung tension on the top of Carmel was now to be followed by a not unnatural reaction—and the heroic prophet was to sink into the lowest state of despondency. He left his servant at Beersheba.

4. *But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die.* What inconsistent beings men are! Elijah had fled to save his life, yet, "he requested for himself that he might die"—that he might die because he was afraid of death—die under a juniper tree in the wilderness in order to escape death at the hands of Jezebel!

4. *And said, It is enough. Now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.* [See Sermon #2725, Volume 46—ELIJAH FAINTING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This was the man who never died, yet, "he requested for himself that he might die." How gracious it is, on God's part, not to grant the requests of His people when they are unwise, as this petition of Elijah was! Had he known that he would go up by a whirlwind into heaven, riding in a chariot of fire drawn by horses of fire, surely he would not have prayed after this fashion, "It is enough. Now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers."

5, 6. *And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and behold, there was a cake baked on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.* He was very

sad at heart because of the apostasy of Israel and beside that, he was very weary, utterly exhausted by the tremendous excitement through which he had passed and by the long journey which he had already taken. So he did the wisest thing possible, "he did eat and drink, and laid him down again."

7. *And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for you.* God exercises foresight on behalf of His people which they cannot, themselves, exercise. He knows when we are to be called either to unusual service or unusual suffering and He prepares us for it. He not only gives us spiritual meat to eat because we know that we are hungry, but He also gives it to us because of our future needs which, for the present, are quite unknown to us.

8, 9. *And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat, forty days and forty nights unto Horeb, the mount of God. And he came there unto a cave, and lodged there; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said unto him, What are you doing here, Elijah?* "Jehovah's courageous prophet, why have you fled? Why are you here when so much is necessary to be done for the apostate people? 'What are you doing here?' How come you are here, in a cave, when the nation needs your presence? 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'"

10. *And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts, for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and slain your prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.* He despaired of the good cause and this was a great pity, for a man such as he was ought never to have given way to such feelings. Was not God with him? And where God is, must there not be victory?

11-13. *And He said, go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind, an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire, a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out, and stood in the entrance of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What are you doing here, Elijah?* God will repeat His questions to His people if they have not due effect the first time, for He is very tender, full of pity and patient.

14. *And he said.* A second time pouring out the bitterness of his soul before his God.

14. *I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and slain Your prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.* It was a good thing that Elijah could thus pour out his complaint into the sympathizing ear of the Most High.

Such bitterness of soul as his is very apt to ferment and to breed all manner of ills! But when we can tell the Lord all that is in our heart—then a time of blessed relief is not far off!

15. *And the LORD said unto him, go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus.* "Get back to your work, be not a deserter from the field of battle! Return, for you are needed for various duties."

15, 16. *And when you come, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria and Jehu the son of Nimshi shall you anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-Meholah shall you anoint to be prophet in your place.* Thus there shall be a successor to carry on your work when you have done your part of it.

17, 18. *And it shall come to pass, that he that escapes the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and he that escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. Yet I have left Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which has not kissed him.* How this gracious assurance must have revived the prophet's spirit! He knew nothing about those 7,000 faithful Israelites, and he must have been amazed and delighted to hear of them! There was no need for him to say, "I, even I only, am left," for there was a noble band of stalwarts to stand up with him and defend the name and cause of Jehovah!

19. *So he departed thence.* Cheered and comforted, he went back to his work without uttering another word. And we do not read of his spirit flagging again. "So he departed thence."

19, 20 *And found Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him. And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray you, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to you?* The Lord wants no pressed men in His service—His soldiers must all be volunteers. But Elisha was a man of a true heart and a brave spirit, so we read—

21. *And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose and went after Elijah and ministered unto him.*

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BRIGHT PROSPECTS FOR YOUNG BELIEVERS
NO. 3172

A SERMON
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"But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall."
Malachi 4:2. (NKJV)

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text are Sermons #1020, Volume 18—"THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS" and #1463B, Volume 25—THE RISING SUN—
Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THIS great promise was fulfilled at the coming of our Lord. There were many waiting for it, like Anna and Simeon, mourning the darkness in which they dwelt and scarcely cheered by a single star, for the voice of prophecy had ceased. Then suddenly Christ came and so the Sun of Righteousness arose upon those who feared the Lord! They went forth into blessed liberty, rejoicing in Him. And afterwards their light was greatly increased in brightness and their life in happiness as they grew in divine knowledge and holiness. It is difficult for us to conceive the revulsion of feeling which must have come into the hearts of such patient waiters for the Lord as Anna and Simeon. They must have triumphed exceedingly, magnifying the Lord, with Mary, that at last He had come—the light to lighten the Gentiles and to be the glory of His people, Israel!

This promise has also had a practical fulfillment in the deathbed experiences of God's people. Tortured with disease, they have been lying in the darkness and gloom of death. Perhaps fears have come in and physical infirmity has been the platform upon which Satan has planted his heavy guns of temptation. But suddenly a wondrous light has surprised them—their dying bed has become a throne of glory! They have found themselves arrayed in royal garments as though it were their coronation rather than their departure out of this world. They have been enabled to sit upright in the bed and to tell others that they had beheld the brightness of the coming glory and that they had experienced in their souls the foretaste of unspeakable and divine joys even before their bodies were released from infirmity and pain! Though the body has been bound fast with cords, the soul has mounted up as on the wings of eagles, in sacred

rapture and holy bliss! The Sun of Righteousness has risen upon them! Before their earthly sun went down, the heavenly Sun lit up their sky with a sacred high, eternal noon! And unto you who fear the name of the Lord, whatever gloom may surround your departure from the earth, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings and one day you shall find Him rise even upon your mortal bodies—

"From beds of dust and silent clay
To realms of everlasting day"—

your very bodies shall wing their flight to dwell—

"Forever with the Lord!"

While the promise in the text has had these two fulfillments, there is no doubt that it awaits another. We are looking for the return of the Lord Jesus! And though, perhaps, we have no right to expect that He will come today or tomorrow—for there are many prophecies which apparently must be fulfilled before He comes, and which may require long periods of time—yet we are to expect Him and are to be as servants who know that their master will come to call them to account. Perhaps just when the Christian church shall become most weary; when the hands of her ministers shall hang down through feebleness; when the warriors shall be "faint, yet pursuing," and when Gog and Magog and the hosts of the enemy shall have gathered themselves together for battle and everything seems to forebode a long dark night for the church and for the world—perhaps just then Christ will suddenly appear in the clouds of heaven! Perhaps at such a time as that, the Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in His wings and the triumphant saints shall go forth to meet Him clothed with His brightness, sharing in His kingdom! And as the next verse solemnly tells us, treading down the wicked who shall be as ashes beneath their feet in the day of their Lord's appearing! Perhaps this is to be the great fulfillment of the text.

But I do not intend to dwell tonight upon any of these three probable fulfillments of the prophecy. I want rather to talk about matters which more nearly concern us just now and to put a few practical soul-matters before this entire congregation, hoping that God may press them home upon some—so that they may find healing beneath the wings of Christ tonight!

I. The text speaks, you will observe, of a certain class of persons—THOSE WHO FEAR GOD'S NAME.

The great multitude of people in the world do *not* fear the name of God. They do not care whether there is a God or not. If there were no God, their conduct would not be very different from what it is now. God is not in all their thoughts—they live as if they were their own creators and sustainers—and practically join in the language of Pharaoh, "Who is Jehovah that I should obey His voice?" Now, for such people, the Bible contains no blessing—why should it when they reject both it and the God who wrote it?

But there are some in the world—thank God, more now, perhaps, than at any former period—who *do* fear God. Some have not advanced far in this heavenly wisdom—they are like scholars on the first form at school. *They fear God just as much as this—that they would not willfully sin.* They are checked from presumptuous sins by the fear of God and this is well. It is so good a thing that I believe it is like that smoking flax which Christ will not quench! And that man who really fears to sin because God would see him and who desires to do right because God would have him do right is not far from the kingdom of God if, indeed, he is not actually in the kingdom!

Others have advanced so far in this fear that *they have been brought into torment by it.* They know that they have already sinned and they dread the thought of the terrible one who has said that, He "will by no means clear the guilty." They have heard the thunder of that dreadful verse, "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them"—and they therefore fear God. It is a fear that brings bondage, but even *that* is better than no fear at all! They believe God and they tremble—and we are thankful to see them trembling, for now, perhaps, they will begin to say within themselves, "We will seek our Father's face! We will fly to Him and ask Him to save us from His own wrath through His Son."

This fear in some, however, has happily advanced still further. *They have come to fear God with a childlike fear.* Their sin has been forgiven. They have put their trust in the Savior. They have heard the voice which said, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins." And now they fear God with a fear with which love is perfectly consistent—they fear Him as a loving, tenderhearted child fears to disobey a gracious, kind, wise, loving father. God is in their thoughts. No, more—God is in their hearts! They love Him. They could not bear to live without God—they would be orphans—their Father would be gone! Without God they would be poverty stricken, for their wealth is found in Him.

I know there are some of you here who could do wonderfully well without a God. Indeed, you would be much happier than you now are if it could be proved that there is no God, for the thought of God is a monster to some of you and you try as much as possible to shut the ears of your soul against the cry of conscience when it tells you that there is a God—a God who will bring you into judgment for all your actions! Well, the promise in the text is not for you, but it is for those who realize that there is a God and who have respect unto His word—who tremble before Him and yet who rejoice in Him, having been brought near to Him by the precious blood of Jesus—and having been reconciled to Him by Christ Jesus, the mediator between God and man. Dear friend, if you do but fear God, take the text and live upon it! It is a precious hive of honey and

you may extract the utmost sweetness from it! Let us go to it, now, and feed upon it as it is here given to us as food from heaven for our souls.

II. Having found out the persons to whom the text is addressed, let us next notice that according to this verse, SOME OF THOSE WHO FEAR GOD ARE IN THE DARK.

They fear God, but they have not any happiness. They are doubtful, timid and possibly they are constitutionally dull and sad. Besides that, they are diseased and need the "healing" of which the text speaks. They are not what they want to be—they have a bad temper to struggle against, or some besetting sin to mourn over.

Now observe the promise that is given to them, that they shall be visited in a remarkable manner by the Lord Jesus and that, in consequence of this visitation, they shall receive the two things that they specially need, namely, light and healing! They are in the dark, so they shall receive light and comfort! They are sick in soul, but they shall receive healing from Christ. *The great blessing promised is that Christ shall appear to them*, but see in what an aspect it is said that He shall appear. He is called, "the Sun of Righteousness." What a title for our blessed Lord! He who did hang upon Calvary in the thickest darkness was the Sun of Righteousness! He is sometimes compared to a star, but this figure is more full and more worthy of Him. Christ is the center of the universe! "Without Him was not anything made that was made." By Him all things consist." As the sun, with secret bands, keeps all the planets in their places and is the great regulator of the solar machinery, so is Christ the great center of the world—and especially of His own church. Forth from the sun floods of heat and light are continually being scattered. We do not know that the sun borrows anything from any other source. He is himself the source, in his stupendous furnace, of the light and heat which gladden all the worlds of which he is the center and controller. So is it with our Savior—borrowing nothing, but having all fullness dwelling within Himself, He pours forth, out of His own inexhaustible heart of infinite mercy and compassion—floods of light to make glad the ignorant and floods of heat to comfort the sorrowing!

We can scarcely bear to look upon the sun! He is an orb of such surpassing splendor, giving out continually such vast masses of light, if I may use the expression and, oh, who could look upon the unveiled splendor of the Lord Jesus? Perhaps if we could see Him as He now is in heaven, we might feel as if we were not prepared for so great a sight, our eyes not yet being strong enough to be able to bear the burning splendor of the great Sun of Righteousness! If you could get any adequate idea of the light and heat that come from the sun, you might *then* form some faint conception of the—

"Streams of mercy, never ceasing"—

which flood the universe from Christ, the great central orb of the love of God! Oh, happy are they who bask in His beams! Blessed are they who

walk in His light! Best of all and most happy are they who, like Milton's angel standing in the sun, dwell amid the very fullness of Christ's glory where He sits upon His Father's throne!

Christ, then, is the Sun of Righteousness. Now, sinner; Now, trembler; If you fear God, Christ will be a sun to you! You will have no need of knowledge, then, depend upon it, for He shall teach you all things! If Christ shall arise upon you, you shall see your sins clearly enough, but you shall also see God and, therefore, you shall see hope! You shall see pardon, you shall see peace, you shall see heaven! What will not the sun reveal? Everything is in darkness till he appears—but when he rises, everything is discovered. And oh, poor troubled soul, you see nothing and you know but little until Christ comes to you! But if He shall arise upon you as the Sun of Righteousness, you shall know all that you need to know and perceive everything that is delightful and comforting—and so your heart shall be glad!

But the figure employed in the text is a double one. It is said that sometimes in the East, after a long time of calm, the very air gets putrid and the glowing sand reflects the burning heat till, presently, a refreshing land breeze comes up with the sunrise. So Christ is here pictured as a sun—His beams being like the wings of some gigantic golden eagle—and those wings, like refreshing winds, bringing health to the poor sickly inhabitants of earth who are ready to die. Certainly when Christ comes in all His splendor of light, for He is "the light of the world," He comes also with health to sick souls! Soul, do not believe that your sickness is incurable, though Satan may tell you a thousand times that it is! If Christ comes to deal with you, man, though your disease should be the deadly cancer of blasphemy, He can cure it! Though you should have the fever of drunkenness within your soul, Christ can heal you of that fiery malady! I ventured to say this morning that there is now no hospital for incurable souls [See Sermon #720, Volume 12—THE GOSPEL'S HEALING POWER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] because Christ can cure all manner of spiritual diseases!

You perceive that the text does not say that they who fear the name of the Lord shall be cured of their spiritual maladies by what they do themselves. No, but that Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, shall arise upon them and in His light they shall obtain the health they lack! Get Jesus, poor soul, and you need not trouble yourself about much else. There is everything that a sinner requires in the person of the appointed Savior. Arise, O You blessed Jesus Christ, like the sun upon the darkness, that some who are in this place may now leave their sins and rejoice in Your power to save!

You perceive also that the way in which those who fear the Lord get light is *not by their raising the sun*—that would be impossible, but it is *through the sun, itself, rising upon them.* Some sinners seem to think that they are to get comfort and light for themselves—but it is not so—Christ

must bring it all to you. You are not to bring anything to Jesus, but to come to His fullness to receive everything! Do you understand me, man? Supposing that you are full of sin, full of hardness of heart and of everything that is bad and contrary to the mind of God, yet if you are saved, it will be by Christ appearing to your mind's eye—and that mind's eye seeing Him—and your soul trusting in Him. And if you do so, you are saved. "What?" you say "is there nothing for me to do?" There is nothing for you to do in order that you may be saved, but believe in Jesus! You shall do many things *after* you are saved—I shall go on to tell you of them directly—but the work of saving your soul does not rest with you. Christ is the Savior and He will do it all! You are not to help in that work—

"It is not your tears of repentance or prayers
But the blood that atones for the soul!
On Him, then, who shed it, believing at once
Your weight of iniquities roll!
We are healed by His stripes—would you add to the word?
And He is our righteousness made!
The best robe of heaven He bids you put on—
Oh, could you be better arrayed?
Then doubt not your welcome, since God has declared
There remains no more to be done!
That once in the end of the world He appeared
And completed the work He begun."

Imagine people lighting their candles after the sun has risen! "Oh," they say, "but we may as well add to the light." But do your candles add to the light when you have the sunlight? Do they not rather mock the light? Are they not an impertinence in the presence of the great orb of day? And, sinner, do not light your candles to add to the light of the Sun of Righteousness! Do not bring your nothingness and your emptiness to add to the perfection of Christ's finished work! You cannot help Him to save you, so do not insult Him by attempting to do so! But just take the text and from your heart, pray, "O God, let the Sun of Righteousness arise upon me with healing in His wings, for I do—I trust and fear Your name!"

I hope this truth will not pass away from your memories. I feel so concerned lest any of you should miss the blessing that God is giving us just now. I know I have with me the opinion of hundreds who fear the Lord, that God is very marvelously present with us as a church and that He has been so for some little time. But I fear lest the cloud should pass away before the heavenly rain falls upon more of you! I trust that it will not, but that you may receive the blessing in your souls!

III. Now I must go on to observe THAT WHICH IS TO FOLLOW IN THE CASE OF THOSE UPON WHOM THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS ARISES. The promise to them in the text is, "You shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall."

It is a subject of great anxiety to earnest church officers as to what will become of our young converts. Many are added to our numbers who know but little of the doctrines of grace. Now you perceive that here is

the blessing for them which may remove our anxiety—may all of you who have lately been converted share in that blessing!

The promise is that they "shall go forth." Of course this means that *they shall enjoy spiritual liberty*. When Christ comes into the heart, whatever bondage there may have been there before, it all disappears in His presence! Where Jesus comes, He is the true liberator. No chains are worn in the court of King Jesus! The moment He enters the heart, He proclaims perfect emancipation and—

"The prisoner leaps to lose his chains."

Yet the realization of this emancipation may be gradual. And a true convert may be saying, "I wish I could enjoy the promises and go forth and walk at liberty in the green pastures." Well do I recollect when I heard some believers singing—

"Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given!
More happy but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven!"

And I thought then, "Ah, I shall never be able to sing that! It is too high a note for me." But I can sing it now and sing it truthfully, too—and so will you who have but just seen Christ, be able to do—you shall go forth in the liberty with which Christ makes His people free!

You shall go forth, too, in *Christian ordinances*. Perhaps you say, "I should be afraid to be baptized—it is such a solemn thing to profess death, burial and resurrection with Christ—I do not think I could dare to do that. And as to going before a Christian church and avowing my faith in Jesus, I am afraid I could not do that—my lips would be tightly closed through fear. And I could not feel at liberty to come to the Master's table. I would be so afraid of eating and drinking condemnation to myself, not discerning the Lord's body." Ah, poor trembler, I know just how you feel! But when the Sun of Righteousness arises upon your soul, you will get liberty in all these matters and will go forth in obedience to your Lord's commands! If a stranger were to come to your house, he would stand at the door, or wait in the hall. If he were a person of any sense, he would not think of walking into your parlor, or your drawing room, or your bedroom, for he would not be at home there. But your child makes himself free in your house because he is at home. So is it with the child of God, for a child may come where a stranger may not venture to go! When the Holy Spirit has become to you the spirit of adoption, you will go forth to Christian ordinances without fear!

So will it be with *the Christian's inward privileges*. I know you think, poor seeker that you never may "rejoice with unspeakable joy and full of glory." If you may but just get inside Christ's door, or sit at the end of His table, you think you will be well content. Ah, but you shall not have any less privileges than the greatest of God's children! God makes no differences between His children as far as their privileges are concerned. He will not make us His hired servants, but we, even we, shall feast upon

the fatted calf and shall have the music and the dancing as much as if we had never gone astray. Yes, young Christian, you shall go forth! You do not know what is before you. There is the goodly land and it is all yours! Do not imagine that you are always to be a babe in grace—you shall grow and become, I hope, a full grown man in Christ Jesus—yes, a father in Israel! Imagine not that you are always to be like that little green blade which is just peeping up above the cold sod—you shall one day be like the corn in the ear—yes, more! You shall one day be like the golden corn which bends its head through its ripeness and the glad harvest home shall be shouted over you. You shall not always be weak and feeble and afraid to enjoy your Christian privileges. You would not know yourself if you could see what you will yet be! The songs you are yet to sing, the grapes of Eshcol you are yet to pluck, the fair days of joy you are yet to spend, the feasts and banquets, the real enjoyments which you are yet to know on this side of the grave might well make you happy if you could but get a foretaste of them! Yes, you shall go forth—only have Christ as your Savior and there shall be no end to your happiness! Let the Sun of Righteousness but rise upon you and your light shall never be put out!

But that is not all, for the text also says, "You shall grow up as calves of the stall." That is to say, *these very people who are so timid, now, shall advance in the divine life at the fastest rate*. The calf grows very rapidly and it ought to do so when it is put into the stall on purpose to help it to grow. The reference is to the calves that are stalled for fattening—those that are fatted regularly, fatted abundantly by those whose aim it is to make them grow! So the text tells the young Christian that he shall grow like the calf in the stall. God's ministers shall feed him. God's word shall be the granary out of which his food shall come and God's Spirit shall enable him to feed upon that food and make him grow! Christ Himself shall be that poor trembler's daily bread, his meat and his drink. He who feeds upon Christ must grow! It is no cause for wonder if the saints are fat and flourishing—and bring forth fruit in old age when they feed upon Christ! Whenever a Christian has to say, "My leanness, my leanness, woe is unto me," it cannot be because suitable food has not been supplied—it must be because he has not fed upon it—for if we have fed upon Christ Jesus, how can we help growing in faith, knowledge, holiness and every spiritual gift?

I am hopeful, therefore, for our young members, that God will take care of them and that they will surprise us by the advance which they will make. I only hope that they will surpass all who have ever gone before them. Ah, dear young friends, never take us as an example in stopping short of the Christian ideal! Follow us as far as we follow Christ! But go beyond the very best of us when you see that we come short of what we ought to be. I hope you will be more earnest, more prayerful, more conscientious, more diligent than any of us have been! May the next gen-

eration of Christians outshine the present one and so may it continue to be until Christ Himself comes and His church shall be in her glory! Do you recollect that passage in the Revelation about the woman clothed with the sun? How bright she must be! But that is the Christian church—and it is also you, in your measure, for you are to be clothed with the sun. Your brightness and holiness are to be such that men shall know that the Sun of Righteousness has risen upon you! You have not any light in yourselves, but when you receive the light from Christ, take care that you reflect it! How bright should those be who shine in the beams of Jesus Christ Himself!

There is one translation of the last clause of the text which I should like to mention. It is thought by some eminent divines that the word rendered, "stall," also bears the meaning of, "yoke." If it is so, then the genuine Christian grows up like the heifers that wear the yoke. That is to say, he is a worker as well as a feeder. He grows, but he is willing to bear the yoke and serve his Lord. I would not thank God for the addition to this church of a man who would be idle, captious, and selfish. I would disapprove such a diminution of our strength, even though it might be an augmentation of our numbers. The members we want are those who are willing to consecrate themselves wholly to the Lord—and to whom religion is a reality! With many it is a sham, a mere pretense, a thing to make them appear respectable, but not a matter which eats up their life and takes away their energy, bearing them onward in service as in a chariot of fire! May you who are converted grow up as heifers that wear the yoke! May you plow to the end of your field and back again—and on and on, plowing in the Master's service till the time shall come for the yoke to be taken from your necks! The crest and the motto of the American Baptist Missionary Union should be ours—the crest is an ox standing between a plow and an altar, and the motto is—"Ready for either." May we be ready to be offered up in death or to serve God in life!

