THE PREPARATORY PRAYERS OF CHRIST
NO. 3178

A SERMON
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"Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus, also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, You are My beloved Son, in You I am well pleased."
Luke 3:21, 22.

"And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called unto Him, His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles."
Luke 6:12,13.

"And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening."
Luke 9:28, 29.

"And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea."
Matthew 14:23-25.

"Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead were laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people here, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me."
John 11:41, 42.

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren."
Luke 22:31, 32.

"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost."
Luke 23:46.

THERE is one peculiarity about the life of our Lord Jesus Christ which everybody must have noticed who has carefully read the four gospels, namely, that He was a man of much prayer. He was mighty as a preacher, for even the officers who were sent to arrest Him said, "Never man spoke like this man." But He appears to have been even mightier in prayer, if such a thing could be possible! We do not read that His

disciples ever asked Him to teach them to *preach*, but we are told that, "as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray." He had no doubt been praying with such amazing fervor that His disciples realized that He was a master of the holy art of prayer and they, therefore, desired to learn the secret for themselves. The whole life of our Lord Jesus Christ was one of prayer. Though we are often told about His praying, we feel that we scarcely need to be informed of it, for we know that He must have been a man of prayer. His acts are the acts of a prayerful man. His words speak to us like the words of one whose heart was constantly lifted up in prayer to His Father. You could not imagine that He would have breathed out such blessings upon men if He had not first breathed in the atmosphere of heaven! He must have been much in prayer or He could not have been so abundant in service and so gracious in sympathy.

Prayer seems to be like a silver thread running through the whole of our Savior's life and we have the record of His prayers on many special occasions. It struck me that it would be both interesting and instructive for us to notice some of the seasons which Jesus spent in prayer. I have selected a few which occurred either before some great work or some great suffering, so our subject will really be the *preparatory prayers of Christ*—the prayers of Christ as He was approaching something which would put a peculiar stress and strain upon His manhood, either for service or for suffering. And if the consideration of this subject shall lead all of us to learn the practical lesson of praying at all times—and yet to have special seasons for prayer just before any peculiar trial or unusual service—we shall not have met in vain!

I. The first prayer we are to consider is OUR LORD'S PRAYER IN PREPARATION FOR HIS BAPTISM. It is in Luke 3:21, 22—"Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus, also being baptized, and praying," (it seems to have been a continuous act in which He had been previously occupied), "the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, You are My beloved Son, in You I am well pleased."

The baptism of our Lord was the commencement of His manifestation to the sons of men. He was now about to take upon Himself in full all the works of His Messiahship and, consequently, we find Him very specially engaged in prayer. And, beloved, it seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate that when any of us have been converted and are about to make a Scriptural profession of our faith—about to take up the soldier's life under the great captain of our salvation—about to start out as pilgrims to Zion's city—I say that it seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate for us to spend much time in very special prayer! I would be very sorry to think that anyone would venture to come to be baptized, or to be united with a Christian church without having made that action a matter of much solemn consideration and earnest prayer. But when the decisive step is about to be taken, our whole being should be very specially concentrated upon our supplication at the throne of grace.

Of course we do not believe in any sacramental efficacy attaching to the observance of this ordinance, but we receive a special blessing in the

act, itself, because we are moved to pray even more than usual before it takes place and at the time. At all events, I know that it was so in my own case. It was many years ago, but the remembrance of it is very vivid at this moment and it seems to me as though it only happened yesterday! It was in the month of May and I rose very early in the morning so that I might have a long time in private prayer. Then I had to walk about eight miles, from Newmarket to Isleham, where I was to be baptized in the river. I think that the blessing I received that day resulted largely from that season of solitary supplication and my meditation, as I walked along the country roads and lanes, upon my indebtedness to my Savior and my desire to live to His praise and glory. Dear young people, take care that you start right in your Christian life by being much in prayer! A profession of faith that does not begin with prayer will end in disgrace. If you come to join the church, but do not pray to God to uphold you in consistency of life, and to make your profession sincere, the probability is that you are already a hypocrite! Or if that is too uncharitable a suggestion, the probability is that if you are converted, the work has been of a very superficial character and not of that deep and earnest kind of which prayer would be the certain index. So again I say to you that if any of you are thinking of making a profession of your faith in Christ, be sure, then, in preparation for it, you devote a special season to drawing near to God in prayer.

As I read the first text, no doubt you noticed that it was while Christ was praying that, "the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, You are My beloved Son, in You I am well pleased." There are three occasions of which we read in Scripture when God bore *audible testimony to Christ.* And on each of these three occasions He was either in the act of prayer or He had been praying but a very short time before. Christ's prayer is especially mentioned in each instance side by side with the witness of His Father—and if you, beloved friends, want to have the witness of God either at your baptism or on any subsequent act of your life—you must obtain it by prayer! The Holy Spirit never sets His seal to a prayerless religion! It has not in it that of which He can approve. It must be truly said of a man, "Behold, he prays," before the Lord bears such testimony concerning him as He bore concerning Saul of Tarsus, "He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles."

So we find that it was while Christ was praying at His baptism that the Holy Spirit came upon Him, "in a bodily shape like a dove," to qualify Him for His public service! And it is through prayer that we, also, receive that spiritual enrichment that equips us as coworkers together with God. Without prayer you will remain in a region that is desolate as a desert! But bend your knees in supplication to the Most High and you have reached the land of promise, the country of benediction! "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you," not merely as to His gracious presence, but as to the powerful and efficacious working of the Holy Spirit! More prayer—more power! The more pleading with God that there is, the more power will there be in pleading with men, for the Holy Spirit will come upon us while we are pleading and so we shall be fitted and qualified to do the work to which we are called of God!

Let us learn, then, from this first instance of our Savior's preparatory prayer at His baptism, the necessity of special supplication *on our part in similar circumstances*. If we are making our first public profession of faith in Him; or if we are renewing that profession; if we are moving to another sphere of service, if we are taking office in the church as deacons or elders, if we are commencing the work of the pastorate. If we are in any way coming out more distinctly before the world as the servants of Christ, let us set apart special seasons for prayer—and so seek a double portion of the Holy Spirit's blessing to rest upon us!

II. The second instance of the preparatory prayers of Christ which we are to consider is OUR LORD'S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO CHOOSING HIS TWELVE APOSTLES. It is recorded in Luke 6:12, 13—"And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. [See Sermon #798, Volume 14—SPECIAL PROTRACTED PRAYER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] And when it was day, He called unto Him, His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles."

Our Lord was about to extend His ministry. His one tongue, His one voice might have delivered His personal message throughout Palestine, but He was desirous of having far more done than He could individually accomplish in the brief period of His public ministry upon earth. He would therefore have 12 apostles and afterwards 70 disciples who would go forth in His name and proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. He was infinitely wiser than the wisest of mere men, so why did He not at once select His 12 apostles? The men had been with Him from the beginning and He knew their characters and their fitness for the work He was about to entrust to them, so He might have said to Himself, "I will have James, John, Peter and the rest of the twelve, and send them forth to preach that the kingdom of heaven is at hand and to exercise the miraculous powers with which I will endow them." He might have done this if He had not been the Christ of God—but being the anointed of the Father, He would not take such an important step as that without long continued prayer. So He went alone to His Father, told Him all that He desired to do and pleaded with Him, not in the brief fashion that we call prayer which usually lasts only a few minutes—but His pleading lasted through an entire night!

What our Lord asked for, or how He prayed, we cannot tell, for it is not revealed to us. But I think we shall not be guilty of vain or unwarranted curiosity if we use our imagination for a minute or two. In doing so, with the utmost reverence, I think I hear Christ crying to His Father whom the right men might be selected as the leaders of the church of God upon the earth. I think I also hear Him pleading that upon these chosen men a divine influence might rest, that they might be kept in character, honest in heart and holy in life—and that they might also be preserved in sound doctrine and not turn aside to error and falsehood. Then I think I hear Him praying that success might attend their preaching. That they might be guided where to go, where the blessing of God would go with them and that they might find many hearts willing to receive their testimony. And that when their personal ministry should end, they might pass on their commission to others so that as long as there should be a harvest

to be reaped for the Lord, there should be laborers to reap it—as long as there should be lost sinners in the world, there would also be earnest, consecrated men and women seeking to pluck the brands from the burning. I will not attempt to describe the mighty wrestling of that night of prayer when, in strong cries and tears, Christ poured out His very soul into His Father's ear and heart! But it is clear that He would not dispatch a solitary messenger with the glad tidings of the gospel unless He was assured that His Father's authority and the Spirit's power would accompany the servants whom He was about to send forth.

What a lesson there is in all this to us! What infallible guidance there is here as to how a missionary society should be conducted! Where there is one committee meeting for business, there ought to be 50 for prayer! Whenever we get a missionary society whose main business it is to pray, we shall have a society whose distinguishing characteristic will be that it is the means of saving a multitude of souls! And to you, my dear young brothers in the College, I feel moved to say that I believe we shall have a far larger blessing than we have already had when the spirit of prayer in the College is greater than it now is, though I rejoice to know that it is very deep and fervent even now! You, brothers, have never been lacking in prayerfulness. I thank God that I have never had occasion to complain or to grieve on that account, but still, who knows what blessing might follow a night of prayer at the beginning or at any part of the session—or an all-night wrestling in prayer in the privacy of your own bedrooms? Then, when you go out to preach the gospel on the Sabbath, you will find that the best preparation for preaching is much praying! I have always found that the meaning of a text can be better learned by prayer than in any other way. Of course we must consult lexicons and commentaries to see the literal meaning of the words and their relation to one another—but when we have done all that, we shall still find that our greatest help will come from prayer! Oh, that every Christian enterprise were commenced with prayer, continued with prayer and crowned with prayer! Then might we, also, expect to see it crowned with God's blessing!

So once again I remind you that our Savior's example teaches us that for seasons of special service, we need not only prayers of a brief character, excellent as they are for ordinary occasions, but special protracted wrestling with God like that of Jacob at the brook Jabbok, so that each one of us can say to the Lord, with holy determination—

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

When such sacred persistence in prayer as this becomes common throughout the whole church of Christ, Satan's long usurpation will be coming to an end and we shall be able to say to our Lord, as the 70 disciples did when they returned to Him with joy, "Even the devils are subject unto us through Your name!"