Now I have to say this to you who fear the Lord and who are seeking to have Christ in your hearts—seek to get Him as the Sun of Righteousness shining within you. And ask, after you have Christ, that you may be helped to grow in grace—that you may not be dull and heavy as some have been, that you may not be cumberers of the ground, that you may not be the mere baggage of Christ's army impeding the march of His heroes—but that you may be men and women who shall be swifter than eagles and bolder than lions—consecrated—to whom work shall be pleasure and loss shall be gain! Who, as the arrow speeds from the archer's bow, turning neither to the right nor to the left, shall speed onward to the prize of your high calling, thinking of nothing except winning Christ and being found in Him!

May God grant us this blessing now! Let the prayer be breathed, "Arise upon us, Sun of Righteousness," and then let the other prayer follow,

"Make us to go forth and to grow up like calves of the stall, and may we serve You, O God, and receive Your blessing world without end! Amen."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 10:25-42.

Verses 25-28. *And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? How do you read it? And he answering, said, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself. And He said unto him, You have answered right: this do and you shall live.* Do any of you want to live by the law? There is the law. Does any man here pretend that he has kept it? Let me ask any man here who would justify himself by his own works—have you thought of God today? How much time have you spent with God? Or yesterday, how much of your time did you give Him—how many minutes? Would you venture to say that you spent a quarter of an hour in prayer? No. Perhaps if it comes to the truth, you did not spend five minutes. Now, if you loved God with all your heart and all your soul, and all your strength, and all your mind, do you think that five minutes would satisfy such a love as that? Oh, no, sirs! You that are unconverted give God no love at all—and how can you think, therefore, that you are keeping His law which puts it so strongly, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart? And with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself"? Have you ever done that? Neither the first nor the second table have you kept intact!

29. *But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor*? The Savior then related this incident which I have no doubt was really a fact.

30. *And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead*. It was a very dangerous road, a very lonely part—and robberies were very frequent there.

31. *And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side*. He did not like the look of wounds and blood. It is a very convenient thing not to recollect the miseries of your fellow men. Do not think about their poverty—it might spoil your digestion! Do not think about their drunkenness—you might have to become a teetotaler! Do not think about their sin—you might have to go and preach in the street to them! You can live so easily and pleasantly, and even be a priest and be called, "His Reverence," if you are very careful which side of the road you take. "He passed by on the other side."

32. *And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him and passed by on the other side.* There are some whose looks are evidently esteemed by themselves to be so very precious that when they have given them, they give nothing more! He may have meant, "I will see into it." There are a great many who are very diligent in their promises to see into a case, but we do not see much come of what they say. They also pass by on the other side. Neither the priest nor the Levite acted as a neighbor to the man who fell among thieves.

33. *But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was.* He looked, approached, drew near, "came where he was."

33. *And when he saw him, he had compassion on him.* He did not ask him how he got there, or say to him, 'Why, man, you must have been very foolish to travel alone! My dear friend, next time you come this way, you must come armed. Did you not know this was a very ugly part of the road? And I think you are ill advised to have been traveling quite so late." Oh, we have many dear friends who always favor us with their rebukes when our wounds are bleeding! "He had compassion on him."

34. *And went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.* Oil and wine—two very good things for external application—and he used them for that. Wondrous healers, these were known to be. They were expensive things, too. He had brought them for his own comfort and he freely used them for this poor man. Then he set him on his own beast—so he had to walk. He accepted the inconvenience. He relinquished his own comfort for the sake of doing good. "And he brought him to an inn and took care of him"—perhaps he sat up all night with him. He took care of him after he had got him into the inn. He did not immediately commend him to the care of some paid person, but he first took care of him. But this good Samaritan had urgent business and was obliged to go about it.

35. *And on the morrow when he departed he took out two pence and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatever you spend more, when I come again, I will repay you.* "This is my piece of work. I want to finish it and as I cannot stay, will you kindly supply the ready money, and when I come again, I will repay you?"

36, 37. *Which, now, of these three, do you think was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, he that showed mercy on him.* Oh, you lawyer, why did you not say, "The Samaritan"? Of course he did not like to use that word! Oh, no, we never mention them—the "Samaritans." "The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." So he would not honestly say, "The Samaritan," but he made a roundabout of it and said, "He that showed mercy on him."

37. *Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do you likewise.* May we all be enabled to do so by exercising constant love to those who are in need!

38. *Now it came to pass, as they went, that He entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.* There were not so very many that kept open house for Christ. But Martha did. It was her house.

39. *And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word.* She was free to do so. It was not her house. She need not attend to the hospitalities of it. Her sister was quite equal to it and so Mary did well to avail herself of the opportunity of sitting at Jesus' feet and hearing His word.

40. *But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him and said, Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Bid her, therefore, that she help me.* She wanted to get so much ready—to have everything nice. So she came almost scolding the Master! She was out of temper, surely, that day. She had gotten to be troubled. Dear friends, it is not wrong to labor and to work and do all we can, but it is wrong to grow cumbered with it—to get fretful, anxious, worried about this thing and that! You will not do it any better. You will probably do less and you will do it worse. She was "cumbered about much serving."

41, 42. *And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, you are careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is necessary.* "You have forgotten much. Looking after many things, you have failed to remember the chief, the *only* necessary thing."

42. *And Mary has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.* And so He let her still sit there and hear His blessed words—

"Oh, that I could forever sit
With Mary at the Master's feet—
Be this my happy choice!"

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"AS" AND "SO"

NO. 3173

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1909,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 3, 1873.

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

[Two other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text are Sermons #483, Volume 8— LIFE AND WALK OF FAITH and #3030, Volume 53— A CONSISTENT WALK FOR TIME TO COME— Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THIS is a very simple text, yet no human being has ever discovered its full meaning. It is a great deep—happy are they who know how to dive into its depths and to swim at ease in its lengths and breadths! Blessed are they who continually obey the exhortation which it contains, "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you in Him." The text divides itself into faith and practice. "You have received Christ Jesus the Lord," there is your faith. "Walk you in Him," that is to be your daily practice!

The text also contains a model for that practice in the "as" and the "so" which are its cardinal points. "*As* you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk you in Him." What we have done suggests the way in which we are to do what still lies before us. "As you have received...so walk."

I. Notice in the text, first, THE FACT STATED. "You have received Christ Jesus the Lord."

Whatever else you have done or have not done, *you have received Christ*. The act of faith was the putting out of your empty hands to receive all the fullness of the Godhead in receiving Christ. There are some precious experiences to which you have not yet attained, some lofty heights to which you have not yet climbed, but you "have received Christ Jesus the Lord." That is the distinguishing mark of all true Christians! Though you may not all belong to the same denomination, yet without a single exception this is true concerning you, whether you are old or young, whether you are well instructed or ill taught, whether you are full of faith or are troubled with many a doubt and many a fear, you "have received Christ Jesus the Lord."

There is nothing in this fact to cause you one boastful thought. You have *received*, that is what emptiness does in order that it may be filled, that is what hunger does in order that its cravings may be satisfied, that is what the beggar in the street does when he craves and obtains alms. There is *nothing* of which you can glory in the fact that you have received, for I may further remind you that even your very receiving you have received! The faith by which you received Christ was as much the gift of God to you as was the Christ upon whom your faith was fixed. You know that it is so and, therefore, you also know that boasting is forever excluded from the fact that you are saved! You have received Christ Jesus, that is all. I hope you prize the gift, and praise the giver. I trust that you often cry with the Apostle Paul, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!" And that your soul makes her boast in the Lord concerning the Savior whom you have received, but no other boasting is permissible even for a moment!

I remind you once more, beloved, that, *you have received* CHRIST. It is true that you have received His doctrines and that you still believe them. It is true that you have received His precepts and that you have obeyed them, though, alas, your obedience has been far from perfect. It is true that you have received His ordinances and that you have conformed to them by being baptized on profession of your faith in Him—and by sitting down with your fellow believers at His table. But, after all, the main point is that you have received Jesus Christ, Himself! Every word that He has spoken is sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, but sweeter far are the lips with which He uttered those words! Every command of

His is to be esteemed more highly than the finest of fine gold, but as for the King who gave those commands, "He is altogether lovely." Human language cannot describe Him and yet *you have received Him*—His very self—you have received into your hearts to dwell there as your only Lord and Master. You have received Him as your life, for you live through Him. And you receive Him day by day as the Bread of Life upon which your soul feeds and as the Water of Life which quenches the thirst of your soul. You have not merely received His offices, His gifts, His grace, His promises, but you have received *Him*! He is the center of your confidence, the target of your hopes!

The text says that you have received "Christ Jesus the Lord." Here are three out of His many names and, first, beloved, you have received Him as *Christ*, the Anointed of God. You see in Him no amateur Savior, uncommissioned—but one sent by the Father, the authorized representative of the Most High—the Christos, the Messiah, the Sent One, who could rightly apply to Himself the ancient promise, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Christ came to this world because the Father sent Him. He said to the Jews, "I came down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." He lived and died here because it pleased the Father for Him to do so. And He is still appointed by the Father to distribute unnumbered gifts to His people. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." You believe that upon Christ, the Spirit rests without measure, that He is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows, and in receiving Him as the Anointed One, you also have unction from the Holy One and, therefore, you also are anointed to be kings and priests unto God. So you have received Him as Christ, the Anointed.

But you have also received Him as *Jesus*, and you love that charming name. No hymn more truly expresses your feelings than that one by John Newton which begins—

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ears!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fears."

You also sing with Bernard of Clairvaux—

"Jesus, the very thought of You
With sweetness fills my breast.
But sweeter far Your face to see
And in Your presence rest.
Nor voice can sing, nor heart can frame,
Nor can the memory find
A sweeter sound than Your blest name,
O Savior of mankind!"

You received Him as your Savior and, therefore, He has saved you from the penalty of sin and He will also save you from the dominion and power of sin. If you are saved, you are saved entirely through Jesus—and you do not need, and you do not desire any other Savior! You look to Jesus for all that can be comprehended in the word, *salvation*. His name means Savior and you have found Him to be a Savior to you. So you have received the anointed Savior, Christ Jesus.

And you have received Him as *the Lord*. You have not accepted Him as merely one of many anointed prophets, nor as a man sent from God, as John the Baptist was, but you worship Him as the Lord! And oh, how blessed it is to adore the Son of God! We cannot make any terms of peace with those who deny the deity of Christ, nor ought they to want to be at peace with us, for if Christ is not the Son of God, we are idolaters. And if He is, they are not Christians! There is a great gulf between us and them and we do not hesitate for a moment to say on which side of that gulf we stand. That same Jesus who was nailed to the tree is to us both Lord and Christ. By faith we put our finger into the print of the nails and our hand into His pierced side—and never questioning the fact that He is truly man, we rejoice to say to Him, as Thomas did, "My Lord and my God." Jesus Christ is, indeed, to us "very God of very God." This being so, we have received Him as our Lord to rule and govern us. In spiritual matters He is our only King—we acknowledge no master save Him who is *The* Master, of whom Martha said to her sister Mary, "The Master is come, and calls for you."

No teacher has any right to impart to us any instruction except that which he has received from the only infallible teacher. "He is the head of the body, the church," and we recognize no other headship. We joyfully acknowledge that He is our Sovereign Lord in the spiritual realm! He is the absolute monarch of our soul! He is that perfect husband who is the true head of His mystical body, the church. Oh, that we more fully carried out, practically, in every thought, wish and action of our entire life, all that is implied in receiving Jesus Christ as Lord!

Beloved friends, as I look round upon you all and gaze into your faces, this question rushes from my heart to my lips—Have all of you received Christ Jesus the Lord? Alas, I am sorrowfully persuaded that there are some of you who have not received Him! He has knocked again and again with those pierced hands of His, at the door of your heart, but you have not let Him in! This fountain of the Water of Life has flowed close to your feet, yet you have not drunk of it. Christ has been set before you as the Bread of Life sent down from heaven, but you have not eaten of Him—you have refused Him even until now! "No," you say, "you are too severe in charging us with having refused Christ, for we have not done that!" Well, it seems to me that this is just what you *have* done, but I will put it more softly and say that, at any rate, you have not *received* Him. You have put Him off to a more convenient season which will probably never come to you. O poor souls, poor souls, how sad is your state in not having received Christ Jesus the Lord! Leaving out heaven and eternity for the moment—and speaking only of today—how wretched you must be in not having received Christ! When I see a man who has never seen the sun, I pity him, but not as I pity you who have never seen the Sun of Righteousness! If I heard of a child who had never known a father's love and who had never looked up with affection into a mother's face, I would pity that poor orphan, but not as much as I pity you who are living without a Savior! If I knew a man who had never known what health was, but who, from the day of his birth, was always sickly and bowed down with pain and infirmity, I would pity him, but not as I pity you who are sick unto death, yet who will not accept healing from the great physician! May God look down upon you, now, not only with pity, as He always does, but also in the power of His almighty grace and turn the heart of stone to flesh and lead you to receive Christ Jesus as Lord! That is all you have to do—to receive Jesus as the parched earth receives the refreshing showers, and as the wilted lilies receive the reviving rain drops and lift up their drooping heads again. That is all you have to do—receive Jesus! A child can receive. The feeblest can receive. Yes, one lying at the point of death, the sick man dying of fever may receive the cooling draught that is put to his lips! This is all that is asked of you—that you will *receive* Christ Jesus the Lord! Oh, that you would all receive Him now! God grant that it may be so and He shall have the praise!

II. Now, secondly, notice THE COUNSEL GIVEN—"so walk you in Him." The text not only reminds us of what we have done, but it also tells us what we are now to do!

Brothers and sisters in Christ, it is not easy to decide whether this counsel is to be regarded as a permission or as a precept—"so walk you in Him." Taking them either way, the words are a sweet morsel in my mouth. Yet I think I prefer to regard them as permission. Suppose I had been to Jesus as a poor sinner and that He had saved me and that He had then said to me, "there, you are saved, so go your way. You have been a prodigal, but you are forgiven. You have shoes on your feet, a ring on your finger and the best robe to cover your nakedness—now go and do what you can for yourself"? Well, it would have been infinite mercy that would have welcomed me and pardoned me, but how much more gracious and tender is the Lord's message, "Come, My child take up your abode with Me and wander away no more." It is thus that God speaks to all who have believed in Jesus, "You have received Jesus Christ the Lord, so now you may walk in Him and you may always walk in Him! What He was to you at the first, He may be to you, still, and He may be to you forever and ever! Did you at the first eat Him as the Bread of Life to your soul? Then go on still eating Him! Did you spiritually drink of Him as the Water of Life? Then still drink of Him. He is yours forever, so continue to draw from His fullness all that you need! As you have received Him, so keep on receiving Him." Surely, this is a most gracious permission as well as a very precious precept!

"Walk in Him." Does not this mean, first, look upon Jesus Christ as your way to heaven and walk in Him? Look upon Him as your forerunner and follow Him. Look upon Him as your companion and lean upon Him. Look upon Him as your delight and live in Him, abide in Him! The expression, "Walk in

Him," implies action and progress. Let your whole life be practically governed by your union with Christ, let your actions speak of your fellowship with Him. But walking also means progress, so do not stand still in Christ, but go on to know more and more of Him—make advances in the Christian life—"grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." There is also something of the idea of permanence in the precept, "Walk you in Him." It means go nowhere else, but continue in Him—let your ordinary life and your common conversation indicate your closeness of communion with Him!

"Walk you in Him." I trust that at least some of us know what it is to "walk in Him." Though we could not tell to others all that it means, yet it is a blessed fact in our experience and we intend, by God's grace, to "walk in Him" as long as we live. I think this is what walking in Him means—to wake up in the morning and to have our first thoughts full of the Savior—to seek His guidance and blessing in everything that is to happen to us during the day, to go down to our morning meal with our heart's affection fixed upon Jesus, to go off to the business or the workshop in the full consciousness that He is going with us—when our hands are busy and our mind is occupied with our trading or our working, still realizing that our heart is with our Beloved in the secret place where none can follow us, and so, as the hours run on, through the noontide heat, Christ is our shade and shelter, in the cool of the evening His company is our supreme delight and then, as we retire to our bed, our last thought being—

"How sweet to rest
Forever on our Savior's breast!"

Christian, this ought to be your way of living! And if you are right with God, this is the way in which you actually do live. You "walk in Him." What a lovely garden! What a delightful place! The air is balmy, the scenery all around is charming. There is nothing to distract, or disturb, or disgust—everything to delight, gratify and satiate the spirit—so "Walk in Him." Climb to every lofty hill of His infinite love, explore the deepest recesses of His eternal purposes so far as they are accessible to mortal man! And in this way, "as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you in Him."

III. Notice, thirdly, THE MODEL WHICH IS PRESENTED TO US IN THE TEXT. "*As* you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk you in Him." The two emphatic words are, "as," and, "so." We are to walk in Christ Jesus as we received Him.

There is great safety in going back to first principles. To make sure of being in the right way, it is well to look back to the gate by which we entered the way. You know how, in ordinary life, in the matter of mutual love, we often look back upon the early days of that experience as the sweetest. Not long ago I heard a good man, whose time had been very fully occupied in business so that for many a year he had scarcely been able to have a holiday, say that, when at last he did manage to take one with his wife, it was like his honeymoon. You also recollect how the Lord said to Israel, "I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness." God likes us to go back in thought to the time when we began with Him—and I want to take you who are Christians back to your first love of God. Perhaps with some of you, religion has become a very mechanical sort of thing—you have become stereotyped in your religious observances. You need to go back to the place where you first received Christ Jesus the Lord and there refurbish your faith, love and all your other divine graces!

So I ask you, how did you receive Christ? Possibly your first answer is, "*I received Him in the depth of sorrow and humiliation of soul*. I had been broken in pieces by the great plow of the law and was rent and torn asunder by my own consciousness of guilt. I lay before the cross moaning and roaring like a wounded beast and in my extremity I received Christ as being the very Savior that I needed. I felt myself to be less than nothing and I took Him to be my all in all. Shivering in my nakedness through sin, I took His righteousness as my perfect covering. Famished to death, I took Him to be both my life and the food of that life. I grasped Christ in my despair at finding there was nothing else to which I could cling! Out of the great deeps of my soul's distress, I cast myself upon His mercy, saying—

"I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try—
For if I stay away,
I know I must forever die!'"

Our daily walk in Christ must be very much like that. Not exactly so, for there should be no unbelief in it. As for myself, I must confess that I never realize Christ's preciousness so much as when I feel myself still to be apart from Him, an undeserving, ill deserving, hell deserving sinner. Sometimes when our Lord gives us sweet enjoyments, we make too much of them by letting them come between Him and our souls. And when the Holy Spirit bestows upon us certain graces, we think we are very fine fellows and carry our heads aloft very proudly—instead of giving all the glory to His holy name. Now, if we ever act like that, we may rest assured that as we go up in our own estimation, Christ will go down—and that would be a sorry thing, indeed! Grow in grace, but not in self-esteem. Have more faith, but do not boast of having it. Be full of zeal, but not of conceit concerning it. Be as holy as it is possible for you to become, but do not prate and brag about your holiness as some have done. Be not like those who push with horn and with shoulder the weak ones of the flock because they have not attained to such heights as these strong ones profess to have reached—though, possibly, the feebler and humbler ones are really nearer to God than the boasters are! Lie low, brothers and sisters, lie low, for what the old Essex farmer used to tell me is true, "If you are one inch above the ground, you are just that inch too high." So lie low and thus continue to walk in Christ—yourself being *nothing*—and Christ being *everything*. You know that if you get to be something, Christ cannot then be everything to you. But if you are still nothing—and less than nothing in your own estimation—as you sink in self-esteem, your Lord will rise to His right position in your sight and so you will be walking humbly in Him as you ought!

Think again how you received Christ. When you really did lay hold of Him by faith, I am sure that *you received Him with great certainty*. There was no mockery, no sham about your reception of Christ. You were a lost sinner and you were pointed to the only Savior—and you did really and truly look unto Him who said, "Look unto Me, and be you saved." Whatever else there was in your look, there was intense earnestness in it. There was no pretense or affectation about it, it was very real! Is all your religion as real as that first faith look at Jesus was? Do you walk in Him as truly and as decidedly as you did that first day? My dear brother, do you ever pray sham prayers? My dear sister, do you ever sing sham praises? Is there not a very great risk of our making our religion into a mere shell with no life in it? May God save us from everything that would be such a sham as that and make us as sincere in our walk in Christ as we were in our first reception of Him! I know that I was most anxious to be certain that I had really believed in Jesus to the saving of my soul. I was not satisfied with just one look at Jesus, but I looked, and looked, again and again, with a holy anxiety lest I might possibly have been mistaken and not really have trusted Christ as my Savior. I wish we had more of that sacred anxiety concerning our walking in Christ.

We were not only very sincere in our early repentance and faith, but *our reception of Christ was very vital*. Salvation was to us a matter of life or death. It was not something about which we were only slightly concerned. It would be well if we manifested a similar vitality about our daily walk in Christ. There are some professors whom I know who do not seem to me to be alive much above their ankles—they have not sufficient vitality to reach up to their knees so as to make them mighty in prayer. They are alive, I hope, but they remind me very vividly of a remarkable but gruesome picture of the resurrection that I once saw. There were skeletons coming out of the graves, with the bones only partly covered with flesh. One man had a head without any eyes in it. Another was stretching out an arm that was all bone—and the rest of the figures in the picture were of a similar character. It was a strange conception on the part of the painter, yet I fear it was only too true a representation of the spiritual state of many nominal Christians! I hope they are really rising from among the dead, but they have not risen yet into fullness of life. Many professors appear to have a very low vitality, if they are alive at all! Their hearts are hard and stony, their consciences insensitive—sin does not shock them as it shocks the young convert—*he* is startled and alarmed at the very *appearance* of evil—but *they* have become so callous that they walk unconcerned among scenes that ought to break their hearts! May the Lord save you, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, from all such callousness as that! May you have the same tender sensitiveness to sin that you had when you received Christ Jesus the Lord. And as you then welcomed Him with warm, loving, overflowing emotion, so may you walk in Him, all your days, as one who is alive from the dead—

thoroughly alive—with all your powers and faculties in active exercise and your whole soul brimming over with love to Him!

Did you not also, beloved, *receive Christ very eagerly*? Have you ever helped to feed a man who had long been without food? If so, you know that it is a great treat to see how eagerly he eats. He does not pick over the meat to see if it is well done—it is all well done to him. He does not leave a scrap of food upon the plate and he looks round to see if there is any more that he can beg. It was in such a fashion that we feasted upon Christ when we first received Him. We had been for months, perhaps even for years, longing with a great heartache to find the Savior. And when we did find Him and began to feast upon Him, we thought we never could have enough of Him! Do you recollect how eager you were in those days to go where you could hear the gospel? You went to a place which was so crowded that you could not get a seat, but you did not mind standing in the aisle and you did not feel tired, then! But now you need a nice soft cushion to sit on and a cushion even for your feet—and you are weary long before the sermon is finished! In those early days you would have walked many miles to hear about Jesus Christ—and even if the preacher's language was somewhat rough and uncouth, what did you care about that, as long as he faithfully preached Jesus Christ and Him crucified? That is the way in which we should still eagerly walk in Christ, feeling that we can never have too much of His company, longing to be often where He meets with His people, delighting in His worship, charmed with everything He says and does! We received Christ eagerly, so let us walk in Him with the same eagerness and earnestness!