III. Now, thirdly, let us consider OUR LORD'S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO HIS TRANSFIGURATION. You will find it in Luke 9:28, 29—"And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was

white and glistening." You see that it was *as He prayed that He was transfigured*.

Now, beloved, do you really desire to reach the highest possible attainments of the Christian life? Do you, in your inmost soul, pine and pant after the choicest joys that can be known by human beings this side of heaven? Do you aspire to rise to full fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and to be transformed into His image from glory to glory? If so, the way is open to you! It is the way of prayer—only there will you find these priceless blessings! If you fail in prayer, you will assuredly never come to Tabor's top! There is no hope, dear friends, of our ever attaining to anything like a transfiguration and being covered with the light of God so that whether in the body or out of the body we cannot tell, unless we are much in prayer!

I believe that we make more real advance in the divine life in an hour of prayer than we do in a month of hearing sermons. I do not mean that we are to neglect the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but I am sure that without the praying, the hearing is of little worth! We must pray. We must plead with God if we are to really grow spiritually. In prayer, very much of our spiritual digestion is done. When we are hearing the Word, we are very much like the cattle when they are cropping the grass—but when we follow our hearing with meditation and prayer, we do, as it were, lie down in the green pastures—and get the rich nutriment for our souls out of the truth of God. My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, would you shake off the earthliness that still clings to you? Would you get rid of your doubts and your fears? Would you overcome your worldliness? Would you master all your besetting sins? Would you glow and glisten in the brightness and glory of the holiness of God? Then be much in prayer, as Jesus was! I am sure that it must be so and that, apart from prayer, you will make no advance in the divine life—but that in waiting upon God, you shall renew your spiritual strength, you shall mount up with wings as eagles, you shall run and not be weary—you shall walk and not faint!

IV. I must hasten on lest time should fail us before I have finished. And I must put together two of OUR LORD'S PRAYERS PREPARATORY TO GREAT MIRACLES.

The first, which preceded His stilling of the tempest on the Lake of Gennesaret, is recorded in Matthew 14:23-25—"And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea." He had been pleading with His Father for His disciples and then, when their ship was tossed by the waves, and driven back by the contrary winds, He came down to them from the lofty place where He had been praying for them, making a pathway for Himself across the turbulent waters that He was about to calm. Before He walked upon those tossing billows, He had prayed to His Father. Before He stilled the storm, He had prevailed with God in prayer.

Am I to do any great work for God? Then I must first be mighty upon my knees! Is there a man here who is to be the means of covering the sky

with clouds and bringing the rain of God's blessing on the dry and barren church which so sorely needs reviving and refreshing? Then he must be prepared for that great work as Elijah was when, on the top of Carmel, "He cast himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees," and prayed as only he could pray! We shall never see a little cloud like a man's hand, which shall afterwards cover all the sky with blackness, unless first of all we know how to cry mightily unto the Most High! But when we have done that, then shall we see what we desire. Moses would never have been able to control the children of Israel as he did if he had not first been in communion with his God in the desert, and afterwards in the mountain. So if we are to be men of power, we also must be men of prayer!

The other instance to which I want to refer, showing how our Lord prayed before working a mighty miracle, is when He stood by the grave of Lazarus. You will find the account of it in John 11:41, 42—"Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people here, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me." He did not cry, "Lazarus, come forth," so that the people heard it, and Lazarus heard it, until *first* He had prayed, "My Father, grant that Lazarus may rise from the dead," and had received the assurance that he would do so as soon as he was called by Christ to come forth from the grave.

But, brothers and sisters, do you not see that if Christ, who was so strong, needed to pray thus, what need there is for us, who are so weak, to also pray? If He, who was God as well as man, prayed to His Father before He worked a miracle, how necessary it is for us, who are merely men, to go to the throne of grace and plead there with importunate fervency if we are ever to do anything for God! I fear that many of us have been feeble out here in public because we have been feeble out there on the lone mountainside where we ought to have been in fellowship with God. The way to be fitted to work what men will call wonders, is to go to the God of wonders and implore Him to gird us with His all sufficient strength so that we may do exploits to His praise and glory!

V. The next prayer we are to consider is OUR LORD'S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO PETER'S FALL. We have the record of that in Luke 22:31, 32—"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren." [See Sermons #2620, Volume 45—CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR PETER; #2034, Volume 34—PETER'S RESTORATION and #2035, Volume 34—PETER AFTER HIS RESTORATION—Read/download all the sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

There is much that is admirable and instructive in this utterance of our Lord. Satan had not then tempted Peter, yet Christ had already pleaded for the apostle whose peril He clearly foresaw! Some of us would have thought that we were very prompt if we had prayed for a brother or sister who had been tempted and who had yielded to the temptation. But our Lord prayed for Peter *before he was tempted*. As soon as Satan had desired to have him in his sieve, that he might sift him as wheat, our

Savior knew the thought that was formed in the diabolic mind—and He at once pleaded for His imperiled servant who did not even know the danger that was threatening him! Christ is always beforehand with us. Before the storm comes, He has provided the harbor of refuge. Before the disease attacks us, He has the remedy ready to cure it. His mercy outruns our misery!

What a lesson we ought to learn from this action of Christ! Whenever we see any friend in peril through temptation, let us not begin to talk about him, but let us at once pray for him! Some persons are very fond of hinting and insinuating about what is going to happen to certain people with whom they are acquainted. I pray you, beloved friends, not to do it! Do not hint that so and so is likely to fall, but pray that he may *not* fall. Do not insinuate anything about him to others, but tell the Lord what your anxiety is concerning him.

"But so and so has made a lot of money and he is getting very purse-proud." Well, even if it is so, do not talk about him to others, but pray God to grant that he may not be allowed to become purse proud. Do not say that he will be, but pray constantly that he may not be—and do not let anyone but the Lord know that you are praying for him.

"Then there is so and so. He is so elated with the success he has had that one can scarcely get to speak to him." Well then, brother, pray that he may not be elated. Do not say that you are afraid he is growing proud, for that would imply what you would be if you were in his place! Your fear reveals a secret concerning your own nature, for what you judge that he would be is exactly what you would do in similar circumstances! We always measure other people's corn with our own bushel—we do not borrow their bushel. And we can judge ourselves by our judgment of others. Let us cease these censures and judgments—and let us pray for our brothers and sisters. If you fear that a minister is somewhat turning aside from the faith, or if you think that his ministry is not so profitable as it used to be, or if you see any other imperfection in him, do not go and talk about it to people in the street, for they cannot set him right—go and tell his Master about him! Pray for him and ask the Lord to make right whatever is wrong. There is a sermon by old Matthew Wilks about our being epistles of Christ, written not with ink, and not on tablets of stone, but in fleshy tablets of the heart. And he said that ministers are the pens with which God writes on their hearts' hearts—and that pens need sharpening every now and then—but even when they are sharp, they cannot write without ink! So he said that the best service that the people could render to the preacher was to pray the Lord to give them new pens and dip them in the fresh ink that they might write better than before! Do so, dear friends—do not blot the page with your censures and unkind remarks, but help the preacher by pleading for him even as Christ prayed for Peter!

VI. Now I must close with our LORD'S PREPARATORY PRAYER JUST BEFORE HIS DEATH. You will find it in Luke 23:46—"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost." [See Sermons #2311, Volume 39—OUR LORD'S LAST CRY FROM THE CROSS and #2644, Volume 45—THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

Our Lord Jesus was very specially occupied in prayer as the end of His earthly life drew near. He was about to die as His people's surety and substitute. The wrath of God, which was due to them, fell upon Him! Knowing all that was to befall Him, "He set His face steadfastly to go unto Jerusalem" and, in due time, "He endured the cross, despising the shame." But He did not go to Gethsemane and Golgotha without prayer! Son of God as He was, He would not undergo that terrible ordeal without much supplication. You know how much there is about His praying in the later chapters of John's gospel. There is especially that great prayer of His for His church in which He pleaded with amazing fervor for those whom His Father had given Him. Then there was His agonized pleading in Gethsemane when "His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." We will not say much about that, but we can well imagine that the bloody sweat was the outward and visible expression of the intense agony of His soul which was "exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death."

All that Christ did and suffered was full of prayer, so it was but fitting that His last utterance on earth should be the prayerful surrender of His spirit into the hands of His Father. He had already pleaded for His murderers, "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do." He had promised to grant the request of the penitent thief, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." Now nothing remained for Him to do but to say, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost." His life, which had been a life of prayer, was thus closed with prayer—an example well worthy of His people's imitation!

Perhaps I am addressing someone who is conscious that a serious illness is threatening. Well then, dear friend, prepare for it by prayer! Are you dreading a painful operation? Nothing will help you to bear it so well as pleading with God concerning it! Prayer will help you mentally as well as physically—you will face the ordeal with far less fear if you have laid your care before the Lord and committed yourself—body, soul and spirit—into His hands. If you are expecting, before long, to reach the end of your mortal life either because of your advanced age, or your weak constitution, or the inroads of the deadly consumption—pray much. You need not fear to be baptized in Jordan's swelling flood if you are constantly being baptized in prayer! Think of your Savior in the garden and on the cross—and pray even as He did—"Not my will, but yours be done…Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit."

While I have been speaking to believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, there may have been some here who are still unconverted—who have imagined that prayer is the way to heaven—yet it is not! Prayer is a great and precious help on the road, but Christ, alone, is *the* Way! And the very first step heavenward is to trust ourselves wholly to Him. Faith in Christ is the all-important matter and if you truly believe in Him, you are saved! But the very first thing that *a saved man does is to pray*—and the very last thing that he does before he gets to heaven is to pray. Well did Montgomery write—

"Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice,
Returning from his ways

While angels in their songs rejoice,
And cry, 'Behold, he prays!'
Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air!
His watchword at the gates of death
He enters heaven with prayer!"

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 18:1-14.

Verse 1. *And he spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.* [See Sermon #2519, Volume 43—WHEN SHOULD WE PRAY?—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] An old writer says that many of Christ's parables need a key to unlock them. Here, the key hangs outside the door, for at the very beginning of the parable we are told what Christ meant to teach by it—"that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." And this is the parable.

2. *Saying, There was in a city a judge who feared not God, neither regarded man.* It is a great pity for any city and for any country where the judges do not fear God—where they feel that they have been put into a high office in which they may do just as they please. There were such judges in the olden times even in this land—God grant that we may not see any more like them!

3. *And there was a widow in that city and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary.* She had no friend to plead for her. She had nobody to help her and, therefore, when she was robbed of her little patrimony, she went to the court and asked the judge for justice.

4. *And he would not for a while.* He preferred to be unjust. As he could do as he liked, he liked to do as he should not.

4, 5. *But afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.* She seems to have gone to him so often that he grew quite fatigued and pained by her persistence! The Greek words are very expressive, as though she had beaten him in the eyes and so bruised him that he could not endure it any longer. Of course, the poor woman had not done anything of the kind—but the judge thus describes her continual importunity as a wounding of him, as an attacking of him, an assault upon him—for he had, perhaps, a little conscience left. He had, at least, enough honesty to confess that he did not fear God, nor regard man. There are some of whom that is true, who will not admit it, but this judge admitted it—and though he was but little troubled about it—he said, "that I may not be worried to death by this woman's continual coming, I will grant her request and avenge her of her adversary."

6, 7. *And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge says. And shall not God avenge His own elect who cry day and night unto Him, though He bears long with them?* [See Sermon #2836, Volume 6—PRAYERFUL IMPORTUNITY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] He is no unjust judge! He is one who is perfectly holy, just, true and who appears in a nearer and dearer character than that of judge, even as the

one who chose His people from eternity! "Shall not God avenge His own elect?" Yes, that He will—only let them persevere in prayer and "cry day and night unto Him."

8. *I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?* [See Sermon #1963, Volume 33—THE SEARCH FOR FAITH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] If anybody can find it, He can, for He is the Creator of it! Yet, when He comes, there will be so little of it in proportion to what He deserves, and so little in proportion to the loving kindness of the Lord, that it will seem as if even He could not find it—although if there were only as much faith as a grain of mustard seed He would be the first to spy it out!

9. *And He spoke this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.* It seems as if these two things went together—as our esteem of ourselves goes up, our esteem of others goes down—the scales seem to work that way.

10. *Two men went up into the temple to pray.* [See Sermon #2395, Volume 41—THE BLESSINGS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] It was the place that was specially dedicated for prayer. It was the place where God had promised to meet with suppliants. They did well, in those days, to go up into the temple to pray to God. Though, in *these* days—

"Wherever we seek Him, He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground."

It is sheer superstition which imagines that one place is better for prayer than another! So long as we can be quiet and still, let us pray wherever we may be.

10, 11. *The one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You that I am not as other men are—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.* It is possible that this was all true. We have no indication that he was a hypocrite—and if what he said was true—there was something in it for which he might well thank God. It was a great mercy not to be an extortioner, nor unjust, nor an adulterer—but what spoilt his expression of thankfulness was that backhanded blow at the other man who was praying in the same temple—"or even as this publican." What had the Pharisee to do with him? He had quite enough to occupy his thoughts if he could only see himself as he really was in God's sight!

12. *I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.* Observe that there is no prayer in all that the Pharisee said. There was a great deal of self-righteousness and self-congratulation, but nothing else. There was certainly no prayer at all in it!

13. *And the publican, standing afar off*—Just on the edge of the crowd, keeping as far away as he could from the Most Holy place—

13. *Would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.* [See Sermon #1949, Volume 33—A SERMON FOR THE WORST MAN ON EARTH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] That was *all* prayer—it was a prayer for mercy, it was a prayer in which the suppliant took his right place, for he was, as he said, "a sinner." He does not describe himself as a penitent sinner, or as a praying sinner, but simply as a sinner. And as a sinner,

he goes to God asking for mercy. Our English version does not give the full meaning of the publican's prayer, it is, "God be propitious to me," that is, "be gracious to me through the ordained sacrifice." And that is one of the points of the prayer that made it so acceptable to God. There is a mention of the atonement in it. There is a pleading of the sacrificial blood. It was a real prayer and an acceptable prayer—while the Pharisee's boasting was not a prayer at all.

14. *I tell you, this man*—This publican, sinner as he had been, though he had no broad phylacteries like the Pharisee had, though he may not have washed his hands before he came into the temple, as, no doubt the Pharisee did—this man, who could not congratulate himself upon his own excellence, "this man"—

14. *Went down to his house justified rather than the other.* He obtained both justification and the peace of mind that comes from it! God smiled upon him and set him at ease concerning his sin. The other man received no justification—he had not sought it and he did not get it. He had a kind of spurious ease of mind when he went into the temple and he probably carried it away with him! But he certainly was not justified in the sight of God. [See Sermon #2687, Volume 46—TOO GOOD TO BE SAVED!—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

14. *For everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.* God turns things upside down! If we think much of ourselves, He makes us little, and if we make little of ourselves, we shall find that a humble and contrite heart He will not despise! May He teach us so to pray that we may go down to our house justified, as the publican was!

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A COMPREHENSIVE BENEDICTION
NO. 3179

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, who has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work."
2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon, upon the same text, are Sermons, #1542, Volume 26—FREE GRACE A MOTIVE FOR FREE GIVING; #2363, Volume 40—COMFORT AND CONSTANCY and #2991, Volume 52—WHAT WE HAVE, AND ARE TO HAVE—— Read/download all the sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

ALL through his epistles, Paul is continually expressing his best wishes for the friends to whom he writes. The Christian should be a well-wisher to all men. No cursing should ever come out of his mouth, but his lips should always distil blessings even upon his enemies—and much more upon his friends. Brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, it should be a part of our religion to be desiring the best of blessings for our fellow men. As the high priest of old blessed the people, so should those whom God has made to be priests and kings unto Himself—a privilege that pertains to all saints—exercise the function of blessing the people by desiring good things for them!

The blessing invoked in the text is very comprehensive, but although there is much to crave, there is much more to acknowledge with gratitude. Blessings already secured in the covenant are the foundation of a rich expectancy for the supply of all our present needs. We may reasonably hope that God will do in the future what He has done in the past. Hence the apostle speaks very plainly of what God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ have already bestowed—and then he couples therewith the kindest wishes as to the future of his friends at Thessalonica.

With as much brevity as possible, I shall first speak *on that part of the text which contains two positive facts.* And then *upon that part of it which expresses two holy desires.*

I. The 16th verse contains A VERY CLEAR STATEMENT OF THE TWO POSITIVE FACTS.

Paul, writing concerning believers in Christ at Thessalonica and everywhere else, says, "Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, who has loved us and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace." From this we gather that every true believer—everyone who rests upon Christ and is saved through the effectual working of the Holy Spirit—is, at the present

moment, first of all, the object of the love of God—"who has loved us." So, my friends, Paul does not speak of God as though we were strangers to Him and He is a stranger to us, but he says, "who has loved us." Concerning this matter, he does not speak as one who was in doubt—with mingled hope and fear—but he says positively, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, who *has* loved us." He is quite sure of it! He is certain that these people to whom he is writing, and all believers in Jesus, are the objects of divine love!

Will you turn that truth of God over in your minds, dear friends, making a personal application of it at this moment? If you are now trusting in Jesus Christ, God loves you! That He should think of you is something! That He should pity you is more. That He should bear with you and have patience with you is no small thing—but think of God *loving* you! That infinite being whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, whose years are eternal, whose existence knows no limit nor shadow of a change—He loves you and yet you are, compared with Him, *nothing*—yes, *less than nothing* and vanity! Could you conceive of an angel loving an ant? Could you imagine one of the seraphs being in love with the gnat which dances in the sunbeam? It would be wonderful condescension for the august spirits to love such insignificant creatures, yet it would be only one creature loving another creature! And between one creature and another, the distance cannot be as great as between the Creator and the created one! That God, the eternal, infinite, almighty I AM, should actually condescend to love *us*, who are but as *worms* compared with Him and who are but as things of yesterday, soon gone, oh, 'tis strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis amazing! Yet though it exceeds marvel, it does not, thank God, exceed belief! But were it not that God has, Himself, revealed it, we might have cause enough to suppose it to be impossible that the Lord Jesus Christ and God, even our Father, should have loved us!

Being spoken of in the past tense, I infer that *the love which God has for believers is no novelty*. He did not commence to love them yesterday. Brothers and sisters, we believe that as many as have been called by grace have been the objects of a love that never knew a beginning! Long before the stars were lit, or the sun's refulgent ray had pierced through primeval shade, the heart of deity had fixed itself upon the chosen! The prescient eyes of God had seen them when as yet they were not—and in His book all their names were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there were none of them! They were not merely foreknown, but they were fore-loved! They were the favorites of His heart, the dear ones of His choice. He "has loved us." Fly back as far as you will—till time has not begun, the work of creation is not accomplished and God dwells alone—it was still true of all believers, even then, that "God, even our Father, has loved us."

Is it not marvelous that we should have been the objects of *a love that has been so constant*? For, as there never was any beginning to it, so there never has been a period in which that love has grown dim towards those who were the objects of it! The river of God's love has gone flowing on in one undiminished stream even until now! He "has loved us." He

loved us when our father Adam plunged us into the ruins of the Fall. He loved us when He spoke the first promise in the Garden of Eden, that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. He loved us all through the prophetic days when He was writing the book of love upon which our delighted eyes were afterwards to gaze. He loved us when He sent His Son, His only Son, to live our life and to die our death! He loved us when He exalted that Son of His to His own right hand—and in His person exalted us there, too, and made us to sit in heavenly places together with Him. He loved us when we were little children, in the weakness of infancy hanging upon our mother's breasts. He loved us when, in the follies of our youth, we seemed determined to destroy ourselves while He was determined that we should be saved. He loved us when we loved not Him. He drew us with the cords of a man and with the bands of love—and now, even at this day—we can, each one of us, look up to Him and say, "Abba! Father! You are mine and I am Yours by the Spirit of adoption." Yes, we can say this! We can look back all along our past lives and right beyond our birth into eternity past, and we can thank Him that we can truly say, "God, even our Father, has loved us."

Now, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, you must not be satisfied unless you can speak about God's love to you in the same positive terms as those which were used by the Apostle Paul. Never rest contented if you do not know that God loves you! Give no sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids until, by a living faith, you have been able to read your title clear to this love of God! It may be that you have lost the sensible presence of that love—then ask for divine grace to search until you find it again. You may be saved and yet you may not be happy, but you ought never be content unless you are certain that you are saved—and then such certainty will infallibly bring you peace and joy. If now your full assurance has departed and your faith is under a cloud, come and knock again at mercy's door and cling to the posts thereof, looking up at the crucified one. Turn your tearful eyes to Calvary, trusting afresh to Him whose wounds will give you healing and in the crimson lines of whose agonies you must read your acceptance. Go there, I say, and be not content till you can say with Paul, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, has loved us." This is the first positive fact which is here mentioned.