Many of us also received Christ very resolutely. I know that I asked the question, over and over again, "Shall I go to Him?" And at last, when I was almost driven to despair, I cried, "I must, I will—

"'I'll go to Jesus, though my sin
Has like a mountain rose.
I know His courts, I'll enter in,
Whatever may oppose.'"

That was how many of us received Christ Jesus the Lord. There were difficulties in our way, but we overcame them, for we were determined to be saved if it was possible. What sacred doggedness, what holy determination will a soul bestow when it is resolved on being saved! Hunger will make a man break through stone walls and iron bars, but a soul that is hungering and thirsting after Christ does not know that there are any walls or bars, so overpowering is its eagerness to get to Him! It was with such eagerness as this that we received Christ Jesus the Lord. Are we just as eager to walk in Him? I know that some of you are sorely tempted—are you standing fast? Are you standing up for Jesus as you used to do when you first knew Him? Are you firm as a rock in your resistance to everything that is opposed to Him and to His truth? You ought to be! Your song should still be that one of which you were so fond in those early days—

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

A lion like spirit was then in you! You would gladly have gone to prison for Christ's sake, or even to death if He had required it. If somebody had told me, when I was converted, that I should have to go to prison and lie there for 12 years as John Bunyan did if I became a Christian, I verily believe that I would have leaped for joy at the prospect of so high an honor! To be a martyr for the truth's sake—the prospect looked glorious—the ruby crown glowed in the sunshine of our ardent anticipation and we envied those who had been privileged to wear it! It was so then. But, beloved, is it so now? Can you cleave to Christ as tenaciously now as you did then? Can you bear to be in ill repute for His sake? Can you rejoice in being scoffed at because you are a Christian as you did when you received Christ Jesus the Lord? If you cannot, blush and be ashamed and, from henceforth, pray that with the same undaunted courage and determination with which you received Him, you may continue to walk in Him!

I will not weary you by multiplying words, but I must ask whether you do not recollect *how joyfully you received Christ*. Ah, you cannot forget that, for in proportion to your sorrow before, was your joy when you accepted Christ as your Savior. No wonder you sang—

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

We are not surprised that Miriam and the women went out with timbrels and with dances when Pharaoh and all his host were drowned in the Red Sea. And we do not marvel at Miriam's jubilant song, "Sing you to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously," for our soul took a timbrel and our feet danced before the Lord as we sang unto Him who had triumphed so gloriously for us! As I go back and remind you of those early joys, I again ask you whether you are as joyous now as you were then? You ought to be a great deal more joyous, for you have had so much more cause to praise the Lord than you had then! Come, brothers and sisters, let us go again to Jesus as we went to Him at the first—let us go as poor, guilty, needy sinners to Jesus Christ upon the cross just as though we had never gone before! If we do so, I can tell you what the consequence will be just as it was at the first. As we—

"View the flowing
Of our Savior's precious blood,
With divine assurance knowing
He has made our peace with God"—

we shall feel as though we were young converts once again! We may be getting old and gray and, perhaps, cold as well as gray, but we shall become like little children again and we shall shout, "Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna!" as the Son of David rides in triumph down the streets of our soul! Oh, that it may be so with many of us here! It ought to be so and it will be so if you walk in Christ Jesus the Lord as you received Him in the hour of your conversion!

I will close my discourse when I have reminded you that when we received Christ Jesus the Lord, *we received the whole of Him*. We took Him for all that we knew of Him and we found that He was much more than we then thought He was. And we did not pick and choose and say, "We will have His pardon, but we will not have His sanctification." We took the many sided Christ, the Christ of many glorious characters, the Christ of ten thousand times ten thousand beauties! We took Christ to teach us, Christ to lead us, Christ to feed us, Christ to cheer us, Christ for us to obey and Christ for us to delight in—we took a whole Christ! And then we gave Him our whole selves. We said, "Lord, take us, body, soul and spirit." We prayed that the sacrifice might be bound with cords to the horns of the altar forever! We made no bargains with Him—we gave the freehold of our souls to Jesus—and of our bodies, too. And we only asked that we might not have a pulse beating except for Him, or our lungs heaving except as He was our very life. And we took Christ—at least I know I did—for better or worse, in health or in sickness, to have and to hold so that even death should never part us! We put our hand in His and asked Him to take us and keep us forever. And we took Him and said, "We will hold to You and will not let You go." Since then there has been many a tug from Satan, who has tried to drag us away from Christ, or to make us think that Christ was going away from us—but we have managed to hold to Him to this hour! Perhaps you feel as though you had only got a hold of the hem of His garment. If so, try to get a firmer hold on Him! Gasp Him, hold Him by the feet, throw your arms about Him and tell Him that without a smile from Him, your spirit cannot rest! Tell Him that you are sick in love and need His presence, and must have it! And beg Him, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, to come to you. Say unto Him, "My Lord, if You love me, come and show Your love. If, indeed, there is between You and me a union of an eternal nature, come to me! Be not a stranger to Your own flesh, but be now as You were of old. Come to me again and let Your left hand be under my head while Your right hand does embrace me." Oh, for more of these blessed hungering and longings! Beloved, we will never let Christ go! We took Him forever and we will hold Him forever! And, blessed be His name, He will hold us forever! We are in His hands and none can take us out. There shall we be when earth and Heaven are in a blaze! There shall we be when He shall sit upon His judgment seat! And there shall we be world without end. Amen!

I leave this sermon with God's people, but I cannot help adding that I do earnestly pray that all of you may receive Christ Jesus the Lord. Oh, come to Him tonight! He is willing that you should have Him—and every soul that wills to have Christ may have Him, for, "the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is thirsty come. And whoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely." Amen, and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

1 JOHN 3:10-21.

Verses 10-12. *In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil: whoever does not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loves not his brother. For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And why did he slay him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.* Some people try to deceive us with the notion that all men are the children of God, but John, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, shows how false that idea is! Holiness and love distinguish the children of God from the children of the devil!

13. *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hates you*. As Cain hated Abel, so worldlings hate the saints whose holiness is a continual rebuke to the ungodly.

14-16. *We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.* [See Sermon #2556, Volume 44—LIFE PROVED BY LOVE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *He that loves not his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer: and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us* [See Sermons #2656, Volume 46—THE DEATH OF CHRIST FOR HIS PEOPLE and #2959, Volume 51—GOD'S LOVE TO THE SAINTS—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* Such self-sacrifice as this is the very highest form of love to the brethren and is a following of the example of Christ, who "laid down his life for us."

17, 18. *But whoever has this world's goods and sees his brother has need and shuts up his heart of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.* Love that consists only of words is utterly worthless. If it is true love, it must prove itself by kind deeds and gracious actions.

19. *And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him*. The love that will pass this test will bring a restful assurance of peace to the heart.

20-22. *For if our heart condemns us, God is greater that our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart condemns us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatever we ask, we receive of Him because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.* It is not everyone who can have whatever he chooses to ask of God in prayer. This privilege is only granted to those who "keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." [See Sermon #1103, Volume 19—THE CONDITIONS OF POWER IN PRAYER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

23. *And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment*. Faith and love—faith in Christ and love to one another—are here most happily joined together! Let us never put them asunder.

24. *And he that keeps His commandments dwells in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us*. Though this great truth of our dwelling in God and God dwelling in us is a great mystery, it is a mystery concerning which we need not be in doubt if we will learn of the Holy Spirit what He delights to teach us!

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

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CONCENTRATION AND DIFFUSION
NO. 3174

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9, 1909,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment."
John 12:3.

YOU will notice, if you read the narrative attentively, that the two sisters and the brother who made up the favored household at Bethany, though all most truly loving Jesus, had each one a different way of showing that love. Even so, true children of God do not always feel moved to serve the Lord Jesus in the same fashion, or to express their love to Him in precisely the same manner.

Martha served. She was the housekeeper and with much diligence made Him a supper. It would have been a sad omission had there been no table spread for so blessed a guest—and who could prepare it as well as Martha? Sometimes we have heard people speak disparagingly of Martha, but truly they mistake the Lord, who never chided her for serving but for being on one occasion so cumbered by it as to think harshly of her sister. Martha, in this instance did not fall into the fault which her Lord once so gently chided—she did her part quietly and well and, thereby, set forth her attachment to Jesus in the most commendable manner. We have sisters in the church whose way of serving Christ is in the household, or by caring for the sick and the poor. Like Dorcas, they make garments for them, or like holy women of old, they minister to the Lord of their substance. Their work is with *temporal* things, but they are none the less approved of their loving Master. Brothers, too, as deacons, may better honor the Lord by serving tables than they could by attempting to edify saints when the gifts suitable for that work are denied them. Each man and woman must labor according to his or her ability and calling.

As for Lazarus, he was "one of them that sat at the table." We might hastily imagine that by sitting there he did nothing, but, my brothers and sisters, the people had come together very much to see Lazarus who had been raised from the dead— and for him to sit there and to show himself—and especially to eat and to drink, was to do the best thing to convince onlookers that he was, indeed, alive! Our blessed Lord, Himself, when He rose from the dead, found it necessary to convince His disciples that He was really alive and in a real body and, therefore, He took a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb and ate before them all. When they saw Him eat, then they were sure that He lived! So, when Lazarus ate at the table, skeptics could not say, "It is merely his corpse, set upright to look like life, or a mere phantom to deceive." Lazarus eating and drinking was a testimony for Jesus and I would that we all knew how even to eat

and drink to the glory of God! There are some Christians who cannot do much or say much, but their godly lives, their patient suffering, their quiet holiness are good witnesses to Jesus. I have looked at the lilies and the roses in the garden, and I have thought, "You toil not, neither do you spin; you preach not, neither do you sing, and yet you praise my Lord simply *by being beautiful* and by unconsciously shedding abroad the perfume which He gives you." May not some saints be glorifying God most truly though they can do no more than this? Besides, someone of the family was needed to keep the Master company, and preside as host at the table—and who could do this but Lazarus, the master of the house? Anywhere else, Lazarus might have been out of place, but to me it appears most seemly that Lazarus should sit at the table—and if he modestly declined to take the head of it and sat with others, he was still bound to be there!

But what shall Mary do? She need not be at the table, Lazarus was there. She is, perhaps, of small use in the kitchen—her abilities are slender in that direction. What shall Mary do? Her heart was very warm and she felt she must do something. She did not ask anybody, however, for her own mind was inventive. She knew that it was a usual custom with honored guests to anoint them with ointment. She perceived that this had not yet been done, or if done, not in the royal style which her love suggested. Perhaps she was very lovely and had been somewhat fond of adorning her person. Her long hair may have been much cherished and she may have been profuse in the use of perfume upon it. The thought strikes her—she will consecrate that hair to Jesus and that pound of fragrant salve which she had stored up for the beautifying of herself shall be spent upon *Him*. It was very costly, but it had not cost a penny too much, now that it could be used upon *Him*. There was a pound of it, but there was none too much for *Him*. It was very sweet, but none too sweet for *Him*. She brings the pound of ointment and pours it upon His feet as He lies reclining at the table—and then begins to wipe His feet with the hairs of her head, consecrating her personal beauty as well as her valued treasure to Him whom she both loved and adored! She had found something to do and that something not the least of the three works of love!

The service of the three members of that elect family made up a complete feast. Martha prepared the supper, Lazarus conversed with their honored guest and Mary anointed the Master's feet. Judge not one another, my brothers and sisters! But do, each one, what you feel you can do, and what the Lord expects of you—and look not on another's work with ungenerous eyes. Neither Martha, nor Lazarus, nor Mary complained of each other, but together they made the service complete! All members have not the same office, but each one must lovingly supplement the office of the rest and ambition and jealousy must never enter among us.

We will now forget the others and look alone at Mary. We are struck with the service which she performed for Christ. It was somewhat singular, it was very demonstrative and it proved her love to be of no common kind. Other women besides Martha had made Him a supper. Other hosts besides Lazarus had sat at the table with Him. But no other had anointed His feet exactly in her fashion, though perhaps some may have come

near to it. Mary was inventive, demonstrative, patient, ardent and enthusiastic. What she did was the deed of a soul all on fire—the deed of a woman filled with deep devotion and reverent love. There is an old proverb that "still waters run deep." Mary had these still waters within her heart—she sat at Jesus' feet and heard His words! She was a woman of few words, but of many thoughts. She considered, she pondered and she adored. Mary among women is the counterpart of John among men and, perhaps, at this time she had even outrun the beloved disciple in quick discernment of the Lord's true nature. It seems to me that she had perceived His Godhead and understood more of what He was and what He was about to do than any other of the disciples did. At least I can, on that theory, better understand her deed of love. She devised homage for Him which she would not have dreamed of presenting to any other than such a one as she perceived the Lord to be. Pondering many things within her soul and remembering what He had done for her, personally—and for her dear brother, Lazarus, whom she loved so well—she determined that a special mark of reverential homage should be paid Him. And she carried out the resolve. Deep thought led to burning love and burning love led to immediate action!

Beloved friends, the church of Christ needs a band of men and women full of enthusiasm who will go beyond others in devotion to the Lord Jesus. We need missionaries who will dare to die to carry the gospel to regions beyond. We need ministers who will defy public opinion and, with flaming zeal, burn a way into men's hearts. We need men and women who will consecrate all that they have by daring deeds of heroic self-sacrifice. Oh, that all Christians were like this, but we must at least have some! We need a bodyguard of loving champions to rally around the Savior, the bravest of the brave, Immortals and invincibles, who shall lead the van of the armies of the Lord! Where are we to get them? How are they to be produced? The Holy Spirit's way to train men and women who shall greatly serve Christ is to lead them to deep thought and quiet contemplation. There they obtain the knowledge and vital principle which are the fuel of true zeal. You cannot leap into high devotion, neither can you be preached into it, nor dream yourself into it, or be electrified into it by revivalism! It must, through the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, arise out of hard, stern dealing with your soul and near and dear communion with your Savior! You must sit at His feet, or you will never anoint them! He must pour His divine teaching into you, or you will never pour out a precious ointment upon Him!

This is a rather long introduction, but we will now leave it all and crave your attention for a little time to a short parable which appears to me to grow out of this incident.

Mary took a pound of ointment and poured it all on Christ's feet—that is *concentration*. When she had poured it all out on Christ's feet, the whole house was filled with the odor of the ointment—that is *diffusion.* And the surest way to effective diffusion is perfect concentration.

I. Let us speak a little first upon this CONCENTRATION.

You desire, my friend, to do something before you die which may prove a blessing to your family connections. The desire is good, but do not begin with diffusion—commence with concentration and let Mary be your

model. She brought out all her ointment, the whole pound without reserve. Even so, consecrate to the Savior all that you have—every faculty, power, possession and ability! Half the pound of spikenard would not have sufficed. That half pound in reserve would have spoiled the deed. Perhaps we should never have heard of it at all if it had been less complete. Half a heart given to Christ? Tell it not in Gath, whisper it not in the streets of Askelon! Half a life given to Christ? Half your faculties, half your powers given to Christ? It is an unworthy gift! He gave you all and He claims all of you. O dear soul, if you would fill the house with sweet odor, bring in your whole self and pour out your heart at His feet!

Note that as she brought all, so *she poured it all upon Jesus*. She had no fear of the black looks of Judas, for the act was not meant for Judas—it was all for Jesus. I do not think she gave a thought to Martha, or Lazarus, or to any of them. The whole pound was for Jesus! The highest way of living is to live for Jesus and altogether for Jesus, not caring what this man says or how the other judges, but feeling that as *He* has bought us with His blood and we are His from the crown of our head to the sole of our feet, we, therefore, acknowledge no master but our Redeemer! Brothers and sisters, do you live for Jesus in that fashion? Do we not perform many actions under the impulse of secondary motives? I like, for my part, sometimes to do an act of which I feel, "I do not consider whether this will benefit my fellow men. I am doing it only for Jesus. What comes of it—whether a soul shall be saved or not is not my main care—I am speaking this good word in His honor and if God accepts it, and it glorifies Jesus, my end is served." Oh, it is a blessed thing to feel that you are living, not as a servant of man, nor of the church, nor of a sect, or party, but of Him whose precious blood has bought you!

Concentrate all your faculties upon the Lord, Himself, and then consult not with flesh and blood. Mary did not wait for any advice about the matter. There is Jesus and there are His blessed feet inviting her to anoint them! She will not stop to inquire what Martha thinks, much less what Judas murmurs, but her heart tells her to do it. All her powers of love say to her, "Do it." And she brings out the costly perfume and pours it all on Him. When the criticism is given about the wasteful deed, she cares not to make an apology—and she needs not to do so. If for the moment the grumbling grated harshly upon her ears, her Master's look of love and that kind word, "Let her alone; against the day of My burying has she kept this," are quite enough for her. She did not aim at pleasing Judas and so, if Judas is not pleased, she is not disappointed! She did it for Jesus and Jesus, being pleased; she has gained all that she sought! Ah, brothers and sisters, this is what we must try to do—we must not always remain in leading strings, asking other people what they think about our actions—if we know that a certain course is right, let us follow it and let others think and say what they choose!

This concentration of everything upon Jesus is the only way of worthily serving Him. When we give Him all, we do not give Him a thousandth part of what He deserves! But to give Him half—to give Him a tithe, to give Him what we can easily spare—is a poor way of expressing our love to Him. Who else deserves a part of your service? If you have been redeemed from death and hell, who else can claim a portion of your heart?

Look at Him in His life of labor. Look at Him on the cross and look at Him still remembering you before the throne of God. Does He not engross your affections? Say, does He not throw another cord of love around you and bind you as a sacrifice to the horns of the altar?

I will not linger longer on that point. Enough is as good as a feast. Concentrate, concentrate, concentrate, and concentrate all on Jesus!

II. Now, consider what will come of it—namely, DIFFUSION. "The house was filled with the odor of the ointment."

Mark that the house was not filled with the odor of the ointment through Mary's seeking. She did not run into every chamber and drop a little on the floor, so that every room might smell of it. She did not care whether the house was perfumed or not—she only wanted to anoint her Lord and, therefore, she poured all the ointment on His feet! The result was that the rooms were perfumed, but that was not her main objective. She did not tell everybody that she had precious ointment in store, but they knew it by her pouring it out. Whenever you hear a man boast that he is holy, remember that good scent needs no proclaiming! The only cart I ever meet with that rings a bell is the dust cart. If jewels and diamonds, or the bullion of the Bank of England are carried through the streets, no bell is rung. "Great cry and little wool" is a proverb which has had a new exposition in this country of late—a wonderful cry about holiness and wonderful little holiness to cry about, but a great deal to be wept over and lamented before the living God! To stand in every room and cry, "Spikenard! Spikenard! Wonderful spikenard!" would have been idle. Pour it on Jesus' feet and you will not have to say anything about it, for every room will be sweet with the smell thereof! We need, nowadays, dear friends, to have a little less talk about what men are and much more actual living unto Jesus. The Lord work it in us by His Spirit!

Why was it that Mary's spikenard perfumed the entire house? And how is it that if there is true grace in a man's life, it is sure to be felt and recognized without his saying much about it? We reply, *because it is real*. Real religion is always influential. Sham religion has but sham power. You cannot get influence by saying, "I mean to influence so and so"—as well hope to stop the sun and moon without Joshua's miraculous power! The power of religion within yourself will be very much the measure of the power which you exercise over others. Artificial flowers may be made so exactly like the real plants that you can scarcely detect them, but they lack the perfume of our garden favorites—and so also the mere professor has not the fragrance of real grace and, consequently, no attractive and sweetening influence upon others! But where religion is real, true, heartfelt, deep—where there is strong, all absorbing love to Christ—the sweet perfume of divine grace will give the man influence over his fellow men! I cannot tell you how it is that a man who lives near to God has this influence, but I know he has it. The camphor tree is full of camphor in all parts of it—branch, bark, root and flower are all full of camphor—and the man who really lives for Jesus is full of gracious influence in all places and times. May you and I be so!

How was it that the rooms became filled with the odor? There is a law of nature which chemists call *the law of transfusion*. If two gases of an entirely different nature are brought into contact, they commence at once

to mix with one another and continue to unite till they are thoroughly intermingled. Thus flavors and odors diffuse themselves in the air. It is so with good and evil in the world. Insensibly, every man is the worse for coming in contact with a vicious example and, consciously or unconsciously, every man is swayed to some degree for good by the presence of a virtuous life. The law of transfusion enters into moral and spiritual matters as well as into the realm of chemistry, and if you walk with God, endeavor to preserve a blameless life and glorify Christ—influence will be yours without your seeking it! How far it will extend, God alone knows. It may reach far beyond what you supposed to be its sphere and may even teach some who are yet unborn who shall hear from others how you lived and how you glorified Christ!

Besides, dear friends, true piety is a very powerful essence and *possesses great energy*. There are perfumes in nature like the attar of roses, of which the smallest drop will make a chamber smell for many a day. True holiness is such a mighty, pervading essence that if you possess it, it cannot be hidden—it will make itself known as a sweet savor even as far as heaven! The life of God is in it and it must operate. In everything that is good, God lies hidden. The Spirit of God dwells in every gracious word, godly thought, holy deed and He is sweetness itself! The name of Jesus is as ointment poured forth—what must His Spirit be? Yet that Spirit is to be found in every true believer!

I want to close by asking you, dear friends, how far, as yet, you have concentrated your love upon Christ and thus have influenced those who dwell in your house? I will only ask about your own house. Has your house been filled with the odor of the ointment? You do pray, but have your prayers been so mighty with God that they have brought down a blessing upon your family? You seek to avoid sin, you try to make your conversation pure, gracious, kind, cheerful, loving and Christ like—do you think that some in your house have been blessed thereby? I do not ask, "Have all been converted?" for though all the house was the better for Mary's ointment, yet Judas remained a traitor! I should not wonder if some in your house may have even disliked you the more for your piety—but still, the Lord frequently blesses godliness and makes it the means of conversion. O woman, you may gain your husband by your piety! If he will not hear sermons, he will hear that quiet, loving life of yours! O sister, you may win your brother by your love! He will not read pious books, but those letters of yours, those sweet words of tender rebuke and invitation—he does read them and he feels them, too, though you fear he does not! Father, those boys of yours are not yet what you could wish, but they must feel your godly example. Perhaps when you lie beneath the sod, they will recollect what you used to be. Fill the house with the odor of true religion! Fill the parlor and the drawing room, the bedchamber and the kitchen with hallowed conversation! I say again, not with mere talk and Pharisaic pretense, but with real holy living and true godly communion! And depend upon it, you are doing for your children and your servants the best thing in your power to do! Give them teaching, give them warning and entreaty, but still, the actual perfuming with godliness must arise from your own holy living—it must be begotten of the ointment poured on Jesus' feet!