There is another fact which is equally positive—*"and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace."* It is absolutely certain that God has given His people this double blessing. What a delightful blessing this is, "everlasting consolation"! There is music in the word, "consolation." Barnabas was called "the son of consolation." No, more than that, it is the name of one who is far greater than Barnabas, for the Lord Jesus is called "the Consolation of Israel." But God is here said to have given this blessing to His people in a very special form—*"everlasting consolation."* A man goes to work to make money and, after toiling hard for it, he gets it and it is a consolation to him. But it is not an *everlasting* consolation, for he may spend or he may lose all his money. He may invest it in some company (limited or unlimited), and

very soon find it vanish! Or he may be compelled by death to leave it. It cannot be, at the best, more than a temporary consolation. A man toils hard for knowledge. He acquires it. He becomes eminent, his name is famous. This is a consolation to him for all his toil, but it cannot last long, for when he comes to feel the headache or the heartache, his degrees and his fame cannot cheer him. Or when his soul becomes a prey to despondency, he may turn over many a learned tome before he will find a cure for melancholy. His consolation is but frail and fickle—it will only serve to cheer him at intermittent seasons—it is not "everlasting consolation." But I venture to say that through the consolation which God gives to His people, they are unsurpassed for their endurance! They can stand all tests—the shock of trial, the bursting out of passion, the lapse of years—no, more—they can even endure the passage to eternity, for God has given to His people "everlasting consolation."

What is this "everlasting consolation"? It includes a sense of pardoned sin. A Christian, when his heart is right, knows that God has pardoned his sins, that He has cast them behind His back, and that they will never be mentioned against him again. He has received in his heart the witness of the Spirit that God has blotted out, as a thick cloud, his transgressions and, as a cloud, his sins. Well, if sin is pardoned, is not that a consolation? Yes, and an everlasting consolation, too—one that will do to live with and that will do to die with—and that will do to rise again with! Oh, joy! My sins are pardoned! Now do what You will with me, my God! As my sins are put away, You have given me "everlasting consolation."

This "everlasting consolation" also gives an abiding sense of acceptance in Christ. The Christian knows that God looks upon him as he is in Christ and, inasmuch as God put Christ into his place, and punished Christ for his sin, He now puts the believer into Christ's place and rewards that believer with His love just as if he had been obedient unto death, as Christ was! It is a blessed thing to know that God accepts us and to be able to sing, with Hart—

"With my Savior's garments on,
Holy as the Holy One"—

and this is a consolation which is abiding. It is, in fact, everlasting! Now let sickness come—the consolation still abides. Have we not seen hundreds of believers as happy in the weakness of disease as they would have been in the strength of hale and vigorous health? Let death come—the consolation still remains. Have not these ears often heard the songs of dying saints as they have rejoiced because the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit? Yes, a sense of acceptance in the Beloved is an "everlasting consolation."

Moreover, the Christian has a conviction of his security in Christ. God has promised to save all those who trust in Jesus. The Christian does trust in Him and he believes that God will be as good as His word and will save him. He feels, therefore, that whatever may occur in providence, whatever onslaughts there may be of inward corruption, or of outward temptation, he is safe by virtue of his union to Christ—is not this a source of consolation? Why, some of you might freely give your eyes to

know that you are saved! It would be a good bargain for men even to be lame or maimed if they did but enter into life. The Christian knows that he is secure—beneath the shield of the divine omnipotence he laughs at the rage of hell, feeling that no fiery dart can ever pierce that sacred protection! Are you rejoicing in this everlasting consolation? If not, you should seriously question whether you know what true religion means. Do you find that your losses make you wretched? Do bereavements in your family make you murmur and complain? Are you never happy? Does not joy ever come into your spirit? Do you always hang your head like a bulrush? Have you no peace of mind, no sacred mirth? Do the bells of your heart never ring? Do the heartstrings of your soul never sound out the music of grateful praise? Then gravely question whether you can be a child of God, for concerning the children of God it is written, "God, even our Father, has given us everlasting consolation."

I am sure there are many here who, if they were to speak from experience, would say, "Well, we are very poor, but we are rich in faith, and faith makes us rich toward God. We have not anything to spare, yet surely goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our life. We are sick in body, yet our afflictions are so sanctified that we rejoice in deep distress. We are ridiculed and slandered by the ungodly, but we rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer anything for Christ's sake. Yes, God has given us everlasting consolation!" John Bunyan said that the man who wears the flower, "heart's ease," in his bosom need not envy a king! And that is a flower which the Christian always wears in his buttonhole—or if he does not always wear it there, it is his own fault, for God has given it to him—He has given unto us everlasting, unchanging, unfading, inexhaustible fountains of consolation!

Another thing which God has given us is *"good hope through grace"*—a hope, a good hope—a "good hope through grace." What is the Christian's hope? It is a hope that he shall be preserved in this life by God's love and kindness. A hope that when he comes to die—for die he must unless the Lord shall come first—he shall have all sufficient grace to be able to play the man in the last solemn article. He has the hope that, after death, his soul, outsoaring sun, moon and stars, shall enter into the realm of spirits and be with Christ! He believes that the day shall come when his very body, though it has become food for worms, shall be quickened and called by the voice of the archangel from its bed of dust and its silent sleeping place. He believes that those bones of his shall live again and that his soul and body shall be reunited and that, when the Lord Jesus shall stand at the last day upon the earth, in his flesh he shall see God! So he sings with Toplady—

"These eyes shall see Him in that day,
The God that died for me!
And all my rising bones shall say,
Lord, who is like unto Thee?"

This is the Christian's hope, that he shall then live, world without end, in the perfection of enjoyment! That he shall have all spiritual joys in communion with Christ—and all joys that shall be suitable to his new and spiritual body as he shall walk the golden streets and forever praise

the love which brought him into an existence of perfect bliss! This is the Christian's hope and, consequently, the thought of death does not alarm him—rather, he looks forward to it with joy! As the toil worn laborer does not dread the eventide when he shall put off his dusty robes, but longs for the night that he may rest in his bed, so the Christian, when he is in his right mind—

"Longs for evening, to undress,
That he may rest with God."

He is willing to put off the cumbrous clay of his body and commit it to the purifying earth, that he may, as a disembodied spirit, depart to be "with Christ, which is far better," expecting that, afterwards, body and soul together shall be forever gratified with Christ!

This is the Christian's hope and it is a *good* hope. It is good for what it brings us, but it is especially good for that upon which it is grounded. The reason why the Christian expects this eternal happiness is because God has promised it to him and has given him an earnest of it. He has heaven in his heart even now. That is to say, he has within him the beginning of that life which shall, in due time, become the heavenly life. In olden times, when men bought an estate, it was customary for the seller to give to the purchaser a tuft of grass and a leaf from one of the trees on the land, signifying that the purchaser then had what was called *seizin* of the property, and they were proofs that it belonged to him. And when God gives true faith in Christ and enables a soul to have peace with God through the precious blood, this is the earnest of heaven, a foretaste of its bliss and sure evidence that heaven is, indeed, ours. I trust that there are many of us who have this earnest and feel comforted by it. We have a good hope because it is founded upon God's promise in His Word and upon the witness of the Spirit within our heart that we are born of God!

And it is said to be a good hope *through grace*. Ah, friends, there is no good hope except "through grace." You cannot have a good hope through merit. If anybody expects to have a good hope through baptism, he is very much mistaken! Baptism is simply the *testimony* of a good conscience toward God—it cannot give any hope of heaven. If we were to build upon such a foundation as baptism, confirmation, the Lord's Supper, or anything of the kind, we should be sad losers, for there is nothing in all these things put together to make a Christian's hope! Nor must we build our hopes on our prayers or our tears, or on anything that we can do, for if so, it will be a sandy foundation and when the time of trial comes, it will give way under us. But to have a good hope through divine grace—such a hope as this—that I, a poor unworthy sinner, have been invited by God to put my trust in His dear Son, and that He has promised that if I do, I shall be saved! I do trust in Jesus and, therefore, if God has promised truly, I shall be saved—this is indeed a foundation on which I may build without fear! Is not this, my brothers and sisters, the top and bottom of the Christian's hope, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life? You do believe in Him and, therefore, you can say that you do possess eternal life! I do solemnly declare that if

I have ever at any time begun to say in my own mind, "I shall be saved, for I have preached the gospel, I have experienced such and such enjoyments, I have drawn near to God in secret prayer"—if ever I have talked to myself like that, I have soon been led to see that if I had not something infinitely better than all that to trust to, I would be resting on a broken reed. But, oh, to come to Jesus just as one came, at the first, saying—

"Nothing in my hands I bring—
Simply to Your cross I cling.
Naked, come to You for dress.
Helpless, look to You for grace.
Foul, I to the fountain fly—
Wash me, Savior, or I die!"

This is, indeed, to have a "good hope through grace."

Now let us take these two statements, look at them again, and then lay them up among our choicest treasures. The one statement is that God has loved us. O Christian friends, do try to drink in that great truth of God! Do not be satisfied simply to hear the words repeated, but get them right into your very spirits—"Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, has loved us." O you angels, you have not even in heaven a greater joy than this—to know that God has loved us! The other statement is that God "has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace." So we cannot be without consolation. Whatever your trouble may be, my dear Christian friend, though you may have lost your dearest one, though your property may have melted as the snowflake melts into the sea, yet God has given you eternal consolation—and whatever you may have to fear concerning the future, you have a hope that is broader than your fears!—

"This is the hope, the blissful hope,
The hope by Jesus given!
The hope when days and years are past,
We all shall meet in heaven!"