Ah, dear friends, I wish that not only the house in which we may happen to dwell, but the workshop where we labor, the shop where we trade, the place of business where we associate with others might all be perfumed with divine grace! Christians are not to glide out of the way of their fellow creatures and shut themselves up in order to be pious any more than a soldier may hope to win the battle by running away! No, mix with your fellow men! If there are offices of trust to discharge, do not leave them to the lowest of the low to discharge them, but be willing to do public service for your country! But so do this that you shall spread abroad in every office the savor of honesty and integrity and make the rogue and the cheat ashamed of themselves. I would to God that every Christian church were a living protest against all the evil of the times, a gracious disinfectant to stop the abounding corruption. There is an evil smell of sin perpetually reeking towards heaven—and it needs that you Christians should live Christ like lives in public as well as in private until you fill this country with a healthier savor—and until England shall become a Christian country in *fact,* as well as in name. Would to God that the example of Christians might yet become so potent that all nations might feel its power, that wars might cease, that cruelties of every kind might come to an end and that the sweet savor of Jesus' name, manifested through His people, might perfume the whole world as though God had showered upon it ambrosia, essences and fragrances from the flowers of heaven to sweeten it against the time when Christ Himself shall come and make it a marriage chamber for His chosen bride! God grant that the perfume of your holiness may reach the stars! That your lives may be so sweet that beyond these fogs and clouds, the sweet aroma of your divine grace may rise acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, for we are always a sweet savor unto Him if we live unto the Lord!

I fear, however, that I may be addressing some whose lives are not a sweet perfume at all. Ah, take heed to yourselves! If you are living without God and without Christ—if you are living in any secret sin—take heed to yourselves! You may think that you will be able to conceal the ill savor of your sin, but you will not. How wonderfully does evil tell its own secret! The intolerable odor of many a secret sin has forced its way to notice. Beware you who would cover your sin! Beware, I pray you! For the task is hopeless. Dig, dig, dig, dig deep and in the dead of night cover up the sin, but like the blood of Abel, it cries from the ground! "Be sure your sin will find you out." If you are living now in sin and yet pretend to be virtuous, remember that if your hypocrisy is never found out in *this* life, it will confront you at the last great day! How terrible will be the resurrection of buried sins to men who know not Christ! They will wake up in the next world and find their sins howling around them like grim wolves—insatiable, fierce and terrible! Any one sin is able to destroy the soul, but what must it is to be surrounded by thousands, howling with terrible voices and eager to drag you down and tear you in pieces?

It will be so with you, sirs! It must be so with many of you unless you lay hold, now, upon the great salvation! Jesus Christ can drive away those wolves, can stop the ill savor of your sins! If you will trust Him, if you will yield your hearts to Him, He will deliver you! But if you will not, on your own heads be your blood!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 12:1-43.

Verse 1. *Then Jesus, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom He raised from the dead.* The days Christ was to spend upon the earth were getting to be very few so He paid another visit to that Bethany home where He was always so welcome—and more so than ever since He had raised Lazarus from the dead!

2, 3. *There they made Him a supper, and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.* All the members of the reunited family were present—Martha busy as usual with the domestic duties which fell to her share. Lazarus in close attendance upon the Master who had worked so great a miracle upon him and Mary, in her own sweet and gracious way, pouring out the wealth of her affection in honor of the Master.

4-6. *Then said one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which would betray Him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and took what was put therein.* The question of Judas was a most unworthy one, but the motive that prompted the question was still worse. Little did he care for the poor, but if he could have had the proceed from the sale of that very costly ointment of spikenard, he would have made that an opportunity of enriching himself.

7, 8. *Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of My burying has she kept this. For the poor you always have with you: but Me you have not always.* Christ was Himself always caring for the poor, so He would not discourage any effort on their behalf, but just then one of His most devoted disciples desired to render to Him special honor—and He would not let her be rebuked—on the contrary, He pointed out the deep symbolical meaning of her loving action.

9. *Many people of the Jews knew that He was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake, only, but that they might see Lazarus, also, whom He had raised from the dead.* Their curiosity was but natural, for few of them could have seen anyone who had been raised from the dead! It is well when a saved soul, who has been spiritually raised from the dead, becomes a center of attraction together with the Lord who has worked such a miracle of mercy upon him!

10, 11. *But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus, also, to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus.* They would have committed a double murder if it had been possible, and would have put to death both Jesus and Lazarus, who was a living witness to the wonder-working power of the Christ whom they would not receive as the promised Messiah. When men hate Christ, they also hate those whom He has blessed—and will go to any lengths in seeking to silence their testimony.

12, 13. *On the next day many 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.* It is significant that John is the only one of the four evangelists who mentions the palm fronds that were carried by the people in this triumphal procession in honor of Christ. And it was to John that the vision was given of the "great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," who "stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

14-16. *And Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold, your King comes, sitting on a donkey's colt. 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.* It is strange that Christ's own disciples did not at once remember this plain prophecy when it was so literally fulfilled, yet, before we condemn them, let us remember how "slow of heart" we also have been "to believe all that the prophets have spoken."

17. *The people therefore that were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record.* They could not help testifying in His favor after they had seen Him work such a notable miracle as the raising of Lazarus from the dead!

18, 19. *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 you prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after Him*! When they saw our Lord riding in state through the streets and the people waving palm branches and shouting in His honor, they said, "The world is gone after Him." That was only very partially true, and for a very short time—but the day will come when the whole world *shall* go after Him! Christ's divine attractions shall be felt throughout the earth and all the Pharisees then in the world will not be able to prevent the people from going after Him! And—

"Come what may
To stand in the way
That day the world shall see."

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 asked him, saying, Sir, we wish to see Jesus.* They were proselytes who had learned to worship Jehovah. Something more than mere curiosity must have moved them to want to see Jesus! Having heard of His raising the dead, they had a desire and a very proper desire, to know more of Him, so they asked to be introduced to Him by one who, though not a Greek, had a Greek name, and who might have, therefore, served as a kind of bridge for these Greeks to reach the Savior.

22, 23. *Philip came and told Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.* Christ's passion and death were getting very

near when these Gentiles came to Him and He saw, in that company of Greeks, the vanguard of that great army that shall yet come to Him out of every nation under heaven. In the prospect of that great ingathering, He looked beyond the impending shame and suffering and spoke even of the hour of His death as the time when He should be glorified!

24. *Verily, verily, I say unto you. Except a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone: but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit.* [See Sermon #3024, Volume 53—CHRIST'S DEATH AND OURS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This was Christ's way to glory, and it must be our way to glory, too. The grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die, or else it cannot bring forth fruit. Just so must it be with you and with me—and in proportion as we learn to die to self, we shall live to the glory of God!

20. *He that loves his life shall lose it.* If you keep yourself to yourself, you will lose yourself.

20. *And he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.* Brothers and sisters in Christ, if we are really to glorify Christ on the earth, we must be willing to lose our reputation, our good name, our comfort and, indeed, everything that we have for Christ's sake! This is the only way to truly live. If for your own sake you begin to keep back anything from Christ, that is the way to die. You would then be like the grain of wheat that is laid by and preserved and which, therefore, can never grow or multiply. Surrender yourself! Be willing to be nothing! Be willing to die if only the truth of God may live! Care nothing about honor and glory for yourself—care only about the honor and glory of your Master! Learn the meaning of the Master's paradox—as you bury yourself, you will multiply yourself. As you are put out of sight, like a grain of wheat that is sown in the ground, you have your only opportunity of growth and increase! Heavily laden ears of corn shall spring up from the grain which has been buried in the earth.

26-28. *If any man serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be. If any man serves Me, him will My father honor. 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. Father, glorify Your name.* [See Sermon #1391, Volume 24—A GOLDEN PRAYER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] In the 27th verse, our Savior asked Himself the question, "What shall I say?" here He gives His own answer, "Father, glorify Your name." When you know not what to pray for, you can always safely pray, "Father, glorify Your name." As you stand where the crossroads meet and you ask, "Which way shall I choose?" pray, "Father, glorify Your name." This incident seems like a rehearsal of Christ's passion. Here we see that natural fear of death which came across the Savior's mind because He was so really and truly man. If His pains had not been real pains, but had been pleasant and congenial to Him, there would have been no self-sacrifice in His suffering. But the fact that they cast upon His spirit the dark shadow of death only proves to us what sharp pains they were—but instead of asking for a way of escape from them, He surrendered Himself to them, gave Himself up as a willing victim with this prayer upon His lips, "Father, glorify Your name." And now see what happened.

28, 29. *Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people, therefore, that stood by and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spoke to Him.* This was one of the three occasions on which testimony was openly borne to Christ by His Father—first at His baptism, then at His transfiguration, and now here at the rehearsal of His great sacrifice. [In Sermon #909, Volume 16—VOICES FROM THE EXCELLENT GLORY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org, Mr. Spurgeon speaks of those three testimonies to Christ.] Verily, He is the Son of God, and He is always well pleasing to God! And God has glorified His name and will continue to glorify it through Jesus Christ His Son! We learn from this narrative that the voice of God is not understood by everybody. Some of those that stood by said that it thundered—and others said that an angel spoke to Him. It is necessary that you should be a child of God if you are to know your Father's voice! Though God is speaking at this moment in the clearest tones, none will recognize His voice, or understand His words, but those who are taught by His Holy Spirit.

30, 31. *Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world.* [See Sermon #2338, Volume 39—THE CRISIS OF THIS WORLD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *Now shall the ruler of this world be cast out.* See how the eyes of faith reads things differently from the eyes of sense! You and I would have said, "Now is Christ coming to His lowest point. Now is His name to be cast out from among men and His cause to be crushed as the result of His death." But Christ reads the signs of the times very differently. "Now," He said, "in the hour of My shame, suffering and death, is the judgment of this world. Now shall the ruler of this world be cast out." It was only by Christ being apparently conquered that Satan could be really vanquished! And there is often no way of victory for a saint except through defeat. When self is slain, then do we truly live!

32, 33. *And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples unto Me. This He said signifying what death He should die.* [See Sermons #139, Volume 3—CHRIST LIFTED UP; #775, Volume 13—THE GREAT ATTRACTION and #1717, Volume 29—THE MARVELOUS MAGNET—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The Pharisees said, "The world is gone after Him," but Jesus says, "No, not while I am riding in state through the streets of Jerusalem. But when I am lifted up and hung upon the cross, then shall it, indeed, be true, 'I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples unto Me.'" The crucified Christ of Calvary is the mighty magnet that is to attract multitudes of trembling, doubting, ruined sinners who by Grace shall be drawn unto Him and find eternal life in Him!

34, 35. *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.* What a sad condition to be in—to not know where you are going! Are there not some of you whom I am now addressing who do not know where you are going? Yet if you would but take the trouble to look, you might easily know that as long as you continue in the paths of sin, you are going down to

the chambers of death! Oh, that God's Holy Spirit would give you sufficient light to enable you to see where you are going! You surely do not want to take "a leap in the dark." Oh, that you may have the grace to turn from the downward way and to seek the heavenward road!

36-41. *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. But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him: that the sayings of Isaiah the Prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again, He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Isaiah, when he saw His Glory and spoke of Him.* [See Sermons #2413, Volume 41—DESPISED LIGHT WITHDRAWN and #1844, Volume 31—ISRAEL AND BRITAIN—A NOTE OF WARNING—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] You know that wonderful sixth chapter of Isaiah's prophecy, and you know how wonderfully he has spoken there of the glory of Christ. But what a terrible thing it is that even Christ should be driven to blind men's eyes, to take the light away from them because they proved themselves unworthy of it! May that never be the case with any of us, but while we may see, let us see—and may God give us more light!

42, 43. *Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on Him; but because of the Pharisees, they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.* What a shameful thing that was! Yet you will still find that there are many persons who, even though they believe the truth, dare not proclaim it, but must hide in obscurity until the times grow easier. However, Christ's death fetched out many who had been His disciples in secret. Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus could not stay in the background any longer and, doubtless, the thoughts of many other hearts were then revealed.

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"PEACE! PERFECT PEACE!"
NO. 3175

AN ADDRESS
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1909,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
IN A SICK-ROOM AT MENTONE.

"You will keep him in perfect peace (Margin: peace, peace), whose mind is stayed on You: because he trusts in You."
Isaiah 26:3.

[This Address is an interesting souvenir of an afternoon visit paid by Mr. Spurgeon to an invalid at Mentone, the late Giles Shaw, Esq., of Bewdley—brother-in-law of Miss Frances Ridley Havergal. The Address was delivered without preparation and followed immediately the singing of the hymn upon which it is based.] [A Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon Isaiah 26:3 is #1818, Volume 31—THE SONG OF A CITY AND THE PEARL OF PEACE. Expositions of the whole Chapter are included with Sermons #2430, Volume 41—CHRISTIANS AND THEIR COMMUNION WITH GOD and #2713, Volume 47—WALKING IN THE LIGHT OF THE LORD—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org .]

AS WE have met together in this sick chamber and you all wish me to talk with you, we will thoughtfully run over the hymn which you have just been singing. It is No. 730 in *Sacred Songs and Solos*, or No. 7 in *The Christian Choir*. May the divine teacher lead us into mines of the truth of God and show us the deep things of God!—

"Peace! Perfect peace! In this dark world of sin?
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within."

Peace, yes, perfect peace! What a heaven lies within! Peace gleaming with a heavenly light even in the midnight of this world of care. We cannot enjoy true peace as long as sin remains upon the conscience. As well might the ocean be quiet while a tempest is raging, or the sea bird rest on the wave when the storm is mixing earth and sky! The more the conscience is enlightened, the more surely will it forbid peace as long as sin remains, for its honest verdict is that sin deserves God's wrath and must be punished. Every upright understanding assents to the justice of that dispensation by which "every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward." To me, when convinced of sin, it seemed that God could not be God if He did not punish me for my sins. Because of this deep seated conviction, that great gospel truth, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin," became a heavenly message, sweeter than the music of angels' harps! Then I saw, with glad surprise, that God in Christ Jesus is just and the justifier of him whom believes."

To me, the glorious doctrine of substitution was a well in the desert and it is still so. I believe it with my whole soul. An honest man, if he is in debt, will always be in trouble until the liability is removed. But when his debt is paid, he leaps into liberty and gladness! When I learned that my enormous debt of sin had been fully discharged by the Lord Jesus Christ, who did this for all believers, then was my heart at peace! How much I wish that all of you may join me and Bishop Bickersteth in singing with emphasis—

"Peace perfect peace! In this dark world of sin?
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within!"

The second verse goes on to speak of—

"Peace! Perfect peace! By thronging duties pressed?
To do the will of Jesus, this is rest."

This peace is a present possession and may be enjoyed in the ordinary circumstances of life. Everyone who keeps house, every busy housewife, every man who is much occupied with his business, needs this verse—

"Peace, perfect peace, by thronging duties pressed."

To be closely pressed by a crowd of duties does not tend to peace of spirit. You do not know how to act through all you have to do and there seems so much to be done all at once. If the duties world come in regular order and you could take them as they come, you might be at peace, even though incessantly occupied. But when they come rushing in, helter-skelter—not only one thing, but 20 other things, all claiming to be done at once—then is the anxious soul apt to be disquieted! We are first wearied and then worried. To be perfectly at peace amid the hurry burly of invading cares is a very blessed condition of soul—and the only way to reach it is described in the next line of the hymn—

"To do the will of Jesus, this is rest."

To be sure that what you are doing is what Jesus would have you do is peace! Happy soul that is doing what Jesus would have it do! I put up this little question in the orphanage, for the children to read—"What would Jesus do?" This, if we have spiritual minds, will be one of the best guides for us when we are in difficulty as to what is the next thing for us to do. We would do good, but too many good things are present with us—which is to be first? To know the will of Jesus, and to do it, is to abide in the peace of God! What we cannot do, we shall leave to Him, being assured that our duty does not lie in the region of the absolutely impossible—

"When obstacles and trials seem
Like prison walls to be,
I do the little I can do,
And leave the rest to Thee."

God comes in with His grace where the impossible shuts us out. There are two things we need never worry about—what we can do and what we cannot do. What remains?

The next verse is very sweet—

"Peace, perfect peace! With sorrows surging round?
On Jesus' bosom nothing but calm is found."

Oh, those sorrows! Sorrows of sickness in ourselves and others. Bereavements, losses and crosses in daily life. Inabilities to succor and depressions of spirit. These last two are at times the worst of all, for then the sorrow gets right into the heart and becomes sorrow, indeed! All the waters in the ocean are as nothing to the vessel so long as they are kept outside—but when they break into the cabin of the heart's assurance and begin to fill the hold of the heart—then are we in peril—

"Peace, perfect peace, with sorrows surging round."

This is the finger of God. It is not according to nature for a man to be just as happy when he is in adversity as in prosperity. Even when "sorrowful" to be "always rejoicing" is a paradox realized only by one who knows that next line—

"On Jesus' bosom nothing but calm is found."

Wonderful position! We cease to marvel at the deep calm which comes of it. I have sometimes noticed very little chicks nestling under their mother's wings, thrusting out their little heads from under her feathers, looking so warm and cozy that they did not seem to know that it was cold in the big world outside! Near their mother's bosom they chirped quite happily and were altogether unaffected by the frosts of the night or the chills of the day. So we read, "He shall cover you with His feathers and under His wings shall you trust—His truth shall be your shield and buckler." We get to Jesus and we find shelter and safety in Him, even as the little chicks beneath their mother's wings. Is it so with each one of you? A present salvation should yield you present consolation and it will do so if you act up to your position and privilege. Tell your sorrow to Jesus! Leave your sorrow with Jesus! Bear your sorrow *for* Him. Bear your sorrow *with* Him and then see what peace, what perfect peace, you will enjoy, even "with sorrows surging round!"

The next verse will suit us who are, for a while, a thousand miles from home—

"Peace! Perfect peace! With loved ones far away?
In Jesus' keeping* we *are safe, and they."

Yes, the dear wife is at home. We do not know how things are going there with the children, and the servants, and the work-people. All sorts of things are left as burdens upon the beloved ones at home. We leave our beloved with our God and commend the household far away to God,

who is present everywhere. A wandering son, a wayward daughter—we leave them all with Jesus. It is ordained by the providence of God that these loved ones should be far away and, therefore, it is right it should be so. Yes, that which God appoints is right—and *must be right*. Distance ordained of heaven is better than nearness of our own choosing! How sweet that line—

"In Jesus' keeping we are safe, and they!"

They are safe, too! It is all well with them. We cannot see them, but they are under the eyes of Jesus. They are as near to Him as we are and, in His keeping they are as safe as we are. When I was a very little child, I lived so long with my grandfather that he became everything to me. And when I left him, it seemed like going among strangers. And I remember that grandfather tried to comfort me by saying, "Ah, child! You are going away from Stambourne; but the same moon will shine where you are going! It will always be the same moon." Often I looked at the moon and remembered that grandfather was looking at it, too, and we were not so very far away from one another. It is a sweet comfort to think that there is the same providence watching over the loved ones far away on the other side of the globe, in Australia, as there is watching over us who are gathered here. The absence of friends must not break our inward peace.

Some are naturally anxious and fretful and this comes out most in their thoughts of those who are away. I was just now talking to a friend who tries to leave her troubles with the Savior, but very soon takes them up again and bears them on her own back. She casts her burdens on the Lord and then bows her own weary shoulders to the load. This, she confessed, she had done many times. I said to her, "Do you keep your money in a bank?" "Yes," she replied. "Then," I said, "it is well for both of us that I am not your banker." "Why?" she asked. "Why," I replied, "if you were to place £100 with me, and then come back in five minutes and ask whether your money was safe, I should have to assure you that it could not be safer. Then you would probably want to see it and I would say, 'There is your money. You can draw it out at once.' I would not be best pleased if the next day you came again and repeated your question, and made a personal inspection. I am afraid I would say to you, 'You had better take your money and look after it yourself, for it is evident that you have little or no confidence in me.'" At any rate, however I might take it, it would be very provoking conduct. We must not talk of confidence in our Lord Jesus and then withdraw at the first sign of trouble or difficulty! "We are safe, and they." Will not an assured conviction of this truth bath us in seas of heavenly peace? The Lord make it so with us all!

Now for verse five—

"Peace! Perfect peace! Our future all unknown?
Jesus we know, and He is on the throne."

That is the end of all doubts about the future, "He is on the throne." His hand is on the helm to steer the ship. He is in the place of sovereign government—nothing can happen but what He ordains or permits. Ah, dear friends! Some of us have need to remember such a verse as this! We went home one year from this place, two of us, as happy as birds could be; and within a very few days one had lost his wife, and the other one dear friend, and then another. We will not try to peer through that telescope which would unveil the future. It may be that dark scenes will startle us before we reach the eternal light. We do not know, and need not wish to know, what is appointed for us—but this great and comfortable truth of God meets it all—

"Jesus we know, and He is on the throne."

We can very well leave all things with our crowned head! I suppose none of us would wish to contradict *Him*, nor to have anything arranged otherwise than His loving mind appoints. If He stood by us this afternoon, and said to any one of us, "My child, I have arranged your way in tender love and wisdom," no one of us would wish it to be otherwise. If He said to us, "I have appointed such and such," would we say to Him, as Joseph said to Jacob, "Not so, my Father," and would we wish Him to uncross the hands which He guides so wisely? Would we not ask for the cross handed blessing? Let the King be a king, and do what seems good to Him! May we not only say that, but stand to it in the trying hour—

"Peace! Perfect peace! Death shadowing us and ours?
Jesus has vanquished death and all its powers."

Death is the last enemy, but more—he is "the last enemy that *shall be destroyed*." He cannot touch a child of God! Only his shadow may fall upon us. How small a thing is this! The shadow of a sword cannot kill, the shadow of a dog cannot bite, the shadow of a lion cannot rend and the shadow of death cannot destroy!—

"Death shadowing us and ours."

Well, well, we are not silly babies that can be frightened at a shadow, for—

"Jesus has vanquished death and all its powers."

He did it by His own death and resurrection! That resurrection transformed death into quite another thing from what it was before. Death used to be as a black cavern in the mountains. Men said that many were the footsteps into it, but that there were none *from* it. It was an awful, all devouring cavern, but Jesus has, by passing through it, turned the cavern into a tunnel! He went in at the gloomy side, but He remained not in

the heart of the earth—He reappeared at the other side. So that, death is now all on the way to heaven and immortality!

I have heard of an aged Christian sister at Plymouth who had been for many years troubled with the fear of death, but she got over it and was very happy and very cheerful when speaking about her departure. She lived in a room of her own and one night she said to the friends in the house, "I believe I shall see the Lord tomorrow." It was on a Saturday night she spoke thus and, according to her wish, they did not disturb her in the morning. But as they did not hear anything from her as the day passed on, they went to her room about midday and, sure enough, she was with her Lord! On a piece of paper which lay on her bed, they found these lines written—

"Since Jesus is mine, I'll not fear undressing,
But gladly put off these garments of clay.
To die in the Lord is a covenant blessing,
Since Jesus to glory through death led the way."

That is the way to look at it!—

"Peace, perfect peace, death shadowing us and ours?
Jesus has vanquished death and all its powers."

Then comes the last verse—

"It is enough! Earth's struggles soon shall cease,
And Jesus calls us to heaven's perfect peace."

Dear friends, it is very essential that we, as Christian people, should not only talk about this peace and believe in it, but that we should enjoy it and exhibit it! I believe that to some of you, the best way in which you can honor God and win others to Christ is by exhibiting a quiet, cheerful frame of mind, especially in sickness. Nothing is so convincing to ungodly men as to see Christians very calm in time of danger, very resigned in the hour of affliction, very patient under provocation and taking things altogether, as Christians should take them, as from the hand of God! They are struck with it, for it is so different from what they feel within themselves! When their earth shakes, when their foundations are removed, when their health is gone, when their earthly comforts are taken away—what have they left? But you and I have just as much left when all these things are gone as we had before! While we have earthly comforts, we have learned to see God in them all. And when they are taken away, we see them all in God. But the ungodly have not that wonderful sense of the full possession of all things which is the peculiar delight of the heirs of salvation!

You and I are like Jacob. The Lord said to Him, "The land whereon you lie, to you will I give it." You have only to lie down upon a promise and you may claim it for yourself—it is yours by the Magna Carta of faith! Go

to the Bible and whatever promise you find there addressed to a child of God, stretch yourself upon it and so make it your own—and it will be so! Remember how the Lord spoke to Abraham, "Lift up, now, your eyes, and look from the place where you are, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which you see, to you will I give it." Let us believe that God has given us all things in giving us His Son—

"This world is ours, and worlds to come,
Earth is our lodge, and heaven our home."

We must get this perfect peace of which we have now been singing and speaking. I admire in certain of the saints their self-command, their great quiet and deep restfulness of spirit. It is not everything, but it is a very great deal. It is all the more necessary just now because the world is in such a hurry. It is necessary to us when we are weak and suffering, and when we are surrounded by cares and sorrows. Yet it is quite as valuable when we are strong and young and comfort would tempt us aside. Oh, that the world may see that we have a peace that cannot be taken away from us by force or fraud! I do not quite like that saying of Addison, "Come here, young man, and see how a Christian can die." It looks too theatrical. But I should like it to be so with us that men might turn aside to see how a Christian can live! O Lord and giver of peace, grant us Your peace, and grace to keep it, even to the end!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HOSEA 14.

Verse 1. *O Israel, return unto the LORD your God,* [See Sermon #2192, Volume 37—THE JOYOUS RETURN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "Bless His name that He is still your God! However much you may have backslidden, you have not lost your right to claim Him as your God, for He is yours eternally by a fixed promise. And because He is still your God, let His everlasting kindness entice you to come back to Him."

1. *For you have fallen by your iniquity.* "You have lost your comforts, you have become a poor despicable creature. You have fallen by your iniquity—this is the eve of all the mischief—your sin is the seed of all your ruin! Get rid of that and you shall soon have your comforts back again."

2. *Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto Him.* See, He puts the words into your mouth, as if He felt persuaded that you would say, "Lord, I cannot pray an acceptable prayer," He makes one for you, so that you who have backslidden the most and have gone the farthest astray, may have no excuse—"Turn to the Lord: say unto Him."

2. *Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the sacrifices of our lips.* "Our thankfulness shall give You such hearty praise that it shall not be like the Jew's slender sacrifice, when he offered the turtledoves or the young pigeons, but we will give You of our praise as hearty a sacrifice as when the devout Israelite brought the young bullock, the very best of his beasts to be offered upon the altar of his God. So we will offer to You the sacrifices of our lips."

3. *Asshur shall not save us.* Backslider, have you been putting your trust anywhere but in God, hoping to find comfort in the world and in sin? Then make this confession—"Asshur shall not save us."

3. *We will not ride upon horses.* These were the confidence of the Egyptians—and the Israelites vainly tried to imitate their powerful and rich neighbors. So we will not put our confidence in the strength of cavalry.

3. *Neither will we say anymore to the work of our hands, You are our gods.* Happy is that man who turns aside from every idol and trusts in God alone! It is a mark of very black backsliding when we begin to make our business, our families, our pleasures and our bodily health the objects of such tender consideration that we virtually say to them, "You are our gods."

3, 4. *For in You the fatherless finds mercy. I will heal their backsliding I will love them freely: for My anger is turned away from him.* [See Sermons #501, Volume 9—GRACE ABOUNDING and #920, Volume 16—BACKSLIDING HEALED—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Everlastingly turned away through the complete and satisfactory atonement of Jesus Christ!

5. *I will be as the dew unto Israel.* The dew is God's gift and so is divine grace! The dew falls silently, yet abundantly, and sprinkles both the leaf and the root sufficiently. "I will be as the dew unto Israel," is a promise to the man of faith, the man of prayer, the man who can endure trial—"I will be as the dew unto Israel."

5. *He shall grow as the lily.* It is "the daffodil" in the original, the yellow daffodil in the East springs up after a shower where you could not have perceived anything before. Yet there is the idea of frailness in that simile, so it is balanced by the next one.

5. *And cast forth his roots as Lebanon.* After you have grown upward, you must grow downward—and growing downward, though it may not be so pleasant—is quite as excellent as growing upward, so the promise to you is, "He shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon."

6. *His branches shall spread.* This is growing sideways. So the Believer spreads his branches by public profession and testimony after having

become deeply rooted in the faith and having grown up in love to God! Then He begins to spread his shadow over the sons of men by telling—

"To sinners round,
What a dear Savior he has found."

6. *And his beauty shall be as the olive tree.* Which largely consists in its fruitfulness. That is always the most beautiful olive which bears the most fruit. So the fruitful Christian shall have the beauty of the olive tree. Besides, the olive is an evergreen and the Christian's beauty is of a kind that shall never fade. There is an old saying, "Beauty soon fades," but that does not mean the Christian's beauty, for that shall *never* fade, neither in life, nor in death, nor in eternity!

6. *And His smell as Lebanon*. That is, the holy influence of his life and conversation shall be as fragrant to God and men as are the perfumes exhaled by the sweet flowers upon the side of Mount Lebanon.

7. *They that dwell under his shadow shall return.* His children, his servants, his congregation shall be blessed by his gracious influence. As the Upas tree drops with deadly poison, so the tree of grace in a Christian drops living drops to fall on dead souls!

7. *They shall revive as the corn.* Which suddenly springs up in the East after rain falls.

7. *And grow as the vine*. The branches shall in their turn become fruitful.

7. *The scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon*. Our families and households should be so well ordered that not only we ourselves, personally, but all in our household should have a heavenly influence, a blessed savor upon all around us.

8. *Ephraim shall say, What have I to do anymore with idols?* [See Sermons #1339, Volume 23—IDOLS ABOLISHED and #2474, Volume 42—THE GREAT CHANGE—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Let that question also go round our ranks, "What have I to do anymore with idols? I, who am bought with the precious blood of Jesus? I, who am named by the name of Jesus? I, who have been baptized into the Sacred Trinity—what have I to do anymore with idols?" You may make an idol of that boy or girl of yours. You may make an idol of that house or garden of yours. You may make an idol of that business or profession of yours. Do not do it, I entreat you, but rather say, "What have I to do anymore with idols?"

8. *I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree.* That is what Ephraim says, and this is what God says.

8. *From Me is your fruit found.* [See Sermon #557, Volume 10—WHERE TO FIND FRUIT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

We are never so fruitful as when we get all our fruit from God! We always shine in borrowed light and we are always fruitful in borrowed fruitfulness.

9. *Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? Prudent, and he shall know them? For the ways of the LORD are right.* Did your murmuring spirit say that they were not right? Because you have had some sore trial, did your repining spirit say that they were not right? They are certainly right and you shall see that it is so one day! "The ways of the Lord are right."

9. *And the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.* Even in God's good ways, transgressors cannot stand—they fall even when they try to praise God, or to pray to Him—and this is a sad proof of man's deep depravity, that even when he is engaged in the worship of God, the thing which is, in itself, good, becomes obnoxious to God by reason of the sin which is certain to be mingled with it!

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

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

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THE BEAUTY OF THE OLIVE TREE
NO. 3176

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1909,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 17, 1879.

"His beauty shall be as the olive tree."
Hosea 14:6.

[This Sermon was one of several preached by Mr. Spurgeon after various visits to the Riviera. He had intended to prepare a volume upon the olive, but illness and the pressure of other work prevented. He had revised nearly half of the manuscript of this discourse and the revision of the remainder has followed as closely as possible the lines laid down by him.]

OUR present objective will be to bring out the resemblance in point of beauty between the godly man and the olive tree. But please note that the parallel does not hold good of all who profess and call themselves Christians—it is only true of those whose backsliding has been healed—to whom the Lord has been as a refreshing dew. It is the believer in a healthy, growing and useful condition whose beauty is "as the olive tree."

Things of beauty were evidently intended to be gazed upon. God created beauty on purpose that it might hold our eyes, rivet our attention and command our thoughts. Whether it is the beauty of a tree or the beauty of a man, it was meant to be a joy forever, but this it cannot be if it is left unnoticed. Beautiful objects are intended to be thought upon and spoken of—and we shall not be doing ill if we now consider and commend a Christian. We shall be doing no dishonor to the Master if we admire the disciple, if we confess, at the very outset, that our whole intent is not to magnify believers, but to glorify God in them. There is no beauty in anything which charms our eyes but what the Creator has put upon it and, assuredly, there is no spiritual beauty about any man but what the Holy Spirit has worked in him, "for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." If the olive tree is beautiful, we are not so doting as to fall down and worship it! And if a man is made comely by the grace of God, we do not worship the man, but we praise the Lord on his behalf! Glory be to God who has done such marvelous things for poor human nature that he has made it lovely—so lovely that even He, Himself, beholds a beauty in it, for remember that the text is not only the word of a prophet, but the word of Jehovah, Himself, who says, "I will be as the dew unto Israel... and his beauty shall be as the olive tree."

Having spent many months under the olive trees of the Riviera, my soul has them still in remembrance. From morning till sunset I have rested in the peaceful groves—at one time basking in the sunshine, and soon seeking the shade to escape the heat of the sun which gave to the invalid, summer in the months of winter! The very color of the olive tree rests the eyes. I delight in its emerald gray, its silver green, its unique foliage—and the song of the birds which sing among its branches refreshes the ears! As I have looked upon the olive trees and thought of them over and over again, my mind has sought for matter whereby I might edify the people of God. My observations have always been made with that desire. And as I now present them to my readers, it is with many prayers that they may minister divine grace to those who read them.

I. The believer in a healthy spiritual state, refreshed by the Holy Spirit as with the dew of heaven, has a beauty like that of the olive tree in this respect, that IT IS A BEAUTY WHICH GROWS UPON YOU.

Louis Figuier, in his, "*Vegetable World*," says peremptorily, "The olive is of a sober grayish green aspect and without beauty, having a rugged stunted aspect." We object to this verdict, but we freely admit that at first sight, there is little or nothing attractive about the olive tree. We have even heard persons pronounce it an unsightly tree which has quite disappointed them. We were sure that they had never sought its company and conversed with it hour after hour as we have done, or they would not have spoken so slightingly of what we have found, "a gracious tree for fruit, for leaf, for flower." As a matter of fact, it is not the most shapely of the sons of the forest. And though the trees, as we are told in Jotham's parable, sought it for a king, it does not, like Saul, lift its head above its fellows. Neither does it, like Absalom, claim to be praised beyond all others for comeliness. It is not a tree which would at once strike the beholder with admiration, like some giant oak, or lofty elm—nor charm him with its elegance, like a weeping willow—nor astonish him with its grandeur, like a cedar of Lebanon. In order to perceive its beauty, you must linger a little. You must look and look again! And then, if you do not at last feel a deep respect for the olive, and a quiet delight in its beauty, it must be because you are not of a thoughtful spirit, or else because you have little poetry in your soul. The more familiar you become with the olive tree, the more will you take pleasure in it!

Now all this is also abundantly true of the lively Christian who is full of the grace of God. He may not at first charm you. Your prejudices may lead you to avoid, if not to oppose him. He appears to be somewhat singular and, perhaps, rugged. He differs materially from the rest of mankind, for he does not run with the multitude—and you are apt to think that his singularity is a pretense. Possibly, at first, he is somewhat cold and distant in his manner towards you. That is the way of many Chris-

tians until they know those to whom they are speaking, for they do not wish to cast their pearls before swine. As you watch them, you will perhaps, at first sight, see more of their imperfections than of their virtues—it being a habit with them not to parade their own attainments either by wearing professional phylacteries or by sounding a trumpet before them. They often put their worst foot foremost out of the very desire not to be seen of men in any Pharisaic fashion. Persevere, however, in observing the spiritual man and you will surely see much that is beautiful about him. Look and look again and, perhaps in time you will come to admire as an excellence that which you now think to be a defect! Be not in a hurry—the best things are not usually glittering and superficial in their attractions. A Christian is assuredly the noblest work of God! In heaven, itself, there stands nothing superior in the way of a creature to a man of God! And on earth there is nothing that can match him. Watch, therefore, the believer in Jesus, for his moral beauty will repay your study.

The olive grove is, to my mind, supremely lovely when the sun darts his beams through it in long slants of brightness so that you see here a golden lane of light, and there a mass of silver shadows directly beneath the trees. I do not know anything that charms me more than to look into the spotted shadow and light created by the irregular planting of a forest of olive trees! They are all the more delightful because of their disorder and the varied dark and bright hues which meet the eyes and gratify them with their exquisite checkered work. In like manner, when Christians enjoy the light of God's countenance and it is sunny weather with them, then will you see their beauty if you have true spiritual insight! When their faith is flourishing and their hope is beaming—then their love is full of freshness and the joy of the Lord flashes on them—then, if you have a spiritual eye for such beauty as angels care to gaze upon, you will wish to be numbered with good men and to mingle in their sacred society!

Perhaps the finest idea of the beauty of olive trees is obtained when you see them in a mass. Stand upon the open common at Bordighera and look beneath you towards Ventimille and Mentone, marking where the mountains shelve to the sea and all their sides are clothed with olive groves—and you will clap your hands with delight! Before you is a very sea of olives, with billowy waves of silver brightness reaching as far as the eyes can see—with here and there a stately palm rising up above them all. Even thus, when we shall be privileged to look upon the entire church of God gathered in one countless multitude at the last, what a sight it will be! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing out before the Lord and the mountains and the hills shall join their rapturous song. What a sight will that complete church be to the pure eyes of holy men

when they see all the trees of the Lord's right hand planting standing together in one glorious garden far excelling Eden before the Fall! Yes, the perfection of the church of God and of each individual member of it will be seen at the last when the separated ones shall be gathered together in one great general assembly and the beauty of holiness shall be over them all! Till then, let us always believe that Christians are lovely objects to look upon. Some seek the company of the rich and the great, but it is cold comfort that any will gain from mere rank and birth. Some delight in the society of the witty, but their sparks, though they glitter for a moment, are too soon extinguished to minister comfort to mourning spirits. Some delight to associate with those who are highly esteemed among men, but surely, he is wiser who selects his companions from those who are precious in the sight of the Lord! O beloved, whatever others may say of the people of God, and of the church of God, let us each one say—

"There my best friends, my kindred, dwell,
There God my Savior reigns."

There, then, is the first point of resemblance between the beauty of a Christian and the beauty of the olive tree. It grows upon you—the more you are with the excellent of the earth, the more will you delight in them!

II. Secondly, in both the case of the olive tree and of the Christian, IT IS A BEAUTY OF A VERY SOBER KIND.

The color of the olive foliage is a gray green or, if you will, an emerald drab. I do not quite know how to speak of it, but would remind you that it belongs to the same family as the ash and is of somewhat similar color, only of a lighter green—one side of the leaf being much paler than the other. I have heard giddy people observe that the olive groves are very dreary. These are the ladies and gentlemen who prefer the fashionable promenades where they can display their finery—or the deadly gambling saloons of Monte Carlo where they can ruin others, or be themselves ruined! Everyone to his taste—ours lies in another direction! In an olive grove, where all sounds are hushed but the singing of birds, I prefer to sit the whole day with a good book, or even without one, and muse the hours away and feel a deep serenity of soul akin to the everlasting rest. Truly, good Lord—

"The calm retreat, the silent shade
With prayer and praise agree,
And seem by Your kind bounty made
For those that worship Thee."

If you want to see true beauty, you will find it in the olive gardens, but it will be of a serious quiet type—not the luxurious beauty of the orange or the lemon with their apples of gold, nor that of the goodly cedar with its regal dignity, nor even of the stalwart oak with its glory of strength! Much less of the flowers of spring which in the land of the olive rival the hues of the rainbow—but an unobtrusive, calm, rugged beauty, dearest

to those who seek restfulness of heart and shrink from "the madding crowd's ignoble strife!"

Thus far the true believer and olive are like to the letter. There is nothing showy about him, but much that is serious and reposeful. He has thought of things and gone to the root of the matter. He has sorrowed under the burden of sin and the delight he has known in being delivered from it is a deep mysterious joy. His happiness does not display itself like the anemones and wild tulips which grow in such profusion on the terraces of Mentone, but it is content with more subdued tints which will last when flowers and their comeliness will be forgotten! The true Christian is not always smiling—he can laugh as every honest man can and should—but he is not a constant giggler and hunter after childish merriment as many are. His is real, substantial, thoughtful happiness which can bear the test of meditation and examination. He can give a reason for the hope that is in him. He does not need to dance and fiddle in order to enjoy himself. His joy is made of nobler stuff. It is such merriment as angels have when they see prodigal sons returning and rejoice before the Father's face! Give me the quiet delight of the genuine Christian. Oh, that some professors had more of it! Not so fast, good friend, take your joy more calmly! Not quite so much fire and fury—pause for a little thought at least now and then. If you go too fast, today, you will be out of breath before tomorrow! You are so very joyful, disappointment, I fear, will tame you into despondency! "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." Believe and act according to the commonsense guidance of faith and go calmly through the world as God enables you, for if you do, you will have the beauty of the olive tree—and what more would you have?

III. Thirdly, the beauty of the olive and the beauty of the Christian are alike in this respect, *they are ever abiding*. You saw yonder plane or beech, a few months ago, adorned with luxuriant foliage. But there came a chilly blast and the leaves began to fall—and when you passed the other day, the tree was like a vessel in a storm under bare poles—not a green leaf was to be seen! In these wintry days you will see the trees lifting their naked arms into the frosty air as if they longed to be clothed once more. Not so the olive! Its leaf is always green and its branch never bare. No wintry wind ever strips its boughs and though it looks more full of foliage at some periods than at others, yet it always seems well clad and in flourishing condition! Perpetually it clothes the bare hills as with the downy feathers of the dove's breast and knows no nakedness. Such is the true Christian—he is evermore as a green olive tree in the courts of the Lord. You shall find him not always alike, happy, but always blessed! Not always alike, restful, but still at peace! Not always alike, useful, but still fruitful—always rejoicing in a blest estate such that even at his

worst, he would not change with the proudest sons of earth! His branches may be at times disturbed and tossed about, but his heart is not troubled, nor his joy taken from him! At bottom, he still believes in God, rests in the covenant promises and rejoices in Christ Jesus!

Many professors know nothing of this constancy of joy. They rejoice for a season and then lose their first love. Like the deciduous tree which puts on its greenery in the early spring, but is stripped in winter, so do they lose their zeal, love, earnestness and joy. This is not as it should be with you who profess to be God's children! This is not having the dew of the Lord upon you! Final perseverance is the test of vital godliness! To continue in the truth, grounded and settled—to abide in Christ Jesus, to constantly bring forth the fruits of the Spirit—this it is to be a Christian! Constancy is the beauty and glory of a Christian. We all like the man of whom we can say that we know where to find him, but there are some whom we never know where we can find them. And if we did, they would not be worth finding. He is the man who really adorns his profession who is consistent and persistent, who abides steadfastly in the truth which he has received and is not "carried about with every wind of doctrine." The Lord grant unto us the grace to have a perpetual spiritual health which shall be our beauty, just as constant greenery is the beauty of the olive tree!

IV. Let us now notice, in the fourth place, that the beauty of the Christian is like that of the olive tree IN ITS DELIGHTFUL VARIETY.

Each season, each day and, I might almost say, each hour, the olive presents a new aspect.

I have recently watched olive trees almost every day for three months and they always appeared somewhat different, varying in color and tint as the day was cloudless, overcast, or decidedly wet. Even the position of the sun caused a change in their appearance! And a little wind turning up the silver side of the leaves presented a new phase of beauty. After a shower of rain, the green appeared predominant, but on a hot and dusty day, the gray was in the ascendant. In the evening, they sometimes seemed dark or drab. And another time they wore a silvery sheen. Like certain other colors which vary with the light, the tint of the olive leaf is peculiar in yielding to its surroundings. I cannot describe it, for it seems as if it follows the mood of nature and blends it with its own. I do not think I am very fanciful, but it seemed to me that this tree was in wonderful sympathy with the weather, the sun, the sky, the clouds, the morning and the evening!

Even thus, believers in Christ Jesus, if they are the right kind of believers, when you come to know them, have peculiar lights and shades and differences of mood and temperament—but in each variation there is beauty. The true Christian is a Christian in all his moods and, therefore,

is worthy of careful observation. When he is brightly happy, see how grace sobers him! And when he has a heavy heart, see how that same grace brightens his spirit. Watch him in the world and see how unworldly he is—observe him in the midst of his brothers and sisters and note how unreserved he is, even as a child is at home. On his knees or at his work in the house of God or in his own house, in controversy or in communion, at rest or in labor, he is always the same! Yet you constantly see a new phase of his character and scarcely know which one pleases you the most. There are sometimes strange lights glowing around Christian character and if you study the biographies of the godly, or watch the living saints, you will continually find fresh charms in them. I am old enough to be weary with observing the imperfections of my brothers and sisters in Christ—I prefer to spy out their excellences and to take delight in them. I find it better to think too well of God's people than to think too ill of them—and better to commend them and to help them by commending them, than to censure them and dispirit them by the censure. Do you the same! You will see some beauty even about the feeblest of God's own people if you will but watch them long enough—and especially if you will study the lives of the saints given to us in the inspired word—you will not fail to see lights and shades which are only new forms of the same "beauty of holiness."

The olive tree changes with the seasons. Just before I left Mentone, it had put forth new shoots and slender branches which drooped like the boughs of the weeping willow. In a few weeks, that same olive will be covered with a vast multitude of flowers—little white stars, countless in number—somewhat like the flowers of the lilac. Near each leaf, they tell me, there is a bunch of blossoms with a host of very tiny flowers. The whole tree becomes one great mass of bloom and whitens the ground with a snowfall of flowers. A very lovely sight is the olive tree in bloom! I do not doubt, however, that the peasants like best to see the fruit. The brown beads of the ripened olive have a beauty, too, and when these are gone, the foliage is still attractive. It does not matter to an olive tree whether it is spring, summer, autumn, or winter—it is a thing of beauty and joy all the year round and every day of the year! And such is the Christian when the dew of the Lord is upon him! He has his changes, but he does not lose his beauty, though men do not always have the eyes to perceive it.