As I turned this text over, I could not help pitying those who have no hope, no good hope through divine grace. When I opened my letters this afternoon, on coming back from Liverpool, the first one I opened was to tell me of the death of one with whom I spent a very happy day about a fortnight ago. He seemed to me to be in perfect health when I spoke to him, then, but now he is gone to his eternal rest. The next letter I opened came from the deacon of a church in Devonshire, to say that one of our students, who was settled there as a minister, had been suddenly taken ill and had just died. I did not care to open any more letters, just then, for fear that I would read of somebody else being gone. But I thought, "Well, both of these dear brothers have served their generation by the will of God, and they have fallen asleep, and it is well." I could only look forward with hope to the day when somebody would read just such a letter about me—and could only trust that they would be there to say of me what I could say of these brothers—"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

But what a sad thing it is to live in this world and to have no hope! It would have been better not to have lived at all than to live without a

"good hope through grace." I do not really know how some of you manage to live. I know you have your troubles—troubles at home and troubles in business—and I cannot make out how you manage to put up with this poor existence without the hope of a better one! Knowing what we do about a future state, if we had not a good hope concerning it, we really might wish that we had never been born. And we sometimes wonder how some of you can be so easy and so careless about the unknown state when you, perhaps, know that you will soon be in that state and also know that if it is not a better state than this one, it will be a very sad thing for you to have had an existence at all! Oh, "seek you the Lord while He may be found! Call upon Him while He is near." A good hope can be had through divine grace and that grace is free even to the chief of sinners! If we come to God on the footing of divine grace, He will never cast us out. Oh, that we might all have this infinite treasure of a "good hope through Grace"!

II. Now I can spend only a few minutes upon the second part of the subject in which we have TWO GOOD WISHES, TWO HOLY DESIRES. The first part of the text has told us what God has given us. The second part tells us what we ought to desire God to give us—"Comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work."

I pray God for those who are about to be baptized and also for you who have long made a profession of your faith, that you may get the first blessing, namely, *divine comfort*. May God comfort you! It is a bad case when a Christian is not happy, when he is not full of comfort. I know it is treated by some people as though it were a very insignificant matter whether a Christian is happy or not, but I am sure it is an exceedingly important matter that he should have comfort. A wretched, miserable Christian is, to a great extent, an injury to the church, and a dishonor to the cross of Christ, for worldly people will pick out such an one and say, "That is what your religion does for a man!" Now, genuine godliness gives peace and joy. In its first beginning, when a man is under a sense of sin, it does make him wretched to feel his sin, but when the soul is obedient to the command of Christ and trusts in Him, it gives him joy and peace. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace" -- and for a Christian not to have this fruit of the Spirit is to libel Christianity!

When one's heart is sad, it is not always best to show it. "When you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that you appear not unto men to fast." Even if you have some sorrow of heart, tell it not at once to your neighbor, who may have quite enough trouble of his own to bear without having yours added to it! Do, Christian, seek to get the comfort of which the apostle here speaks. Is there ever a position into which you and I can be cast where there is no comfort for us in the divine promises? There is, in God's word, a key to open all the locks of trouble in Doubting Castle! If we will but turn over the sacred pages, we shall find there a promise exactly suited to our case. Do you lack comfort, Christian? How can you while there is a mercy seat to go to and one there whose ears are always open to hear your petition and to relieve your trouble? Do you lack comfort while you can pray? Surely it must be neglect of prayer that makes your burdens so heavy. How can you be

without comfort while your Savior lives? If Jesus Christ still bears your name upon His heart, that should be enough for you! Is it not really a comfort to think that the Father, Himself, loves you? My Father, who is in heaven, knows my needs—ought not that to cheer me? Midst darkest shades, if I feel that He is with me—yes, even in the valley of the shadow of death—if His rod and His staff comfort me, what have I to fear? Yes, Christian friends, you have abundant ground for comfort, so be not content unless you enjoy that comfort! May God, even your Father, put you and keep you in a comfortable frame of mind!

I would say especially to young Christians—Do not imagine that as soon as you become believers in Christ, you are to cast away those cheerful looks and those bright eyes of yours. God forbid! If you were happy, before, be far happier now! You need not have levity—that is to be avoided—and the pleasure which consists in sin should be no pleasure to you, but now your joy should be deeper as it is purer, more lively as it is more sound!

"And establish you in every good word and work." These are the two forms of establishment in good doctrine and in good practice. When a Christian receives good words, the devil would like to drive them from him and to drive him from them. It is one of the masterpieces of Satan to try to spoil our faith. If he can lead us to believe falsely, he will the more easily lead us to *act* falsely. So may God "establish you in every good *word."* You cannot help noticing, if you look upon the spiritual firmament just now, how like it is to what the natural firmament was the other night. It is said that there were thousands of shooting stars visible within an hour! And I might almost say that if you look out into the Christian world, you can see thousands of shooting stars within a minute! I do not know what new error we shall have within the next 24 hours. There are some people who are so fond of novelties that they have advanced pretty nearly every form of error that our poor imagination can conceive of, yet they seem to be studious to make fresh ones! We have new "isms" and "ites" of all sorts, but old fashioned truths of God, which we thought would never have been doubted, are, nowadays, contested! An age of great religious activity is pretty sure to be also an age in which error is active and, therefore, it is the more necessary that we should pray for believers that they may be established in every good word!

I should like you who are members of this church not only to believe the truth, but to know *why you believe it* and to be so sure and certain of it that you cannot be shaken from it! I would have you be not like the dry leaves in autumn, which are carried away by the first wind because they have lost their vitality, but like the green leaves in spring which will bear the March winds and cannot be torn off because their sap is flowing in them and they are fresh and vigorous. I would that you were always able to give a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. The faith which we have has been handed down to us by martyrs' hands all along the ages—not through the corrupt church of Rome—but down along the line of martyrs and confessors who have sealed their testimony with their blood! And that testimony is still with us this day! Search

God's word and if we teach you anything that is inconsistent with it, then reject us as we would have you reject all false teachers! If we set before you anything which is of *our* making, and not of God's making, cast it to the dogs and have none of it! But if it is God's truth, be established in it. Garner it in your soul. Hold it fast as for dear life and never let it go! Believe that the truth of God as it is in Jesus, is worth the blood which martyrs have shed in its defense—and will be worth all that it can possibly cost you in holding it! May you be established in every good word—not merely in *some* good words—but in *every* good word! Believe all the truths of God. Many Christians, alas, believe only one truth or so. One man gets a hold of the doctrine of predestination and he is like a child with a doll—it is the entire world to him! Another man gets a hold of the doctrine of human responsibility and he looks at it, as Luther says, "like a cow at a new gate." He stands staring at that and can see nothing beyond it! But I would have you see all the truth and be always ready to receive anything that God has revealed! Be you steadfast "in every good word."

But the blessing invoked by the apostle is that you may be established in every good *work* as well as in every good word. Alas, there are some Christians who like the Word of God very well, though they do not like the work—but unless our godliness extends to our daily work, it is not godliness at all! May you, brothers and sisters in Christ, be established in every good work! May there be the good work of holiness in all the relationships of life! May you be the best of sons, the best of daughters, the best of parents, the best of husbands, the best of wives, the best of employers, the best of employees! Wherever your lot may be cast, may you be established in every good work in all the relationships of life!

Then, in this Christian church, may you work in prayer, may you work in teaching, may you work according to the ability which God has given you—and may you be established in it! If there is any good work which you have not yet attempted, but to which you are called of God, may you have grace to enter upon it and, once engaged in it, may you never take your hands from the plow till you have finished the task that God has sent you! O beloved, I can pray this prayer from my heart for every one of you! May you who have served the Master for years, still be kept serving Him! Oh, may none of you turn your backs in the day of battle! May you be faithful unto death and so obtain the great reward! May the grace which has helped you forward up to now, impel you forward till your hairs are gray and until you throw yourselves back upon the couch of death to sleep with God! So may you be established in every good word and work! Every Christian ought to be a member of the established church—I do not mean the church which is established by the English law—but the Church which is established by God! Oh, to be established by divine grace—to be established by knowing what we believe, by practicing it—and by being established in that practice! These apostolic good wishes I leave with you—may you inherit them!

But remember that we must first come to Christ, or these good wishes will be only wishes. We must first trust the Savior, or else these blessings

can never be ours! May divine grace bring us to Jesus and keep us at His feet—and divine grace shall have the praise forever and ever!

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

Verses 1, 2. *Now we beseech you, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him, that you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.* In the church of Christ, the teaching has always been that Christ is coming quickly and that teaching must never be withdrawn, for He *is* coming quickly, as He said to John in the Revelation. At the same time, this teaching has given an opportunity to certain presumptuous people to prophesy that at such and such a time, Christ will come. They know nothing about it and their prophecies are not worth the breath they spend in uttering them! And we have, today, what the apostle wrote to the Thessalonians—

3. *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that Day shall not come, except there comes a falling away, first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.* I believe that to a large extent this has already happened and that the "man of sin" has been revealed. This "son of perdition" has had a long, dark and terrible reign over myriads of men, and he still sits on the seven hills of Rome, and rules over multitudes of his fellow sinners. Paul held that it was consistent to expect the Lord to come quickly and yet to know that certain events must occur before He did come. That is just the condition, I think, to which a man's mind will come if he diligently and impartially reads the Scriptures—especially the prophetic parts of them. The Lord will come in such an hour as we think not, yet there are clear indications of certain things which are to happen before He does come.

4. *Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.* It has been said that the Pope of Rome is infallible, that his interpretation of Scripture, whatever it may be, is as valid as the Scripture, itself, and that whatever he chooses to decree must be obeyed by the faithful. Such are some of the pretensions, even at this day, of the "man of sin."

5-7. *Do you not remember that when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity is already at work.* There were certain reasons why that gigantic iniquity should begin to be developed, even while the Roman Empire was in power to keep it in check. And when that passed away, there was the opportunity for "the mystery of iniquity" to become the despot of the world!

7-10. *Only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the*

working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. This is the last sin of all—that ungodly men do not receive "the love of the truth." If they were, themselves, true, they would love the truth of God. If the grace of God was in them, His own precious truth would be prized by them above everything else! But when men finally reject the truth by which they might be saved, God visits them with terrible judgments!

11-17. *And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasured in unrighteousness. But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God has, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word or our epistle. Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.* So may it be, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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"All things were created by Him and for Him."
Colossians 1:16.

THERE can be no mistake as to the person concerning whom Paul is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit—it is Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnate Son of God who was crucified on Calvary for, writing concerning the same person in the 14th verse, the apostle says, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." It is, therefore, that Savior whose blood was shed for His people's redemption who is here declared to be the Creator of all things and by whom all things consist!

The first verse of the book of Genesis tells us that, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," so someone may ask, "How do you reconcile that statement with Paul's declaration that all things were created by Christ and for Him?" No reconciliation is needed, for the two statements are identical, *as Jesus is God*, and "in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Jesus said, "I and My Father are one," and so they are! We know not how it is, but the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct personalities, yet there are *not* three Gods, but only one, as the Apostle John writes, "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one." The one God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is the Father, Son and Spirit—three in one and one in three!

The subject I have to speak about is the honor and glory of the second person of the blessed Trinity, even our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! But it is so vast a theme that the preacher, at the outset, confesses that the task is too great for him to accomplish! He staggers beneath the weight of his theme which seems to him too great for the human mind to compass or for human lips adequately to express! All I can hope to do is to be lost in my subject that Jesus Christ may be all in all.

The text tells us that all things were created by Christ and for Him, so we will, first, consider *Paul's statement*. And, secondly, we will *review the rejections arising from it*.

I. First, then, let us CONSIDER PAUL'S STATEMENT—"All things were created by Him and for Him."

So, first of all, *heaven, itself, was created by and for Christ Jesus*. Then there is such a place, as well as such a state, and of that place Jesus is the center! There is such a place, for Enoch is there. "Enoch walked with God: and he was not, for God took him." God took him

bodily to some place—and that place is heaven. Elijah is also there—the horses of fire and the chariots of fire took not merely his spirit, but the entire Elijah—and he is in heaven. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who has gone back to heaven, went there in His own body. When He passed into the skies, He went up into the heavenly places, as well as into the heavenly state—and there He lives at the right hand of God, even the Father, enthroned in the New Jerusalem, the Holy City of God—

"See how the conqueror mounts aloft,
And to His Father flies!
With scars of honor in His flesh,
And triumph in His eyes!
There our exalted Savior reigns,
And scatters blessings down—
His Father well rewards His pains,
And bids Him wear the crown."

God, absolutely considered as a pure Spirit, needed no such place as heaven. God is everywhere! Long ago He asked, "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" The idea of there being needed any celestial court or place of abode falls short of the true idea of the omnipresent Jehovah. Neither do I suppose that it would have been necessary to have a place for angels, for the holy spirits would have been able to behold the face of God everywhere—wherever they might be, there they would see God and, consequently, no special place would have been needed to be set apart for them! But it was ordained, in the eternal purpose of God, that there should be created a race of beings who should not be pure spirits, but who should have bodies made of material substances. And it was resolved by Jesus Christ that He would become one of these beings—that He would take upon Himself their nature and would become, in fact, a man! Now, when a spirit becomes linked with a material substance, it must have a place in which to dwell and, therefore, heaven was created both for Christ and for His people. When the Son of man shall come in His glory, He will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Prepared, that is, with this view—that there might be a special central place for the display of Christ's glory—and that all His people might be there with Him. These are His own words—"Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory." They are not merely to be as He is, but to be *with Him where He is* and, therefore, heaven was created by Him and for Him—and for His people who are vitally united with Him!

O beloved, when we get to heaven, we shall see that everything there glows with the glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! The print of His pierced hands will be upon everything. The city of pure gold was created by Him and created for Him. The foundations of the walls of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones by Him and for Him. The jasper, sapphire, emerald, beryl and all the rest—and the gates of pearl are all for Him—all shall be to His glory! For Him each harp of gold, each palm of victory, each shout of victory, each song of adoration—all heaven shall ring with the praises of Jesus! Heaven shall be, as it were, set with mirrors and every one of which you will be able to see a reflection of the

glorious person of Jesus Christ, even as in every dewdrop you may see the image of the sun. Everyone in heaven will feel it to be his bliss to praise Jesus! Towards the august throne of the Most High this anthem will triumphantly ascend, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory and blessing!" And with the variation of which John tells us in the Revelation, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever."

There will be nothing in heaven that will be derogatory to Jesus, but everyone and everything there will be to His praise and glory! I cannot believe that any of His chosen people will be missing on the last great gathering day. No David's seat will be empty there! No Thomas will be absent then! I cannot conceive of one whom He has purchased with His precious blood being lost! Not one sheep or lamb will be missing from the great Shepherd's flock in the day when they pass under the hand of Him that counts them—they shall all be there! The army of the great captain of our salvation shall be complete there! When the muster roll is read, they shall all answer to their names—and all who are gathered there will owe their salvation to the Lamb who was slain! There will not be one Pharisee there to boast, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are." There will not be one atheist there blasphemously shouting, "There is no God!" Nor one Unitarian seeking to drag Christ from the throne that is rightly His—but all will be adoring and magnifying, and delighting to adore and magnify Him by whom and for whom heaven itself was created—

"All the chosen of the Father,
All for whom the Lamb was slain,
All the church appear together,
Washed from every sinful stain!"

Next, *all angels were created by Jesus and for Him*. However great and strong, and swift they are, there is not one angel that ever flies from Jehovah's throne that was not created by Christ! Read the whole verse from which our text is taken—"For by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they are thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him." If there are rank upon rank of blessed spirits, "that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word," all were created by Him and for Him! Gabriel was sent to foretell Christ's coming to earth. Angels announced His birth at Bethlehem. Others of them ministered to Him in the wilderness and in Gethsemane. They watched over His empty sepulcher and joyfully attended Him as He returned to heaven as the victorious King of glory! It is written that He was "seen of angels," and it must have been with awe and wonder that they gazed upon Him from the manger to the tomb! We read, also, "which things the angels desire to look into" --and there must have been many mysteries which even their lofty intelligence could not comprehend until He explained it to them! They delight to praise and worship Him! And they help to swell the mighty chorus of adoring homage that is always ascending to Him—

"Bright angels, strike your loudest strings,
Your sweetest voices raise!
Let heaven and all created things
Sound our Immanuel's praise!"

Angels were created by Christ and for Him -- not merely to admire and adore Him, but actually to serve Him. Truly did the Psalmist write, "who makes His angels spirits; His ministers a flaming fire." And Paul reveals a most important part of their service when he asks, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" We will not enter into any speculations about their battles with evil spirits on our behalf, though we believe that this is one of the many ways in which they minister for us. We cannot describe all the service that these heavenly messengers render to the Lord's own people. I remind you of how one of them killed 185,000 of Sennacherib's army in a single night! And of how the Prophet Elisha, besieged by the Syrians in Dothan, saw the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire for his protection. You will recall many other instances of angelic interposition and you know, too, how it is written, "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."

As for the fallen angels who rebelled against God and who have sunk forever into hopeless alienation from Him—even these were created by Christ and for Him! And though they hate Him, they shall be compelled to obey Him and to acknowledge that He is Lord over all! Even their malice against the people of God shall only draw out His love toward them and manifest His vigilance, wisdom and power on their behalf. In the wilderness the Son of man met "the prince of the power of the air" in mortal conflict. Evil stood there endowed with all the attributes it could desire to have upon its side—evil ancient with long and varied experience, evil backed up by a powerful angelic intellect, evil with ferocious malice glaring in its eyes—evil with diabolic cunning tempting the Son of God to sin! There, too, stood the Prince of Life—alone, yet undaunted—the incarnation of holiness and love! Three times they wrestled, foot to foot, but the tempter had to retire beaten. And when he came again, hoping to take the Son of God and Son of man at a disadvantage in Gethsemane—when He was full of anguish and was shortly to die in still greater agony on the cross—it was again a desperate struggle, but the Master flung him to the ground! Our Samson tore the old roaring lion as if he had been a kid, and left him prostrate and defeated, while He passed on to complete the great work of His people's redemption and to conquer all the powers of darkness before He gave up the ghost! Glory be to Jesus! He has gotten glory to Himself out of the devil and all his angels!

And even hell, itself, terrible as it is, was created by Christ as a necessary part of the moral government of the universe so that sin might not go unpunished. Even there Christ reigns! His sovereignty is supreme down to its lowest depths. He has the keys of hell and of death—and when the appointed time comes, He will send an angel with the key of the bottomless pit and bid him lay hold on "the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan," and bind him for a thousand years and

cast him into the bottomless pit. And then, after the Millennium, and Satan has been again loosed for a little season, he shall be "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophets are—and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever." Christ is King even over that dark sad part of His domains! And amidst all the confusion and tumult of the pit, His enemies shall "confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

The verse from which our text is taken also reminds us that *this world was created by Christ and for Christ*. "By Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth." John tells us, "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him: and without Him was not anything made that was made." The eternal *logos* was the Creator of this lower world as well as of the realms on high! There is neither hill nor valley, sparkling fountain nor foaming sea which He has not made. "The sea is His and He made it: and His hands formed the dry land." Truly is He the Creator of this earth! It was formed for Him as well as by Him!

It was especially made to be the place of residence for His people, the place on which they would fall through sin and the place on which they would be restored through the redemption accomplished there by Christ Jesus on the cross of Calvary. This world was created by Christ as the place where He, Himself, would live and labor—and suffer and die. He would be laid as a baby in an earthly manger. As a boy and a man He would walk through the streets and lanes of this world! He would fare as human beings fared and suffer as the dwellers upon the earth suffered, though never through any sin of His own. I might truly say that the whole world was created for Calvary. "Why leap you, you high hills?" That little mound outside Jerusalem's gate explains your very existence! The world itself was created that Christ might die on Calvary! This earth was to be a sort of stage upon which Christ was to take the principal part in the greatest drama that the whole universe has ever witnessed! The world was made by Him and for Him—and it will remain until His great purpose of love and mercy is fully accomplished!

We must not forget that even the lower orders of Creation were made by Christ and for Him. They were needed by man—and man was necessary to the completeness of Christ's plan of Salvation—so the lower forms of creatures are links in the chain that could not be spared. There is a wonderful sympathy between the various portions of Creation, as the Apostle Paul tells us, "for we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves, also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Treat all creatures kindly, then, as far as you can, for the great Creator's sake. I would not have a sparrow needlessly killed, nor even a worm trod on that might be spared. My Lord and Master made them all—and when I look at them, I see traces of His wonderful wisdom and power! And when I see how bountifully He provides for them, I note the tokens of His

goodness and care. He opens His hands and satisfies the desire of every living thing! There is not a little bird that picks up a seed by the roadside that was not created by Christ and for Him! And, perhaps, answers its end better than some of you who lift your brows to yonder heaven only to defy your Maker! There is not an animal upon the common, nor a lion in the forest, nor a fish in the sea, nor a fowl in the air that was not made by Him—and that does not in some way promote His glory!