Look at David, especially as he is revealed to us in the book of Psalms. There you see him like a green olive tree in the courts of the Lord. Look at the blossoms of joy that are on him, covering him with a beauteous garment of praise! When you read the 103rd Psalm and similar joyous odes, he seems to be smothered with the delicious bloom which yields a

most pleasing perfume of thanksgiving! Watch him at another time, when he is putting forth the green shoots of holy desire—his heart thirsting after God as the panting hart thirsts for the water brooks, his inmost soul longing to drink a deep draught of the divine grace that comes from the Most High! Then see him at another time when, as an old man, his fruit grows ripe and you observe his rich experience full of unction, bearing fruit unto the Lord. Everywhere David is beautiful, except when he sins—and so are all those who seek to follow David's Lord and make Him their all in all.

Some Christians seem to be always the same. I wish I could always be the same by being always at my best, but it is very bad to always be the same at your worst! And I know some professors who appear to be just like that. They have a faulty string in their harp, yet they always want to play on that string whenever we are with them! Indeed, they seem to think that that particular string of theirs is the one upon which we all ought to play. And if our harp strings do not happen to be faulty like theirs, they fancy that our harp can scarcely be right—that our spot is not the spot of God's children. Yet you know that if one child in your family happens to have a defect somewhere or other, you would not think it essential or desirable that all of your children should have the same defect! It is well that they should all have the family likeness, but there is no need that there should be a family deformity peculiar to them all! Yet some Christians seem to think that there is such a need. I hardly think that many Christians are always at their worse, though, in another sense, I hope some are, because if they are ever worse than I have seen them, they must be bad, indeed! But I do wish we could all be always as we are at our best—only then I would wish that we could be something even better than that and keep on advancing "till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Yet it may be that these varying modes of feeling and ways of looking at things are, after all, as far as they are not sinful, the various parts that help to make up the complete beauty of the Christian character!

V. Now, fifthly, (I hope you will not be wearied with so many divisions. I cannot help having them, for the olive tree has so many branches)—another point of resemblance between the olive and the genuine, lively, healthy Christian—and another point of beauty in each case is INDIVIDUALITY.

I think no one ever saw two olive trees that were exactly alike. They are wondrously varied. The twists and turns of the branches, the singular way in which they grow down where you think they never can grow and the equally remarkable way in which they do not grow where you think they should—the curious shapes and the shapeless shapes that

they take, I cannot describe to you—it would be necessary for you to see them to understand what I mean. Sometimes some of the branches seem as if they were turned to serpents, coiling themselves around the bigger branches. The olive trees always appear to me to be in an agony—twisting and turning like one in excruciating pain as if they remembered the griefs and woes of Him who sweat, as it were, great drops of blood when He agonized beneath the shade of the olives in Gethsemane!

The trunk of the olive is often split into many separate parts and each part seems to be full of vitality. You scarcely ever see one that appears to be entire—they are rent and torn as though sundered by volcanic eruptions—and they are turned into all manner of shapes so that no one of them is like its fellows! Here and there one sees a young tree that seems, for a while, to have a definite shape and to grow up in some sort of comely form. But you see another by its side, still smaller, which has not grown three feet above the ground before it takes a twist and goes down again, and then comes up again, once more, forming letters something like a W, or an S, or a V, but never reaching the shape that you would have thought it might have done!

This individuality in the olive tree is a part of the charm of the olive grove. And so it is among Christians. There are certain sets of professing Christians about who are very much of one type. You must have noticed them if you have gone about with your eyes open. There is a Methodist type, a Particular Baptist type, a Bible Christian type, a Church of England type and many others. Somehow or other, they are cut and trimmed according to certain prescribed rules and regulations—like the lines of little olive trees that we pass on our way to Mentone which have nothing of the grandeur and glory of the beautiful olive groves with which we are familiar. The more we get out of this attempt at securing uniformity, the better will it be for us and for the whole church of God! Egyptian art laid down certain laws that had to be kept—the nose must bear such and such a proportion to the mouth, and the eye must be of just such and such a form and so on—and, therefore, Egyptian art remained forever where it was. True art knows that there must be individuality and that no rule can be made of universal application!

It is so among Christians. Here is one man who is naturally of a cheerful spirit, yet he condemns himself because he does not mourn like his sorrowful brother over yonder. But, my dear friend, God did not intend you to be like he is! Here is another brother who is naturally of a very desponding spirit and he often blames himself because he has not the exhilaration that he sees manifested in others. My dear friend, you were not to be as they are and it is no use for you to try to imitate them! Be yourself, for that will be much better! I have sometimes compared myself

with my fellow Christians until I have felt not only humbled, which is a good thing, but I have been despondent, which is a bad thing! I have found that the better plan is to remember that in a great house there are many different kinds of vessels and they are not all of the same size or shape because they are not all to be put to the same use! In a large garden there are various orders of flowers, but they are not all of the same color, neither do all exhale the same perfume, neither do their seeds, when they come to perfection, all assume the same form! So is it among Christians—there are some who sing sweet, solemn melodies with a strain of despondency always running through their matchless music, for to me it seems the sweetest of all harmonies. There are others who are more like the lark. As they sing, they soar! The Countess of Huntingdon was a singer of this sort and, therefore, she sang—

"Teach me some melodious sonnet
Sung by flaming tongues above."

Well, shall I chide the lark because it is not a nightingale or the linnet because it sings not like the canary or the goldfinch? No, let every bird have its own distinct note. Let every flower have its own special hue. Let every tree have its own peculiar form and let all the Lord's people grow as they are guided by the divine nature that is in them! And then one shall grow in this shape and another shall grow in that style, and others shall grow differently from either of them! Although there is not one olive tree that is exactly like another, yet all the olives are olives and you never mistake them for any other tree. And, in like manner, though no one Christian is exactly like another in all respects, yet they are all Christians and you should not be able to mistake them for worldlings! The all-important matter is not that you should be like I, or that I should be like you, but that both of us should be like Christ! "Ah, but then," you say, "we shall be like each other, shall we not?" No. It is strange, but it is quite true that Christians may be like Christ and yet very little like each other. There may be a thousand minor diversities in the imitators of the one great exemplar—and the individuality of every one of them shall be as definite as the identity of the whole of them as followers of Christ!

VI. Sixthly, much of the beauty of an olive tree and much of the beauty of a Christian is found in the fact that THE OLIVE TREE IS FULL OF LIFE, AND SO IS THE CHRISTIAN.

In the olive, it seems to be always a struggling life. It is true that it is full of life, but as you get a glimpse of some olive trees, you say to yourself, "That tree must have had a hard time of it." The gnarled and knotted old trunk is split up just as if an axe had been driven through it. You can see the white wood inside and on the surface the rugged bark appears in places as if it were rotten, yet you find that it is still alive. Then you see the branches that grow out of these various divisions of the trunk, twist-

ing, twirling and wriggling in and out as if they lived in perpetual agony, for they have to draw oil out of the flinty rock. It would involve much hard labor for men to accomplish that task, yet the olive tree is continually doing it, yielding the precious oil which not only makes the face of man to shine, but which supplies him with food and light the whole year round! This the olive tree often does in a sterile soil where there appears to be no nourishment for it whatever. It seems as if the olive tree, though always in an agony, is always full of life. It is not an easy matter to kill an olive tree—even if you hew it down, yet leave the stump, or a portion of its roots in the ground—it will begin to sprout and grow again. If you let the tree stand for a thousand years or more, it will still bring forth fruit in old age! And when it is, at last, worn out and decayed, its children will have grown up into a fruitful grove all around it!

The olive must live and it will live! And, to my mind, it is one of the beauties of the olive tree that under the sternest circumstances, it seems invincibly to live. And that is also the glory of a true Christian. He must live and will live. The grace of God within him will enable him to live when men would think he must die. Persecute him, but the axe, or the stake, or even the lions have no terrors for him. Try to crush the church of Christ and the more you try to crush it, the more it will live and flourish! Seek to exterminate the Christians and in the futile attempt you shall multiply them like the stars of the sky or the sands of the seashore! There is no way of killing the life of God when it is once implanted in the heart of a believer in Jesus! All the devils in hell, if they set all their demoniacal powers to work to blow out the feeblest light that ever glowed in a Christian's heart, could not put it out even if they took an age to do it! The Christian must live, must grow and must bring forth fruit unto God! I love, therefore, to study the lives of Believers and to watch the struggles of the saints of God. You may study this conflict in your own heart and see how the divine life within you struggles on under affliction, adversity, trial and temptation—but conquers all! You may watch it also in your fellow Christians who are poor and despised, who have to suffer much sickness, pain, weakness and who, perhaps, are bed-ridden year after year—yet you will see how the divine life still lives and triumphs over all obstacles! Is there not a wondrous beauty in it upon which we delight to look and for which we praise God with all our hearts?

VII. Now, seventhly—and coming to the number of perfection, we come to that which the olive tree might well regard as its greatest beauty, namely, ITS FRUITFULNESS. "Oh, yes!" the peasant says, "the olive is a beautiful tree, for it bears its berries full of oil and the olive crop is the best crop that can possibly be grown." There is no known root or seed that can be grown by the most skillful farming that can produce anything

like so much return in a year as the olive does with little or no labor from its proprietor! It simply stands still and makes him rich. When he eats his bread, he uses no butter or animal fat as we do, but he spreads a little olive oil upon it and so is nourished by it. When he lights his lamp at night, he does not use the pungent petroleum that we burn—but he takes some good sweet olive oil and so gets all the light he needs! Mosquitoes and other insects sting him, or he has some irritation of his skin and he anoints his flesh with oil and obtains immediate relief. When he is sick, or his body is wounded, he anoints himself with oil and it proves to be one of the best medicines in the world! And, at any rate, it is not so disagreeable as some of the medicines of modern invention. If he is working a machine, the olive oil helps to prevent both the danger and the discomfort caused by the friction. In fact, the man puts the tree to so many uses that he says it is a lovely tree because its fruitfulness helps him in so many ways.

In like manner, the most beautiful Christian in the world is the most fruitful one. Our old proverb is true, "Handsome is that handsome does" and, in the sight of God, those who do the most good works and who thus most glorify their Father who is in heaven, are the most lovely of all Christians. It is not every Christian who is lovely in this way, but if you have the "dew" of which this chapter speaks, if the roots of your spiritual nature are refreshed by the river of the water of life and if, by blessed fellowship with God and the entire consecration of your body, soul and spirit to Him, you bring forth an abundance of fruit unto God, then you have the beauty of the olive tree whose greatest glory is its fruitfulness!

You may, perhaps, have stood in an orchard in the autumn when the apples are getting rosy red and are weighing down the boughs, so that they would break if the owner did not prop them up. Or you may have been in a cottager's garden and he has said to you, "Look at that tree, sir. Ain't it a beauty?" Possibly you had not been thinking of the beauty of the tree, for you were admiring some of the lovely flowers that were growing at your feet—but the cottager does not care much about them—but he does care about those apples which are so abundant. After a good look at the tree so well laden with ruddy cheeked fruit, you agree with him, for there is a practical beauty in the tree's fruitfulness. Try to have that beauty, dear friends! To be commended for the eloquent way in which you speak, or for the elegant way in which you dress, or for the admirable way in which you practice deportment is praise that is empty as the wind! But to be useful in your day and generation—to glorify God by doing something to benefit your fellow creatures, instructing the ignorant, helping the poor and needy, bringing the lost and erring ones to the feet of Jesus—this is a practical kind of beauty that is worth having! Let your beauty in this respect, be as the olive tree.

VIII. Eighthly, THE BEAUTY OF THE OLIVE TREE OFTEN LIES IN ITS PROGENY.

The writer of the 128th Psalm says of the man who fears the Lord and walks in His ways, "Your wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of your house: your children like olive plants round about your table." If you have ever been in the olive groves you must frequently have noticed around the parent olive tree, two, three, four, sometimes as many as eight, ten, or 12 little trees all growing up from the old root—some of them also beginning to bear fruit and standing there ready, when the old tree in the middle is taken away—to do all they can to supply its place. I have occasionally seen an olive tree felled and the white trunk left flat like a table, with several little trees growing all around it—and that sight seemed to bring the text I just quoted very vividly to my mind, "your children *like olive plants round about your table*." May your children, beloved, be like young olive trees springing up around your table to bring forth fruit unto God when you have done with fruit bearing! Or even like the old and young olive trees, may you all be fruitful together! It is to me a very beautiful sight to see a godly man succeeded by gracious sons and daughters. It is a privilege beyond comparison, a delight beyond description to see those whom you have nursed and nurtured come under the nurture and admonition of the Lord and be so taught in His ways as to become true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ! The aged Apostle John wrote, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." Do not you, dear parents, desire this joy for yourselves? I believe you will have it if the dew of the Lord is upon your souls.

I have frequently heard it said that many children of professing Christian parents do not turn out well. How is this? We know that Solomon said, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Now I do not wish to say anything unkind or too severe, but I have noticed that in many such cases the children have *not* been trained up in the way they should go! The father was a very good man—so people said—yet he never had family prayer! How could he train up his children aright without it? No prayer in the family? Why, the training of a tree on a wall requires that you should have some shreds of cloth and some nails so as to fasten securely every little branch or shoot as it comes out! And I call family prayers our shreds and nails to help to train up our boys and girls as they begin to grow. Besides, if a professing Christian finds his children turning out ungodly, let him ask himself this question, "Did I ever personally pray with my sons? Did I ever personally plead with my daughters? Have I been loving and kind in my conduct towards my children?" If you cannot say, "Yes," to these and similar questions, then you did not train your child up in the way he should go!

I verily believe that there are many fathers who make religion nauseous to their children. A young man said to me, "My father is a good man, but he will never let his children have any sport or mirth, and he condemns everybody who indulges in anything of the kind. His religion consists in saying, You shall not! You shall not! You shall not! You shall not!" Well, that may be Mosaic, but according to the religion of Jesus Christ, there is something else beside the negative! There is a positive joy and a real delight in true religion—and where that is set before our young people in a proper spirit, we may expect that God's Grace will bring them to desire the same joy and delight for themselves! We have proved that God often gives us the happiness of seeing that instead of the fathers, shall be the children whom He makes princes in the earth. He who loved Abraham loved Isaac, and loved Jacob, and loved Joseph, and loved Ephraim and Manasseh, for although grace does not run in the blood, it often runs side by side with it. And when you once get God to be friend of your family, it is not easy to get Him out of it. If His grace calls the father, is it not likely to also call the son, and the grandson, and the children's children's children—not only unto the third and fourth generation, but as long as the earth remains? Yes, blessed be His name, it shall be so and this is one of the beauties of the life of a Christian—that his beauty is perpetuated through his progeny as he stands like an old olive tree with the young olives growing up around him and so "his beauty shall be as the olive tree."

IX. Now, ninthly, I must remind you that THE BEAUTY OF THE OLIVE TREE SOMETIMES SUFFERS DECREASE.

At Mentone, I went up a valley between the mountains and I came to an olive garden which certainly did not charm me by its beauty. The natives had been lopping the olives and they had cut them most mercilessly, hacking away huge branches here and there and leaving the poor trees standing there piteously lifting up their mutilated arms to heaven as though they were imploring someone to take pity upon them and deliver them from their present wrenched condition! Why had they been lopped and cut about like that? Simply because some of the branches had ceased to yield fruit, so they had to be cut away. And then, where one old branch was cut off, there might come five or six smaller branches, all of which would, in due season, bear olive berries! So all that cutting and hacking and hewing was intended to improve the olive and make it much more beautiful by making it far more fruitful than it would otherwise have been.

Christians do not look very pretty when they are thus lopped. You had better not come to see some of us when we are full of aches and pains, when the brain is so weary that we cannot think, when the breath is short and the throat is so dry that we cannot sing the high praises of our

God! Do not say concerning any of your dear relatives who are very, very ill, "I cannot see much that is Christ like about them." Ah, dear friend, they are under the rod and about the only thing a child can do when he is under the rod, is to cry! At least that is what I used to do when I was under the rod and I suppose that is what most of you would do under similar circumstances—there is not much else that seems in season then. The olive certainly does not look very lovely when it is being lopped, but remember this text, "Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." So, then, you may expect to find fruit *afterwards*, and you may expect to see the beauty of the Christian *afterwards*, and not while they are under the pruning process. "Father!" said a child, "Did you not cut those fruit trees this morning?" "Yes, my child, I did." "Why did you cut them, Father?" "To make them bring forth more fruit." "I thought so, Father, so, after dinner I ran down the garden to see if they had brought forth fruit, but there is not a single pear or apple on any of them." "No, dear child," replied the father, "it is not immediately after the cutting that the fruit comes. We must wait till its proper season, and then I hope we shall see it." You all know how to interpret that little parable! Do not expect to see the full results of sickness and trial immediately, but believe that in due time they will be seen.

X. Lastly, dear friends, to me the very choicest beauty of the olive grove is that IT ALWAYS REMINDS ME OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

This is also the point in which every Christian who has the dew of the Lord upon him has a beauty like that of the olive tree, namely, that he reminds those about him of his Master! They take note of him that he has been with Jesus. When you are under the olives, you cannot help thinking of Gethsemane, of the dark night in the garden, of the disciples asleep, and of our Savior, Himself, in an agony of grief. A poetess sweetly sings—

"But you, pale olive, in your branches lie
Far deeper spells than prophet groves of old
Can ever enshrine. I could not hear you sigh
To the wind's faintest whisper, or behold
One shiver of your leaves dim silvery green
Without high thoughts and solemn of that scene
When in the garden the Redeemer prayed.
When pale stars looked upon His fainting head
And angels ministering in silent dread
Trembled, perchance, within your trembling shade."

Well, just as all right-minded people would be sure to think of Christ when under the olive groves, so ought we to compel men, whether they are right-minded or not, to think of the Lord Jesus Christ when they

come into association with ourselves! Not because we are always talking about religion, but because we are always practicing it. And as frequently as we can, adding suitable verbal expression to the practical testimony of our lives—speaking and singing of our Beloved Lord whose name should never long be off our tongue!

We should so act when we are provoked, bearing it so gently that observers should be compelled to say, "How Christ like they are!" We should, when offended, so readily, so truthfully, so thoroughly forgive the offenders that if they do not say, they should at least *feel*, "How Christ like they are!" We should be so unselfish, so generous, so anxious to serve others and to please them rather than ourselves. We should be so kind in our judgment, so truthful, so tender, so upright, so calm, so strong, so brave and yet so free from all Phariseeism and affectation that men should not have to look at us long before they would be obliged to say, "They have been with Jesus. They never learned that lesson anywhere but at the feet of the crucified."

The Lord bless you, dear friends, and give you faith in Jesus! And then, by His Spirit, impart to you all this beauty of which I have spoken—and a great deal more of which no tongue can adequately speak—even the beauty of holiness—and so your beauty shall be as the olive tree! God grant it for His dear Son's sake! Amen and Amen.

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CHRIST SEEN AS GOD'S SALVATION
NO. 3177

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1909,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"My eyes have seen Your salvation."
Luke 2:30.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text are #1417, Volume 24—"YOUR SALVATION" and #2293, Volume 39—SIMEON'S SWAN SONG—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org .]

THOUSANDS of times that song of Simeon has been sung by careless, thoughtless persons, but surely it is one of those songs that ought never to come except from *believing lips*. To make it merely a part of a liturgy and for shamelessly living men to say, "*My eyes have seen Your salvation*," must be an atrocious sin before God! Let all who have ventured to use such words as these without having thought of their meaning, confess their sin before God and ask that He would make those words to be true which have up to now been so frivolously uttered and that before they close their eyes in death, they *may* see God's salvation!

I. I shall, first of all, TAKE THE TEXT AS IT DROPS FROM SIMEON'S LIPS and follow his leading.

We will start with Simeon's main idea. He came into the temple. He saw there a little babe and he recognized, in that newly born child, Jesus the promised Savior! And as he took up that Savior into his arms, he said, "Mine eyes have seen"—what? "Your salvation," God's salvation—not only the worker of the salvation, but the salvation itself! From which I gather that wherever we see Jesus, we see God's salvation, Wherever our eyes spiritually light upon the Christ of God, there we see God's salvation! Whether in Bethlehem's manger, or on Calvary's cross, or on yonder throne of glory from which He shall judge the quick and the dead—wherever we see Him, we see the salvation of God!

Let me then take your thoughts along the history of our Savior for a few moments. Far back into the ages, when as yet this world and sun and moon were not created—when God dwelt alone—then, in the foreknowledge of God, it was apparent that man would sin—that elect men, beloved of God, would fall in the common ruin. Then came the grand debate, the mighty question to be only solved by the supreme intellect of heaven, "How can sinners be reconciled to God?" And the covenant was made, that ancient covenant of which David sang, "ordered in all things and sure." Jesus, the second person of the blessed Godhead, entered into covenant with His Father, that in the fullness of time, He would stand in

the sinner's place and pay the sinner's debt—that He would head up in Himself as many as the Father gave Him and become the second and restoring Adam to them, though, through the first and falling Adam, they, with others, had been destroyed. Then, when the covenant was signed and the divine parties to that grand transaction struck hands and ratified the bond, my eyes, as they look into that vast eternity and, with holy curiosity, desire to scan that council chamber—my eyes perceive God's salvation in the person of Jesus Christ!

This was all that could have been seen by faith, even after the world had been created and man had fallen, until that day when the fullness of time was come—when Jesus Christ, who had covenanted to save His people, came to perform the work. Oh, the grandeur of that day when angels came in haste to sing that the babe was born in Bethlehem! Ah, Simeon! What you see there is not merely a babe—a little child hanging upon a woman's breast—it is the word incarnate, the *logos*, without whom was not anything made that is made! He that spoke and it was done, lies there! He that said, "Light be," and light was—the word that was with God when He balanced the clouds and when He fixed the sockets of the universe, even He is there in the person of that child! The Son of Mary is also the Son of God! And whenever you, beloved, look to God incarnate and understand that wondrous mystery, "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us," and men chosen of Him beheld His glory, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"—then when you see God in human flesh, you see God's salvation!

Follow with the eyes of your love that babe when He had become a man. See Him, in the obedience of 30 years to His reputed father, handling the saw and the hammer in the carpenter's shop of Joseph. "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself." See Him in the three years of His most blessed ministry! What work was crowded into those years! How did the zeal of God's house eat Him up! The dews fell upon Him in the night when He kept the sheep of God in the wilderness and on the mountain's brow shepherded them in His midnight prayers. Oftentimes the sweat fell from Him in that daily service which, as the servant of servants, He rendered to all His brethren. None toiled as He did—none so arduously, none so perfectly, none so willingly, none with so complete a bending of His whole faculties to His all absorbing work! Behold the righteousness of the saints—this work of Christ is making a robe in which the saints shall be arrayed. His active obedience renders unto God a recompense for our breaches of His holy law. In Christ, the actively obedient, you see God's salvation!