And to come to ourselves, *men were created by Christ and for Him.* Perhaps the Creator resolved to manifest His power and skill in a new order of created beings. He had made pure spirits and He had made material substances. He had created various forms of life rising from the vegetable to the animal. But He resolved that there should be a spirit created that would be affiliated with materialism and that this spirit should, in the end, when it had passed through all its graduations, become the most wonderful creature in the whole universe—a creature that should know evil, not merely by report, but by actual personal experience—a creature that would, after that, be delivered from the power of evil and so should be bound to God by ties of gratitude so strong that it would never revolt from Him again! This creature, knowing evil and knowing good, strengthened by divine grace, would, of its own free will, cling to the good and eschew the evil—and would forever be God's best ally against all revolt in His dominions—for this creature, though it had known evil, was to become a child of God and to be a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. These creatures, partly spiritual and partly material, were to have at their head, Christ Jesus, who was to be the model of them all! And they were to be like He and to be His companions forever! But they were to be to Him more than companions—to be His friends with whom He might hold familiar conversation and to be to Him even more than friends—to be united to Him in personal relationship—to be so completely one with Him that they should be "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones," that His life should be their life and that their life should be derived from Him!

What a wonderful creature a man will be when He gets to heaven with His body, soul and spirit all complete! No other creature will be so near to God as man will be through his union to the God man, Christ Jesus the Lord! Yet this glorified man will never presume upon his position, but will always keep his proper place. He will have been so trained and educated by his falls, his regeneration and his redemption that he will be always humble, and yet will rejoice that he is a son of the Most High who may say to Him, "Abba, Father." I do not know how such a creature as a perfect man could have been made by God except through the fall in Eden, the birth of Christ at Bethlehem and His death on Calvary. In making man, God had produced a new type of being, that in him, Jesus Christ might find an opportunity of displaying His wondrous condescension in taking upon Himself man's nature—and His wondrous grace in taking upon Himself man's sin and dying in his place! Through glorified men becoming Christ's companions, friends and faithful servants by reason of His mysterious union with them, a new race of

beings has been created who can have greater sympathy with God than any others of His creatures can have. Devils can have no sympathy with God, for they are only evil. The holy angels cannot have as much sympathy with God as man who has fallen by sin and then been saved by divine grace! It is of those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, that it is written, "Therefore are they before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He who sits upon the throne shall dwell among them." He will be our God and we shall be His people! He will be our Father and we shall be His children forever and ever!

But oh, if you reject the Savior! If you turn the wondrous opportunity of immortal glory which God presents to you in the gospel, into the dread alternative of eternal wrath—if you are resolved that you will not be among those privileged beings who will be next to God, Himself. If you spurn the dignity that is held before you. Then, notwithstanding all that, you will have to glorify Christ! Even in this life and against your own will—you shall scarcely know how—you shall be made to subserve Christ's purpose! And at the last He will make you realize how terrible He is as He breaks you in pieces as a potter's vessel! If you will not touch His silver scepter of mercy, you shall feel the weight of the iron rod of His inflexible justice! If you will not lie at His feet as a penitent, you shall be driven from His presence into the outer darkness where there will be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth forever! God grant that none of you may ever know experimentally what this means!—

"You sinners, seek His grace,
Whose wrath you cannot bear!
Fly to the shelter of His cross
And find salvation there!"

II. Now I must pass on briefly to REVIEW THE REFLECTIONS ARISING FROM THIS STATEMENT—"All things were created by Him and for Him."

And the first clear reflection from this declaration is, then, *Jesus is God*. If all things were made by Him and for Him, how is it possible for us to get away from the conviction that He is, indeed, God? I will not attempt to argue about the matter, but whatever others may say or do, as for me, Jesus of Nazareth is my Lord and my God—and I will love and adore, and worship Him forever and ever!

The second reflection is that *Jesus is the key of the universe*—its center and its explanation. Creation and history are enigmas which can only be understood in the light of the cross. When we look at the planets, their motions seem irregular from our standpoint. But if we could stand in the sun, we would see the planets revolving in their orbits in an orderly manner around it. Calvary is the son of the universe! Stand there, believe in God making propitiation for sin by the death of His Son, and you can understand everything in the light that streams from Calvary! Get away from that great center and you understand nothing. The great question to ask concerning everything is—Will it glorify Christ? How will it affect His infinitely wise designs?

Try, beloved friends, wherever you are, to see all things in the light of Christ. I think this will teach you not to look with scorn upon any of the things that are around you. See how the Lord Jesus has purged all things for His people so that they shall no longer be common or unclean. That lovely river, those fertile valleys, that dense forest, yonder snow clad Alps and everything else that Christ has created, you need not say, as some have done, "I will not gaze upon the beauties of nature, lest they should take my thoughts away from my Master." Scorn not His works, lest you should also scorn the great Maker of them! His are the mountains. And the valleys are His—sun, moon and stars all shine to His praise and glory! Go up and down, then, in the world and be not troubled by many things that now disquiet you. Say, "I do not know how this will glorify Christ, but I am persuaded that in some mysterious way which I cannot yet fully comprehend, His eternal purposes are being accomplished." See Christ in everything and see everything in the light of Christ!

And, beloved, another clear inference from Paul's declaration is that *to live to Christ is to live as we ought to live.* If He made us for Himself, then we who live unto Him have found out the true purpose of our existence! Put a thing to a wrong purpose and it is a failure. But use it for the purpose for which it was made and it will answer that end. Christian, Christ made you for Himself! Yes, He has *twice* made you for Himself! Therefore lay yourself out for Him—body, soul and spirit—spend all your time, and all your strength, and all your means for Him and Him alone! So you will be in accord with the great purpose of your creation.

If we do not live unto Christ, we have to make the sorrowful reflection that we are out of gear with all things that He has made. Although by the mysterious working of His divine power, He will get glory out of us, yet we are not consciously in harmony with Jesus and all discords must have an end. All opposition to omnipotence must be futile and must also be transient. However long He may allow evil to continue, there is an end even to His long suffering patience! And then, woe be to those who are still at enmity against the Almighty!

Another reflection from the text is that *we can only live for Christ as we live by Christ.* We cannot glorify Him except as He gives us the grace to do so—if we attempt to do it by our own power, we shall most certainly fail. Wait at His cross, beloved! Cry to Him to give you the aid of His almighty Spirit and then, through the effectual working of the Holy Spirit, you shall be able to live for Jesus, alone, by whom and for whom you were made both at your first creation and also when you were created anew in Christ Jesus!

And, lastly, it is clear from all this that *Christ must triumph.* Some of us have been almost breaking our hearts as we look around at the follies of the generation in which we live. They are going on pilgrimages to the shrines of their idols—the gods that are not gods! They are bowing down to their priests and confessing in their ears the sad stories that should be told only to God! They are setting up the calves and images that their fathers worshiped and turning away from the only living and true God! All this we mourn and grieve over, but let us not imagine that Christ's

true kingdom is suffering loss! Beneath the dark clouds that hide the sun, we mourn the absence of the great orb of day, but think how brightly the sun is shining above those clouds! Borrow an eagle's wings and soar above the clouds, and then you shall see the sun shining in his strength. So is it with Christ, the Sun of Righteousness! Get away, by faith, from this poor earth, and you shall see Him shining in His glory, whether it is day or night, summer or winter! Christ *must* reign. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us." But it is still true, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." And He shall reign forever and ever, and let all His people say, "Hallelujah!" And again and again cry, "Hallelujah!"

He *must* reign. What power is there that can stand against Him who created all things? What arm can dare to be lifted up against His almighty arm? Be of good courage, you soldiers of the cross! Dream not of defeat, nor think for a moment of fleeing from the foe in terror. Victory must come to the Lamb that was slain! He shall come from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah. His apparel shall be red, like the garments of him that treads in the wine vat, for all His enemies shall be trodden down in His wrath! And Rome, the harlot church, the chief of all His foes, shall be hurled down like a millstone into the flood and sink to rise no more—

"He shall reign from pole to pole
With illimitable sway!
He shall reign when, like a scroll,
Yonder heavens have passed away!
Then the end—beneath His rod,
Man's last enemy shall fall!
Hallelujah! Christ in God,
God in Christ is all in all."

Happy is he who is the lowliest page in the retinue of such a King! Happy is he who shall be privileged to sprinkle a few drops of water to lay the dust in the road over which our conquering King shall ride! Blessed is he who shall spread his garments in the way, or wave a palm branch in honor of the royal victor in His triumphal procession! Happy shall he be, then, who has been laughed to scorn for Christ's sake! Or who has been lying in a dungeon till the moss has grown on his eyelids! Or who has been burned at the stake and his ashes cast to the four winds of heaven because he would not deny his Lord! Oh to be wholly on His side, now, that we may be among His faithful followers on that day! Here we are, O glorious Son of David! Take us and all that we have, and make us more than ever Yours from this time forward, and unto You shall be the glory forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
COLOSSIANS 1.

Verses 1, 2. *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy, our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are*

at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Kindness is the very breath of Christianity, so the apostle will not begin the subject matter of his letter until first of all he has breathed out a benediction upon those to whom he writes.

3. *We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you.* Paul very graciously blends his giving of thanks and his constant prayer for these Christians at Colosse and, therein, sets us an example that we may well imitate.

4-6. *Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which you have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come unto you, as it has, also, in all the world and is bringing forth fruit, as it has also among you, since the day you heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth.* If there is a way of knowing the grace of God which is of no value, it is when it is not known in truth, that is to say, when it is only head knowledge, not heart knowledge. But, oh, when in truth the grace of God sinks into the soul and changes the whole nature, then it is an experience for which we may well give thanks to God!

7, 8. *As you also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.* Epaphras told them of Paul's prayers for them and when he came back from Colosse, he told Paul of their great love in the Spirit.

9. *For this cause we, also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.* [See Sermon #1742, Volume 29—SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE AND ITS PRACTICAL RESULTS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] See, the apostle asks even more for them than faith, hope and love—that they "might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." This shows what a valuable thing it is to know and understand the will of God!

10, 11. *That you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.* If we have faith, hope, and love, it is desirable that we add to these a fullness of knowledge—and to this holiness of life and fruitfulness of service—that we may have patience to endure the afflictions of this life and longsuffering with which to put up with the provocations of the ungodly.