But oh, let your eyes swim with tears as you follow Him from His active to His passive obedience. I stayed midway in a verse just now, "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself"—as you go on, you read—"and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." There He is in yonder garden among the olives! Do you hear His sighs, His deep fetched groans? Do you mark the sweat drops of His blood as

they fall upon the earth? He is pleading, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." But it is not possible. Do you see Him hurried away with the felon's kiss still upon His cheek—hurried away by traitorous hands to Caiaphas—hurried to Pilate and Herod, one after the other, scorned and scoffed everywhere? He, whose visage is bright as the morning when the sun arises, and whose countenance is like Lebanon, comely as the cedars—He it is that they make nothing of, and laugh and scoff at! Into His face, which angels look on with hushed awe, they cast their accursed spittle! They buffet Him and cry, "Hail King of the Jews." They mock His royalty with a crown of thorns and His priesthood by binding His eyes and saying, "Who is it that struck You?" Remember that He who is in this shame is God's salvation! He is made lower than earth's basest menials that He might lift us higher than heaven's brightest seraphs! He came down from where He was in heaven's excellence to all this depth of shame—that out of all our shame He might lift us up to the supernal excellency!

Then, at length, it comes to a climax and the patient sufferer gives His hands to the iron and His feet to the nails. They lift Him up—He must die a felon's death! Outside the camp He must suffer. Made sin for us, He cannot be in the congregation. He must be numbered with the transgressors! Behold Him dying in bodily pains not to be readily described! But, the worst was this—God, to whom good men look for succor when they die, refused Him help! Jehovah, who never did forsake the virtuous, forsook Him, the most virtuous of all! He who is our castle and high tower, our rampart and defense in our extremity, hid as it were, His face from Him—and that bitterest of all cries, which contains in it as much grief as all the shrieks of the damned in hell, went up, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" There He was, the forsaken one. Yet He was God's salvation, for He was—

"Bearing, that we might never bear,
His Father's righteous ire"—

enduring to be cast away from heaven that we, base as we are, might be enfolded in the divine bosom and loved with the divine affection!

Nor is this all. On the third day, He who on the cross had conquered, rose to claim the victory. Behold Him! He is God's salvation as He rises from the tomb. Where is your sting, O death? Where is your victory, boastful grave? Jehovah Jesus has saved us from death! He has risen from the sepulcher. Behold Him as He ascends! Let not your eyes be too dazzled with the glory. He rides in solemn pomp up to heaven's gate. Your ears can even now catch the echoes of that song, "Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lift up, you everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." He that enters there has saved us and has gone to receive gifts for men. His entrance there is the entrance of all His people, for He is their representative and takes possession of heaven on their behalf. Being there for us, we are saved! His presence on the throne is the presence of God's salvation!

If time did not fail me, I would like to pursue the story and point you to Him, looking still like a lamb that has been slain, pleading with His never ceasing, ever prevalent intercession. I would like to bid your faith anticipate the day when He shall come again, with no sin offering, but unto salvation, when you and I, seeing Him, shall see God's salvation—when our bodies shall be perfected, no more to be weak and suffering, but made like His glorious body! Our brothers and sisters that have gone before us, who at this moment sleep in their silent tombs among the purple heather, or in the crowded cemetery, or in the chill vault—they, also, shall hear the sound of His second advent when the herald blast shall bid the world know that the Lord has come and—

"From beds of dust and silent clay
To realms of everlasting day"—

they shall wing their triumphant way, for Jesus Christ shall be to them, as to us, God's salvation! That was Simeon's idea, I think. I have but hammered out his ingot of gold a little to show you that where Jesus is, there is the salvation of God.

II. And now, in the second place, we shall TAKE SOME LEAVES OUT OF OUR OWN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

The text says, "*My* eyes have seen Your salvation." Simeon must not be allowed the monopoly of these words. I claim them, "*My eyes have seen Your salvation.*" Brothers and sisters, many of you can, in a spiritual sense, use the same language as the patriarch about to depart uses. You too, can say, "My eyes have seen Your salvation." Will you turn over the book of your life awhile as I turn over mine?

Well, we need not read those early pages, the pages of our estate of sin. Drop tears and blot them out! Dear hand of Jesus stained with blood, wipe down each one of them and blot them out forever! But what is this first bright page? It is the page where we began to live, *the page that records our spiritual birth.* And I think we shall find written somewhere across it, "This day my eyes beheld God's salvation." Well do I remember that day! I had looked here and looked there. This was my question—I have offended God, how can He forgive me? It was no use to tell me God was merciful—I had an answer for that—"God is just." It availed nothing to say, "Sin is little," I knew better! It was heavy to me—what must it do to Him? The question I wanted to have answered was—How can God in justice pass by my iniquities? Then did I learn, as in a moment, this sweet story which has been my delight to tell in various forms a thousand times—that Jesus came and said, "I will be the sinner's surety. I will stand in his place of curse and ruin and will bear for him the penalty of pain—for him I will even bear death." I learned that if I looked to Jesus—just looked, that was all—that if I simply trusted in Jesus, I would be saved! I looked and, happy day, my eyes saw God's salvation! That blessed doctrine of substitution, that simple command, "Believe and live"—that was the glass through which my soul looked and saw God's salvation!

But if I remember rightly, a little further on—in my case it was not above a week after I had seen my sin forgiven, I felt myself in another difficulty. *I found I could not do what I would.* My will now was never to sin again, but I did sin. I willed to be holy, but I was not what I would be. I groaned and cried, "Where is salvation from this evil heart of mine, from this corruption of my nature?" And I remember well going to the same place where I had heard of the Savior and hearing the minister declare that if any man felt in himself the evil nature, he was not saved. "Ah," I thought, "I know better than that!" I could not be persuaded of that, for I knew I was saved as I had looked to Christ, but I did find that I was where Paul was when he said, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." I seemed, then, to say to myself, "My will is so fickle, how can I hold on? My power is so feeble, how can I stand against sin?"

Ah, and well do I remember the day when I could say in a more emphatic sense than before, "My eyes have seen Your salvation." For, as I searched the word, *I perceived that as many as believed in Christ had eternal life* and *eternal life* is not a life that lasts a little while—it is what it is said to be—*everlasting life*. Then I perceived in the word that against this everlasting life the old body of sin and death would struggle, but that it was written that the new life was a living and incorruptible seed "which lives and abides forever." And I discovered the apostle's words, "Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." It was a grand discovery when I perceived that the life God had given me could not die any more than God could! That it was a beam from Himself! That He had made me a partaker of that divine nature since I had escaped the corruption that was in the world through lust. That the Spirit of the Most High was given to the believer to dwell in him and to be with him forever! And that He who began the work had declared that He would carry it on and perfect it unto the day of the appearing of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

When I learned those truths of God, I felt as if I had not seen God's salvation before. I had seen so little of it the first time—enough to make me leap for joy, it is true—but on the second discovery, I beheld that *He who redeemed me from the guilt of sin would quite as certainly redeem me from the power of sin*! That He who set me on the rock would keep me there! That He who put me on the road to heaven had said about all His servants, "I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." That was a glorious discovery! None of your two penny-halfpenny salvations that some people profess to have, that only last for a day or two, or a few weeks at most and then depart—in Christ today and out of Christ tomorrow! Christ has pardoned their sin and yet they think He has not given them salvation! But to know that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." That He has said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be *saved*." That "the righteous also shall hold on his way and he that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger."

That the word of Christ stands sure, "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands"—this is to see God's salvation in a broader light! I pray that every hearer who has seen Christ may go on to see more of Christ till he has seen his full security in the person of the well-Beloved!

But further on, (and it was with me a long time later), when I had discovered that the Christ who saved me from the guilt was also pledged to save me from the *power of sin*—then I found afresh that He was God's salvation! I discovered partly through thought and partly through the clear testimony of the written word, that every soul that believes in Christ, believes in Christ because God *made Him believe in Christ*! That concerning that soul there was a purpose made by God that that soul should be a believer—and that purpose was made from all eternity, and that purpose once made could never be changed! It was like the mountains of brass which could never be moved. I say that the salvation of the believer in Christ did not rest on his own will, but on God's will! That the purpose that saved him was not his own purpose, even as it is written, "it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy." Why, I remember that was as good a discovery to me as the very first one that I made! It was almost like another conversion! I had been up to the ankles in the water of life before, but now I was up to my very neck! And what could I say but this—

"I'm a monument of grace,
A sinner saved by blood!
The streams of love I trace
Up to the fountain, God.
And in His sacred bosom see
Eternal thoughts of love to me"?

Here it is that "my eyes have seen God's salvation"—seen the source of it, the secret springs of it, the eternity of it, the immutability of it and the divinity of it! I pray that every burdened child of God may also get to see that. Then will he indeed sing for joy of heart!

Probably, dear brothers and sisters, we have not all gone further than that, if as far, but it is a very blessed thing when we are led to see another truth of God, namely, that *every quickened believer is one with Jesus Christ*. "We are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones." The Christ in heaven is the same Christ who is here on earth in all of His saved ones—they are all parts of Him. There is a vital union subsisting between them so that whatever Christ is, they are. They were one with Him of old, they were one in the grave, one when He rose, one when He triumphed over His foes and they are at this day one with Him as—

"Now in heaven He takes His seat,
While seraphs sing all hell's defeat."

Every believer is as much one with Christ as the finger is one with the body. If I lost my finger, I would not be a perfect man as to my body. And if Christ lost the meanest member of His body, it would be *a part of Christ* that would be lost—and Christ would not be a perfect Christ! We

are one with Jesus by permanent, vital union—and if your soul perceives that, you will clap your hands and say to the Father—"I have indeed seen Your salvation, for now I see that I am in heaven." He "has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." We are saved and glorified in Christ Jesus as our representative and covenant head!

Not even yet have I exhausted this theme! And I only pray that you and I may go on to know yet more and more the heights and depths of God's Salvation! I was thinking just now before I began to preach that if ever you and I should be permitted to look down upon the world of misery—if in some future state we should ever gaze into that land of darkness and despair where sinners cast away from God are suffering the due reward of their sins—if our eyes should ever see their agonies and our ears should ever hear their cries of despair, we would, among other things, say, "My God, I never knew before how great Your salvation is, for I also should have been there, but for Your mercy. Until I saw something of what hell is, I could not tell how much I owed You. I could not say that in its heights and depths my eyes had seen Your salvation."

And, brothers and sisters, (to put a better, a more pleasing light upon it)—

"When I stand before the throne,
Dressed in beauty not my own"

—when I shall see Him—and see Him I shall, for I can say with Job, "Whom I shall see for myself and my eyes shall behold, and not another." When you and I shall cast our crowns at His feet, when we shall raise our voices with all the white robed throng in the everlasting hallelujahs, then we shall say, "My God, my Father, 'My eyes have seen Your salvation.'"

III. Time fails me, so I must pass on to spend a few minutes in a third portion of my topic. It is this—THERE ARE SOME HERE WHO HAVE NEVER SEEN GOD'S SALVATION.

The gospel is hid from them. And if it is hid, it is not hid because we have used hard words to hide it. "If our gospel is hid, it is hid from them who are lost; in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not." Blind sinner, do you desire to see the salvation of God? "Ah," you say, "If I know my own heart, I do." Why, then, can you not see it, man? It is very plain. Ah, I see, your eyes are sealed up!

The first seal I see on your eyes, like a fixed scale, (and oh, I wish I could take it off of you), is this—*you do not even believe that you need any salvation.* The man who does not believe he needs saving, of course will never see God's salvation! In your heart you say, "I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." But my poor friend, be persuaded to take God's opinion of you, which is much nearer the truth than yours. You are naked, blind, poor and miserable! You are lost, ruined and condemned, as it is written, "He that believes not is condemned already." Is that scale gone?

Now I see another, (I wish that I could take that off, too), and that is, you know you are blind, but *you say, "I must try and save myself."* This is a very thick scale. You will never see while that is on your eyes! Do you not notice how Simeon put it—not, "My eyes have seen *my own salvation*," but, "My eyes have seen *Your* s*alvation*," that is, God's salvation, the Lord's salvation! Let me tell you, poor man, if ever you are saved, your salvation must be God's in the beginning, God's in the carrying on and God's in the concluding! No salvation will ever serve your turn but one which is divine from top to bottom! If nature's fingers could nimbly spin a garment that should cover human nakedness, it would be of no use. All that nature spins, God must unravel before a soul can be clothed in the righteousness of Christ! It is not your doings, man—it is Christ's doings that must save you! Not your tears, but Christ's blood! Not your feelings, not anything in you or from you! Listen you who have an ear to hear it—"Salvation is of the Lord"—from first to last!

If that scale shall come off your eyes, I know that you will say, "Now I begin to see enough to know that I cannot see. I have just enough light to discover the darkness I am in. I see that none can save me but God. He must do it—but will He save me? Will He save me?" Lend me your finger, man. Do you see? No, you do not, but there is the hem of Jesus' garment—touch that with your finger and you shall be restored to sight at once! I mean this—Jesus died to save such as you are—trust Him and you are saved! You are saved completely and at once! A physician who was under some concern of soul, asked his patient, who was a godly man, "Can you explain to me what faith is?" "Yes," said his godly patient, "I can let you see it very soon if God will let you see it. It is like this—I am very ill, I cannot help myself, I do not attempt to do it, I have confidence in you—I put myself into your care, I take what medicine you send me—I do what you bid me. That is faith. You must trust yourself in the hands of Christ like that." That is it. When you, my dear friend, wholly and entirely trust yourself in the hands of Christ—then your eyes have seen God's salvation!

I have no time for more. I wish I had. But I want to say this final word to everyone who has seen God's salvation. Perhaps one of you is poor. Well, go home tonight saying, "I am poor, but my eyes have seen Your salvation." One of you, perhaps, is in suffering. Then say, "I feel ill. Never mind, my eyes have seen Your salvation." And perhaps there are some warnings and intimations that make another of you think you will soon be called to die. Consumption is undermining your constitution—never mind, don't fret—your eyes have seen God's salvation! How much better to die in an attic or in a ditch and see God's salvation, than be carried in the most pompous manner to your grave a soul that knows nothing of God and of the Savior! O you that are much tried and much troubled, bear up, bear up! Your sorrow will not last much longer! When you and I get to heaven, as I trust we shall, as I *know* we shall if we are resting on the atonement of Christ, these troubles by the way will only be matter for

us to talk of, and to say to one another, "How graciously the Lord has upheld us in His providence, and how wonderfully He has brought us through every trial! Even in my poverty, my eyes saw His salvation. In my sickness and in my death, I did but see it all the more clearly because of the clouds and darkness that were round about me!" God bless you, dear friends! I earnestly pray that you may all see God's salvation! May He hear the prayer, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 2:1-40.

Verses 1-9. *And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria). And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, (because he was of the house and lineage of David), to be taxed with Mary, his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country, shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sorely afraid.* These men were probably poor and illiterate, but that did not hinder God from revealing Himself to them, nor prevent the coming of His Son to them! They were engaged in their ordinary calling, "keeping watch over their flocks by night," when this great blessing came to them. Seldom does such a blessing as this come to idlers. It was not while they were gadding abroad and wasting their time, but while they kept watch over their flocks that "the angel of the Lord came upon them." First one angel led the way and then a multitude of the heavenly host followed and these poor men, perhaps troubled with the common superstition of the Jews that the appearance of God, or any supernatural visitation, would always be followed by death, "were sorely afraid."

10, 11. *And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.* The anointed Savior has full power to save, for He "is Christ the Lord" and, therefore, He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.

12. *And this shall be a sign unto you—You shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.* [See Sermons #1026, Volume 17—JOY BORN AT BETHLEHEM and #1330, Volume 22—THE GREAT BIRTHDAY—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Not in marble

halls, wrapped in purple and fine linen and welcomed by the great and mighty of earth! No, this greatest of all princes is born amid the poverty of our ordinary manhood! He is one chosen out of the people, the people's Savior—and a manger receives the people's King.

13. *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God.* They could not stay behind! The news spread through heaven that an angel had gone to announce the birth of Christ and the others flew through the pearly gates and hastened to overtake the herald—and reached him just as he had concluded his message—"Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host." These cohorts of the Lord came riding post haste, Praising God.

13-17. *And saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into Heaven, the shepherds said, one to another, let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us. And they came with haste and found Mary, and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child.* Good news is not to be kept to ourselves. When we have ascertained its truth we are to tell it to others, and we are especially to tell the goodness of salvation! Tell it, O you who know it in your own hearts by blessed experience! Tell it, though it will sometimes be with broken accents in the feebleness of your flesh, yet even then tell it in the ardor of your heart's affection and God will bless your testimony—and others will learn the Good News through you.

18, 19. *And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them.* Weighed them, estimated them at their right value.

19. *In her heart.* The best of coffers to lay up anything in is the heart! Happy are those who, like Mary, store up the things of Christ, not in their brain, though that would make them orthodox—but in their heart—for that will bring them salvation!

20-24. *And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them. And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the Child, His name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before He was conceived in the womb. And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord; (as it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord) and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.* Our Savior put Himself under the law for our sakes and in every jot and tittle He observed it. So we are delivered from its dominion, for if Christ has fulfilled the law on our account, it has no more claim upon us. "You are not under the law, but under grace."

25. *And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon.* [See Sermon #659, Volume 11—SIMEON—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *And the same man was just and devout.* This combination makes up a complete character—"just" towards man—"devout" towards God. There are many who think they are just, but their justness does not extend to their fellow creatures, and they forget the claims of the Most High upon them. On the other hand, I have known men who have pretended to a vast amount of devotion, but who have never been just. Such persons are hypocrites, as the others are robbers of God! But he who is just and devout—just towards man and devout towards God—has the character of a true man! Such was Simeon, "just and devout."

25-29. *Waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the Child, Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the law, then he took Him up in his arms and blessed God, and said, Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word.* You see, dear friends, he was not afraid to die and he knew that he could not die until he had seen the Messiah! Some of us, if we had a revelation that on the occurrence of a certain event, we would die, might be filled with alarm or anxiety! But it is not so with holy Simeon—he rather longs to depart in peace. He looks upon the coming of "the Lord's Christ" with great joy because now he knows the battle of life for him will soon be over and that he will enter into his victory!

30-34. *For my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of the people Israel. And Joseph and his mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. And Simeon blessed them and said unto Mary, His mother, Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.* [See Sermon #907, Volume 15—CHRIST—THE RISE AND FALL OF MANY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] There were many who fell through their offenses against Jesus, but blessed be His name, there are still many who rise through Him, rise first to newness of life on earth and afterwards to resurrection life in glory! Jesus is set for both—He must be to one the savor of death unto death, and to another He must be the savor of life unto life.

34. *And for a sign which shall be spoken against.* How true has this been! The cross has been to many a stumbling block, and to the worldly wise it has been foolishness. And so will it be to the world's end!

35. *(Yes, a sword shall pierce through your own soul, also).* Great privileges often involve great troubles. Mary was highly favored and truly blessed among women, yet no woman ever had greater sorrow than she had!

35. *That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.* Christ's death revealed the thoughts of many hearts. It revealed the thoughts in the

heart of Pilate, that he loved popularity better than the truth of God. It revealed the thoughts of the heart of Judas, that he loved gold better than he loved his Master. It revealed the thoughts in the heart of Caiaphas, that he would keep to old customs rather than to the right. It revealed the thoughts in the hearts of the disciples and showed what poor timid, trembling hearts they had. Peter's impulsive spirit, too, was revealed in all its weakness by the death of the Savior. The cross is the great touchstone! Wherever it goes, it tests and tries us—even as the crucible tries the metal that is put into it—and lets us know what manner of men we are. Do you love Christ? Do you glory in His cross? Then it is well with you. But do you despise the cross? Do you set up your own righteousness in opposition to it? Are you depending upon anything besides Jesus Christ and Him crucified? Then His cross reveals you to be self-righteous and dead in trespasses and sins! Our Savior was not only to be received by men, but He was to be welcomed by women also, so now we read.

36-40. *And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age and had lived with her husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about 84 years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fasting and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant, gave thanks, likewise, unto the Lord, and spoke of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. And the Child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him.*

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END OF VOLUME 55

"AS" AND "SO"
NO. 3173

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1909,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 3, 1873.

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

[Two other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text are Sermons #483, Volume 8— LIFE AND WALK OF FAITH and #3030, Volume 53— A CONSISTENT WALK FOR TIME TO COME— Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THIS is a very simple text, yet no human being has ever discovered its full meaning. It is a great deep—happy are they who know how to dive into its depths and to swim at ease in its lengths and breadths! Blessed are they who continually obey the exhortation which it contains, "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you in Him." The text divides itself into faith and practice. "You have received Christ Jesus the Lord," there is your faith. "Walk you in Him," that is to be your daily practice!

The text also contains a model for that practice in the "as" and the "so" which are its cardinal points. "*As* you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk you in Him." What we have done suggests the way in which we are to do what still lies before us. "As you have received…so walk."

I. Notice in the text, first, THE FACT STATED. "You have received Christ Jesus the Lord."

Whatever else you have done or have not done, *you have received Christ*. The act of faith was the putting out of your empty hands to receive all the fullness of the Godhead in receiving Christ. There are some precious experiences to which you have not yet attained, some lofty heights to which you have not yet climbed, but you "have received Christ Jesus the Lord." That is the distinguishing mark of all true Christians! Though you may not all belong to the same denomination, yet without a single exception this is true concerning you, whether you are old or young, whether you are well instructed or ill taught, whether you are full of faith or are troubled with many a doubt and many a fear, you "have received Christ Jesus the Lord."

There is nothing in this fact to cause you one boastful thought. You have *received*, that is what emptiness does in order that it may be filled, that is what hunger does in order that its cravings may be satisfied, that is what the beggar in the street does when he craves and obtains alms. There is *nothing* of which you can glory in the fact that you have re-

ceived, for I may further remind you that even your very receiving you have received! The faith by which you received Christ was as much the gift of God to you as was the Christ upon whom your faith was fixed. You know that it is so and, therefore, you also know that boasting is forever excluded from the fact that you are saved! You have received Christ Jesus, that is all. I hope you prize the gift, and praise the giver. I trust that you often cry with the Apostle Paul, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!" And that your soul makes her boast in the Lord concerning the Savior whom you have received, but no other boasting is permissible even for a moment!

I remind you once more, beloved, that, *you have received* CHRIST. It is true that you have received His doctrines and that you still believe them. It is true that you have received His precepts and that you have obeyed them, though, alas, your obedience has been far from perfect. It is true that you have received His ordinances and that you have conformed to them by being baptized on profession of your faith in Him—and by sitting down with your fellow believers at His table. But, after all, the main point is that you have received Jesus Christ, Himself! Every word that He has spoken is sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, but sweeter far are the lips with which He uttered those words! Every command of His is to be esteemed more highly than the finest of fine gold, but as for the King who gave those commands, "He is altogether lovely." Human language cannot describe Him and yet *you have received Him*—His very self—you have received into your hearts to dwell there as your only Lord and Master. You have received Him as your life, for you live through Him. And you receive Him day by day as the Bread of Life upon which your soul feeds and as the Water of Life which quenches the thirst of your soul. You have not merely received His offices, His gifts, His grace, His promises, but you have received *Him*! He is the center of your confidence, the target of your hopes!

The text says that you have received "Christ Jesus the Lord." Here are three out of His many names and, first, beloved, you have received Him as *Christ*, the Anointed of God. You see in Him no amateur Savior, uncommissioned—but one sent by the Father, the authorized representative of the Most High—the Christos, the Messiah, the Sent One, who could rightly apply to Himself the ancient promise, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Christ came to this world because the Father sent Him. He said to the Jews, "I came down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." He lived and died here because it pleased the Father for Him to do so. And He is still appointed by the Father to distribute unnumbered gifts to His people. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." You believe that upon Christ, the Spirit rests without measure, that He is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows, and in re-

ceiving Him as the Anointed One, you also have unction from the Holy One and, therefore, you also are anointed to be kings and priests unto God. So you have received Him as Christ, the Anointed.

But you have also received Him as *Jesus*, and you love that charming name. No hymn more truly expresses your feelings than that one by John Newton which begins—

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ears!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fears."

You also sing with Bernard of Clairvaux—

"Jesus, the very thought of You
With sweetness fills my breast.
But sweeter far Your face to see
And in Your presence rest.
Nor voice can sing, nor heart can frame,
Nor can the memory find
A sweeter sound than Your blest name,
O Savior of mankind!"

You received Him as your Savior and, therefore, He has saved you from the penalty of sin and He will also save you from the dominion and power of sin. If you are saved, you are saved entirely through Jesus—and you do not need, and you do not desire any other Savior! You look to Jesus for all that can be comprehended in the word, *salvation*. His name means Savior and you have found Him to be a Savior to you. So you have received the anointed Savior, Christ Jesus.

And you have received Him as *the Lord*. You have not accepted Him as merely one of many anointed prophets, nor as a man sent from God, as John the Baptist was, but you worship Him as the Lord! And oh, how blessed it is to adore the Son of God! We cannot make any terms of peace with those who deny the deity of Christ, nor ought they to want to be at peace with us, for if Christ is not the Son of God, we are idolaters. And if He is, they are not Christians! There is a great gulf between us and them and we do not hesitate for a moment to say on which side of that gulf we stand. That same Jesus who was nailed to the tree is to us both Lord and Christ. By faith we put our finger into the print of the nails and our hand into His pierced side—and never questioning the fact that He is truly man, we rejoice to say to Him, as Thomas did, "My Lord and my God." Jesus Christ is, indeed, to us "very God of very God." This being so, we have received Him as our Lord to rule and govern us. In spiritual matters He is our only King—we acknowledge no master save Him who is *The* Master, of whom Martha said to her sister Mary, "The Master is come, and calls for you."

No teacher has any right to impart to us any instruction except that which he has received from the only infallible teacher. "He is the head of the body, the church," and we recognize no other headship. We joyfully acknowledge that He is our Sovereign Lord in the spiritual realm! He is the absolute monarch of our soul! He is that perfect husband who is the

true head of His mystical body, the church. Oh, that we more fully carried out, practically, in every thought, wish and action of our entire life, all that is implied in receiving Jesus Christ as Lord!

Beloved friends, as I look round upon you all and gaze into your faces, this question rushes from my heart to my lips—Have all of you received Christ Jesus the Lord? Alas, I am sorrowfully persuaded that there are some of you who have not received Him! He has knocked again and again with those pierced hands of His, at the door of your heart, but you have not let Him in! This fountain of the Water of Life has flowed close to your feet, yet you have not drunk of it. Christ has been set before you as the Bread of Life sent down from heaven, but you have not eaten of Him—you have refused Him even until now! "No," you say, "you are too severe in charging us with having refused Christ, for we have not done that!" Well, it seems to me that this is just what you *have* done, but I will put it more softly and say that, at any rate, you have not *received* Him. You have put Him off to a more convenient season which will probably never come to you. O poor souls, poor souls, how sad is your state in not having received Christ Jesus the Lord! Leaving out heaven and eternity for the moment—and speaking only of today—how wretched you must be in not having received Christ! When I see a man who has never seen the sun, I pity him, but not as I pity you who have never seen the Sun of Righteousness! If I heard of a child who had never known a father's love and who had never looked up with affection into a mother's face, I would pity that poor orphan, but not as much as I pity you who are living without a Savior! If I knew a man who had never known what health was, but who, from the day of his birth, was always sickly and bowed down with pain and infirmity, I would pity him, but not as I pity you who are sick unto death, yet who will not accept healing from the great physician! May God look down upon you, now, not only with pity, as He always does, but also in the power of His almighty grace and turn the heart of stone to flesh and lead you to receive Christ Jesus as Lord! That is all you have to do—to receive Jesus as the parched earth receives the refreshing showers, and as the wilted lilies receive the reviving rain drops and lift up their drooping heads again. That is all you have to do—receive Jesus! A child can receive. The feeblest can receive. Yes, one lying at the point of death, the sick man dying of fever may receive the cooling draught that is put to his lips! This is all that is asked of you—that you will *receive* Christ Jesus the Lord! Oh, that you would all receive Him now! God grant that it may be so and He shall have the praise!

II. Now, secondly, notice THE COUNSEL GIVEN—"so walk you in Him." The text not only reminds us of what we have done, but it also tells us what we are now to do!

Brothers and sisters in Christ, it is not easy to decide whether this counsel is to be regarded as a permission or as a precept—"so walk you in Him." Taking them either way, the words are a sweet morsel in my mouth. Yet I think I prefer to regard them as permission. Suppose I had been to Jesus as a poor sinner and that He had saved me and that He

had then said to me, "there, you are saved, so go your way. You have been a prodigal, but you are forgiven. You have shoes on your feet, a ring on your finger and the best robe to cover your nakedness—now go and do what you can for yourself"? Well, it would have been infinite mercy that would have welcomed me and pardoned me, but how much more gracious and tender is the Lord's message, "Come, My child take up your abode with Me and wander away no more." It is thus that God speaks to all who have believed in Jesus, "You have received Jesus Christ the Lord, so now you may walk in Him and you may always walk in Him! What He was to you at the first, He may be to you, still, and He may be to you forever and ever! Did you at the first eat Him as the Bread of Life to your soul? Then go on still eating Him! Did you spiritually drink of Him as the Water of Life? Then still drink of Him. He is yours forever, so continue to draw from His fullness all that you need! As you have received Him, so keep on receiving Him." Surely, this is a most gracious permission as well as a very precious precept!

"Walk in Him." Does not this mean, first, look upon Jesus Christ as your way to heaven and walk in Him? Look upon Him as your forerunner and follow Him. Look upon Him as your companion and lean upon Him. Look upon Him as your delight and live in Him, abide in Him! The expression, "Walk in Him," implies action and progress. Let your whole life be practically governed by your union with Christ, let your actions speak of your fellowship with Him. But walking also means progress, so do not stand still in Christ, but go on to know more and more of Him—make advances in the Christian life—"grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." There is also something of the idea of permanence in the precept, "Walk you in Him." It means go nowhere else, but continue in Him—let your ordinary life and your common conversation indicate your closeness of communion with Him!

"Walk you in Him." I trust that at least some of us know what it is to "walk in Him." Though we could not tell to others all that it means, yet it is a blessed fact in our experience and we intend, by God's grace, to "walk in Him" as long as we live. I think this is what walking in Him means—to wake up in the morning and to have our first thoughts full of the Savior—to seek His guidance and blessing in everything that is to happen to us during the day, to go down to our morning meal with our heart's affection fixed upon Jesus, to go off to the business or the workshop in the full consciousness that He is going with us—when our hands are busy and our mind is occupied with our trading or our working, still realizing that our heart is with our Beloved in the secret place where none can follow us, and so, as the hours run on, through the noontide heat, Christ is our shade and shelter, in the cool of the evening His company is our supreme delight and then, as we retire to our bed, our last thought being—

"How sweet to rest
Forever on our Savior's breast!"

Christian, this ought to be your way of living! And if you are right with God, this is the way in which you actually do live. You "walk in Him." What a lovely garden! What a delightful place! The air is balmy, the scenery all around is charming. There is nothing to distract, or disturb, or disgust—everything to delight, gratify and satiate the spirit—so "Walk in Him." Climb to every lofty hill of His infinite love, explore the deepest recesses of His eternal purposes so far as they are accessible to mortal man! And in this way, "as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you in Him."

III. Notice, thirdly, THE MODEL WHICH IS PRESENTED TO US IN THE TEXT. "*As* you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk you in Him." The two emphatic words are, "as," and, "so." We are to walk in Christ Jesus as we received Him.

There is great safety in going back to first principles. To make sure of being in the right way, it is well to look back to the gate by which we entered the way. You know how, in ordinary life, in the matter of mutual love, we often look back upon the early days of that experience as the sweetest. Not long ago I heard a good man, whose time had been very fully occupied in business so that for many a year he had scarcely been able to have a holiday, say that, when at last he did manage to take one with his wife, it was like his honeymoon. You also recollect how the Lord said to Israel, "I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness." God likes us to go back in thought to the time when we began with Him—and I want to take you who are Christians back to your first love of God. Perhaps with some of you, religion has become a very mechanical sort of thing—you have become stereotyped in your religious observances. You need to go back to the place where you first received Christ Jesus the Lord and there refurbish your faith, love and all your other divine graces!

So I ask you, how did you receive Christ? Possibly your first answer is, "*I received Him in the depth of sorrow and humiliation of soul.* I had been broken in pieces by the great plow of the law and was rent and torn asunder by my own consciousness of guilt. I lay before the cross moaning and roaring like a wounded beast and in my extremity I received Christ as being the very Savior that I needed. I felt myself to be less than nothing and I took Him to be my all in all. Shivering in my nakedness through sin, I took His righteousness as my perfect covering. Famished to death, I took Him to be both my life and the food of that life. I grasped Christ in my despair at finding there was nothing else to which I could cling! Out of the great deeps of my soul's distress, I cast myself upon His mercy, saying—

"I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try—
For if I stay away,
I know I must forever die!'"

Our daily walk in Christ must be very much like that. Not exactly so, for there should be no unbelief in it. As for myself, I must confess that I

never realize Christ's preciousness so much as when I feel myself still to be apart from Him, an undeserving, ill deserving, hell deserving sinner. Sometimes when our Lord gives us sweet enjoyments, we make too much of them by letting them come between Him and our souls. And when the Holy Spirit bestows upon us certain graces, we think we are very fine fellows and carry our heads aloft very proudly—instead of giving all the glory to His holy name. Now, if we ever act like that, we may rest assured that as we go up in our own estimation, Christ will go down—and that would be a sorry thing, indeed! Grow in grace, but not in self-esteem. Have more faith, but do not boast of having it. Be full of zeal, but not of conceit concerning it. Be as holy as it is possible for you to become, but do not prate and brag about your holiness as some have done. Be not like those who push with horn and with shoulder the weak ones of the flock because they have not attained to such heights as these strong ones profess to have reached—though, possibly, the feebler and humbler ones are really nearer to God than the boasters are! Lie low, brothers and sisters, lie low, for what the old Essex farmer used to tell me is true, "If you are one inch above the ground, you are just that inch too high." So lie low and thus continue to walk in Christ—yourself being *nothing*—and Christ being *everything*. You know that if you get to be something, Christ cannot then be everything to you. But if you are still nothing—and less than nothing in your own estimation—as you sink in self-esteem, your Lord will rise to His right position in your sight and so you will be walking humbly in Him as you ought!

Think again how you received Christ. When you really did lay hold of Him by faith, I am sure that *you received Him with great certainty*. There was no mockery, no sham about your reception of Christ. You were a lost sinner and you were pointed to the only Savior—and you did really and truly look unto Him who said, "Look unto Me, and be you saved." Whatever else there was in your look, there was intense earnestness in it. There was no pretense or affectation about it, it was very real! Is all your religion as real as that first faith look at Jesus was? Do you walk in Him as truly and as decidedly as you did that first day? My dear brother, do you ever pray sham prayers? My dear sister, do you ever sing sham praises? Is there not a very great risk of our making our religion into a mere shell with no life in it? May God save us from everything that would be such a sham as that and make us as sincere in our walk in Christ as we were in our first reception of Him! I know that I was most anxious to be certain that I had really believed in Jesus to the saving of my soul. I was not satisfied with just one look at Jesus, but I looked, and looked, again and again, with a holy anxiety lest I might possibly have been mistaken and not really have trusted Christ as my Savior. I wish we had more of that sacred anxiety concerning our walking in Christ.

We were not only very sincere in our early repentance and faith, but *our reception of Christ was very vital*. Salvation was to us a matter of life or death. It was not something about which we were only slightly con-

cerned. It would be well if we manifested a similar vitality about our daily walk in Christ. There are some professors whom I know who do not seem to me to be alive much above their ankles—they have not sufficient vitality to reach up to their knees so as to make them mighty in prayer. They are alive, I hope, but they remind me very vividly of a remarkable but gruesome picture of the resurrection that I once saw. There were skeletons coming out of the graves, with the bones only partly covered with flesh. One man had a head without any eyes in it. Another was stretching out an arm that was all bone—and the rest of the figures in the picture were of a similar character. It was a strange conception on the part of the painter, yet I fear it was only too true a representation of the spiritual state of many nominal Christians! I hope they are really rising from among the dead, but they have not risen yet into fullness of life. Many professors appear to have a very low vitality, if they are alive at all! Their hearts are hard and stony, their consciences insensitive—sin does not shock them as it shocks the young convert—*he* is startled and alarmed at the very *appearance* of evil—but *they* have become so callous that they walk unconcerned among scenes that ought to break their hearts! May the Lord save you, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, from all such callousness as that! May you have the same tender sensitiveness to sin that you had when you received Christ Jesus the Lord. And as you then welcomed Him with warm, loving, overflowing emotion, so may you walk in Him, all your days, as one who is alive from the dead—thoroughly alive—with all your powers and faculties in active exercise and your whole soul brimming over with love to Him!

Did you not also, beloved, *receive Christ very eagerly*? Have you ever helped to feed a man who had long been without food? If so, you know that it is a great treat to see how eagerly he eats. He does not pick over the meat to see if it is well done—it is all well done to him. He does not leave a scrap of food upon the plate and he looks round to see if there is any more that he can beg. It was in such a fashion that we feasted upon Christ when we first received Him. We had been for months, perhaps even for years, longing with a great heartache to find the Savior. And when we did find Him and began to feast upon Him, we thought we never could have enough of Him! Do you recollect how eager you were in those days to go where you could hear the gospel? You went to a place which was so crowded that you could not get a seat, but you did not mind standing in the aisle and you did not feel tired, then! But now you need a nice soft cushion to sit on and a cushion even for your feet—and you are weary long before the sermon is finished! In those early days you would have walked many miles to hear about Jesus Christ—and even if the preacher's language was somewhat rough and uncouth, what did you care about that, as long as he faithfully preached Jesus Christ and Him crucified? That is the way in which we should still eagerly walk in Christ, feeling that we can never have too much of His company, longing to be often where He meets with His people, delighting in His worship,

charmed with everything He says and does! We received Christ eagerly, so let us walk in Him with the same eagerness and earnestness!

Many of us also received Christ very resolutely. I know that I asked the question, over and over again, "Shall I go to Him?" And at last, when I was almost driven to despair, I cried, "I must, I will—

"'I'll go to Jesus, though my sin
Has like a mountain rose.
I know His courts, I'll enter in,
Whatever may oppose.'"

That was how many of us received Christ Jesus the Lord. There were difficulties in our way, but we overcame them, for we were determined to be saved if it was possible. What sacred doggedness, what holy determination will a soul bestow when it is resolved on being saved! Hunger will make a man break through stone walls and iron bars, but a soul that is hungering and thirsting after Christ does not know that there are any walls or bars, so overpowering is its eagerness to get to Him! It was with such eagerness as this that we received Christ Jesus the Lord. Are we just as eager to walk in Him? I know that some of you are sorely tempted—are you standing fast? Are you standing up for Jesus as you used to do when you first knew Him? Are you firm as a rock in your resistance to everything that is opposed to Him and to His truth? You ought to be! Your song should still be that one of which you were so fond in those early days—

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

A lion like spirit was then in you! You would gladly have gone to prison for Christ's sake, or even to death if He had required it. If somebody had told me, when I was converted, that I should have to go to prison and lie there for 12 years as John Bunyan did if I became a Christian, I verily believe that I would have leaped for joy at the prospect of so high an honor! To be a martyr for the truth's sake—the prospect looked glorious—the ruby crown glowed in the sunshine of our ardent anticipation and we envied those who had been privileged to wear it! It was so then. But, beloved, is it so now? Can you cleave to Christ as tenaciously now as you did then? Can you bear to be in ill repute for His sake? Can you rejoice in being scoffed at because you are a Christian as you did when you received Christ Jesus the Lord? If you cannot, blush and be ashamed and, from henceforth, pray that with the same undaunted courage and determination with which you received Him, you may continue to walk in Him!

I will not weary you by multiplying words, but I must ask whether you do not recollect *how joyfully you received Christ*. Ah, you cannot forget that, for in proportion to your sorrow before, was your joy when you accepted Christ as your Savior. No wonder you sang—

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

We are not surprised that Miriam and the women went out with timbrels and with dances when Pharaoh and all his host were drowned in the Red Sea. And we do not marvel at Miriam's jubilant song, "Sing you to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously," for our soul took a timbrel and our feet danced before the Lord as we sang unto Him who had triumphed so gloriously for us! As I go back and remind you of those early joys, I again ask you whether you are as joyous now as you were then? You ought to be a great deal more joyous, for you have had so much more cause to praise the Lord than you had then! Come, brothers and sisters, let us go again to Jesus as we went to Him at the first—let us go as poor, guilty, needy sinners to Jesus Christ upon the cross just as though we had never gone before! If we do so, I can tell you what the consequence will be just as it was at the first. As we—

"View the flowing
Of our Savior's precious blood,
With divine assurance knowing
He has made our peace with God"—

we shall feel as though we were young converts once again! We may be getting old and gray and, perhaps, cold as well as gray, but we shall become like little children again and we shall shout, "Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna!" as the Son of David rides in triumph down the streets of our soul! Oh, that it may be so with many of us here! It ought to be so and it will be so if you walk in Christ Jesus the Lord as you received Him in the hour of your conversion!

I will close my discourse when I have reminded you that when we received Christ Jesus the Lord, *we received the whole of Him*. We took Him for all that we knew of Him and we found that He was much more than we then thought He was. And we did not pick and choose and say, "We will have His pardon, but we will not have His sanctification." We took the many sided Christ, the Christ of many glorious characters, the Christ of ten thousand times ten thousand beauties! We took Christ to teach us, Christ to lead us, Christ to feed us, Christ to cheer us, Christ for us to obey and Christ for us to delight in—we took a whole Christ! And then we gave Him our whole selves. We said, "Lord, take us, body, soul and spirit." We prayed that the sacrifice might be bound with cords to the horns of the altar forever! We made no bargains with Him—we gave the freehold of our souls to Jesus—and of our bodies, too. And we only asked that we might not have a pulse beating except for Him, or our lungs heaving except as He was our very life. And we took Christ—at least I know I did—for better or worse, in health or in sickness, to have and to hold so that even death should never part us! We put our hand in His and asked Him to take us and keep us forever. And we took Him and said, "We will hold to You and will not let You go." Since then there has been many a tug from Satan, who has tried to drag us away from Christ, or to make us think that Christ was going away from us—but we have managed to hold to Him to this hour! Perhaps you feel as though you had only got a hold of the hem of His garment. If so, try to get a firmer hold on Him! Gasp

Him, hold Him by the feet, throw your arms about Him and tell Him that without a smile from Him, your spirit cannot rest! Tell Him that you are sick in love and need His presence, and must have it! And beg Him, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, to come to you. Say unto Him, "My Lord, if You love me, come and show Your love. If, indeed, there is between You and me a union of an eternal nature, come to me! Be not a stranger to Your own flesh, but be now as You were of old. Come to me again and let Your left hand be under my head while Your right hand does embrace me." Oh, for more of these blessed hungering and longings! Beloved, we will never let Christ go! We took Him forever and we will hold Him forever! And, blessed be His name, He will hold us forever! We are in His hands and none can take us out. There shall we be when earth and Heaven are in a blaze! There shall we be when He shall sit upon His judgment seat! And there shall we be world without end. Amen!

I leave this sermon with God's people, but I cannot help adding that I do earnestly pray that all of you may receive Christ Jesus the Lord. Oh, come to Him tonight! He is willing that you should have Him—and every soul that wills to have Christ may have Him, for, "the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is thirsty come. And whoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely." Amen, and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 JOHN 3:10-21.

Verses 10-12. *In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil: whoever does not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loves not his brother. For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And why did he slay him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.* Some people try to deceive us with the notion that all men are the children of God, but John, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, shows how false that idea is! Holiness and love distinguish the children of God from the children of the devil!

13. *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hates you.* As Cain hated Abel, so worldlings hate the saints whose holiness is a continual rebuke to the ungodly.

14-16. *We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.* [See Sermon #2556, Volume 44—LIFE PROVED BY LOVE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *He that loves not his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer: and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us* [See Sermons #2656, Volume 46—THE DEATH OF CHRIST FOR HIS PEOPLE and #2959, Volume 51—GOD'S LOVE TO THE SAINTS—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *and we ought to lay down our lives for*

the brethren. Such self-sacrifice as this is the very highest form of love to the brethren and is a following of the example of Christ, who "laid down his life for us."

17, 18. *But whoever has this world's goods and sees his brother has need and shuts up his heart of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.* Love that consists only of words is utterly worthless. If it is true love, it must prove itself by kind deeds and gracious actions.

19. *And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.* The love that will pass this test will bring a restful assurance of peace to the heart.

20-22. *For if our heart condemns us, God is greater that our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart condemns us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatever we ask, we receive of Him because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.* It is not everyone who can have whatever he chooses to ask of God in prayer. This privilege is only granted to those who "keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." [See Sermon #1103, Volume 19—THE CONDITIONS OF POWER IN PRAYER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

23. *And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment.* Faith and love—faith in Christ and love to one another—are here most happily joined together! Let us never put them asunder.

24. *And he that keeps His commandments dwells in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us.* Though this great truth of our dwelling in God and God dwelling in us is a great mystery, it is a mystery concerning which we need not be in doubt if we will learn of the Holy Spirit what He delights to teach us!

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

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

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