12-14. *Giving thanks unto the Father who has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who has delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.* And now Paul, having mentioned his Master's great work—redemption by blood and the forgiveness of sins—goes on a tangent, as it were. He is so enthusiastic with regard to Christ and His great atoning sacrifice that the very thought of Christ's blood stirs his own blood and he seems like a man all on fire with holy fervor as he writes—

15-17. *Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they are thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.* How can anyone ever read this passage and yet say that Christ Jesus is only a man? By what twisting of words can such language as this be applied to the most eminent prophet or apostle who ever lived? Surely He must be God by whom all things were created, and by whom all things consist! But Paul's next sentence is, to us, the sweetest of all—

18. *And He is the head of the body, the church.* [See Sermon #839, Volume 14—THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] He is joined by an indissoluble union to His people and is the head of their glory, their wisdom and their strength!

18. *Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence.* Are we giving Him the preeminence in all things? That theology must be false which puts Jesus in the second place, or even lower than that! And that experience is a wrong one which does not put Christ always in the front. He must in all things always stand first!

19. *For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.* [See Sermons #978, Volume 17—ALL FULLNESS IN CHRIST and #1169, Volume 20—THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST THE TREASURY OF THE SAINTS—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] That we might have to go to Him for it, it pleased the Father to make errands for us so as to take us to Christ and to thus make our very emptiness to minister to the glory of Christ!

20-23. *And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they are things in earth, or things in heaven. And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now has He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and blameless and above reproach in His sight—if, indeed, you continue in the faith grounded and steadfast.* This is a text that ought to be read and pondered every day by the many unstable professors who are in the church at this present time— "if, indeed, you continue in the faith grounded and steadfast," like a building that will have no further settling, no more splitting of the stones, no more cracking of the walls—because your foundation is secure and you are firmly built upon it!

23, 24. *And are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister; who now rejoices in my sufferings for you.* Oh how blessed it is when a man has so mastered himself that his sufferings for his fellow Christians become a matter of rejoicing for himself! He not only accepts them and bears them with patience, but he says—

24. *And fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the church.* There is nothing "behind" as to the atoning efficacy of the sufferings of Christ, but there is much

yet to be endured in order that all the elect may be brought to Christ. Some must suffer through their extraordinary labors in preaching the gospel, others through bearing reproach for the truth of God's sake—and Paul was glad to take in his mortal body, his share of the sufferings to be endured for the sake of Christ's church—which is His mystical body.

25-27. *Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, the mystery which has been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.* [See Sermon #1720, Volume 29—CHRIST IN YOU—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This is the most blessed of all mysteries! I trust that many of us understand it—may the Holy Spirit reveal it to any who know it not!

28. *Whom we preach.* That is, Christ. It is not so much *what* we preach as *whom* we preach. We preach the person of Christ—"whom we preach"—

28, 29. *Warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labor, striving according to His working, which works in me mightily.* [See Sermon #914, Volume 16—WORK IN US AND WORK BY US—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] There will never be any mighty work come *from* us unless there is first a mighty work *in* us—no man truly labors for souls unless the Holy Spirit has first worked mightily in him.

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A SERMON FOR A WINTER'S EVENING
NO. 3181

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 20, 1910,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals, for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself."
John 18:18.

WE note from this incident that *it was a cold night in which our Redeemer agonized in the garden of Gethsemane.* [See Sermon #2767, Volume 48—JESUS IN GETHSEMANE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] A cold night and yet He sweat! A cold night and yet there fell from Him, not the sweat of a man who earns the staff of life, but the sweat of one who was earning life, itself. "His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." No natural heat of the sun, or of a sultry evening caused this! The heat within His soul distilled those sacred drops! His heart's throbs were so mighty that it seemed to empty itself and His life floods rushed with such awful force that the veins, like overfilled rivers, burst their banks and covered His blessed person with gory drops! On such a wintry night as this, while you wrap your garments about you, I would ask you to remember the olive garden and the lone sufferer, all unsheltered, entering into the dread anguish by which He won our souls from death and hell! The sharp frost may be a useful monitor to us if it makes us think of Him and remember that dark, that doleful night when all the powers of evil met and, even unto blood, He strove with them for our sakes!

Now we will take you away from the garden to the high priest's hall where the incident occurred which is regarded in the text—and we will make as good a use as we can of it. I suppose it was a large dark hall in which the soldiers, the priests and the rabble were gathered together. There may have been a few lamps lighting up the far end where Christ was with His judge and His accusers. But the greater part of the hall would have no other light than the glare of the fire which had been kindled—a charcoal fire, around which the band of men who had seized Christ and the servants of the high priest gathered to keep themselves warm. We are going to make five observations upon that and upon the fact that Peter was among those who warmed themselves at that fire.

I. The first observation is this. THIS IS A TYPICAL INCIDENT AS TO THE MOST OF MEN.

Jesus Christ was being tried. Some were very busy about it, being full of malice and burning with rage. But a great many more were indifferent—and in the presence of a rejected and maltreated Savior were carelessly warming their hands. It was not a matter that interested them. They did not care whether He escaped or was condemned—it was very cold and so they warmed their hands. Now, in a land like this, where

Jesus Christ is preached, it is a sad circumstance that there are individuals who oppose Him and His gospel. There is the infidel who denies the gospel altogether. There is the superstitious man who sets up another way of salvation. And there is the persecutor who rages at Christ and His people. Yet these active enemies are comparatively few—the great bulk of those who hear the gospel are not open opponents—but like Gallio, care for none of these things. They know that there is a Christ and they have some idea of His salvation, but it does not interest them, or awaken any sympathy in their minds. "What shall we eat and what shall we drink?"—these are the great questions of their catechism! But as to who this glorious sufferer is and why He died, and what are the blessings which He bought with His precious blood—none of these things move them—and they forget, neglect, or despise the great salvation and the Savior, too! They are full of the business of warming their hands! The death of Jesus may be important to other people. It may concern ministers, clergymen and professors, but it is nothing at all to them. They have other matters to attend to and their own comfort is their main concern. Around that charcoal fire the servants of the high priest warmed their hands and so, in their temporal comforts, or in murmuring at the lack of them, the most of men spend their lives. To them it is nothing that Jesus should die! A rise in their wages, a fall in provisions, or a change in the money market is far more important to them!

If you think of it, this is a very terrible thing. Christ came into the world to save men, yet men do not think it worth their while to turn their gaze upon Him! He takes their nature, but His incarnation does not interest them. He dies that men may not perish—and men care not one whit for His great love! One goes away to his farm and another to his merchandise. One has bought a yoke of oxen and goes to test them. Another has married a wife and, therefore, he cannot come. They are eager for the bread which perishes, but they make light of the meat which endures the everlasting life! They think much of this world, but nothing of the world to come. Jesus is over yonder at His trial and they are warming their hands!

I pray you think this over a few minutes, any of you who have been indifferent to the great realities of redemption, and see what it is and who it is that you thus treat with discourtesy. It is the Son of God, the Redeemer of men, whom you neglect! Can you imitate those who rattled the dice box at the foot of the cross, in utter hardness of heart, though Christ's blood was falling upon them as they cast lots for His clothes? Can you trifle in the presence of a dying Savior? *Can you*, did I say? Alas, some have done so for thirty, forty, fifty and even 60 years! And unless the almighty grace of God prevents, they will continue to trifle, still—to sport, play and seek their own welfare in the presence of the bleeding Son of God, within earshot of His dying groans!

Look, He dies and they place His body in the sepulcher! But on the third day, according to His promise, He rises again from the dead! That risen Savior is surrounded by the glory of unspeakably precious promises, for He has risen for the justification of His people and as the first fruits of them that slept—the great pledge that all those who sleep in Him shall rise as He has risen! An august mystery—a mystery which

brought angels out of heaven, the one to sit at the head and the other at the feet, where His body had lain! And yet men eat, drink, sleep and wake as if no risen Jesus had been here! In the presence of the risen Christ many only warm their hands, for it is cold. The animal has mastered the mental. The body, which is the baser part of man, and cleaves to the dust, has subdued the soul, and so the man allows himself to trifle in the presence of Jesus risen from the dead!

Nor is this all, for He that rose from the dead ascended after 40 days! A cloud received Him out of the sight of His disciples and He rose into glory and now He sits at the right hand of the Father, reigning there, head over all principalities and powers—King of kings and Lord of lords! Men do not generally trifle in the presence of a king. If they have petitions to present, they put on an air of reverence. In the presence of the royal intercessor who pleads for us day and night, one would think there would be some interest excited! But no, the multitude warm their hands and think nothing of Him. In His presence, they forget His redeeming love, neglect His great salvation and remain without God and without Christ. This is terrible! As I see the worldling merely caring for his personal comfort while Christ is in glory, I marvel, first, at the insolence of the sinner and, secondly, at the infinite patience of the Savior!

The Lord Jesus is to come a second time to judge the earth in righteousness. When He shall appear, no man knows, but come He will—and every one of us must stand before Him. If we are alive and remain, we shall join in that great throng. And if we fall asleep before His coming, we shall rise from the dead at the sound of the trumpet which proclaims His advent—and shall all be judged of the Most High. The hour of His appearing is not revealed in order that we may always stand on tiptoe, expecting it to be today, or tomorrow, for He has said, "Behold, I come quickly." Oh, how can you still be money grubbing, pleasure seeking, enjoying yourselves, living only for this world, living to get a competence, living to be what is called, "respectable," and to feed yourselves like the beasts of the field? Have you no thoughts for the judge and the day of His coming? Shall our immortal spirits spend all their energies on these trifling temporary things in prospect of that great tremendous day when Christ with clouds shall come? Surely the solemnities of judgment should constrain us to think of something nobler than earth and time!

There was no harm in their warming their hands, neither is there any harm in our attending to the things of this life. Indeed, they ought to be seen to, and seen to with care—but there is something higher, something nobler and loftier for us to do than to serve ourselves! And as it was horrible that we should be so callous in the presence of the suffering Jews, so is the widespread indifference of sinners a terrible thing! I would to God that the unthinking portion of those who hear the gospel might be startled out of their groveling care for the things of this life and each one of them be led to ask, "What have I to do with this Jesus of Nazareth? Is His blood sprinkled upon me? Has He cleansed me from my sin? May I hope for salvation through Him?" Oh, consider these things and give an answer to your consciences! And God do so with you as you shall think of Christ, your Lord.

II. Secondly, we remark that FOR A DISCIPLE TO MAKE HIS OWN COMFORT THE CHIEF THING IN THE PRESENCE OF HIS SUFFERING MASTER IS MOST INCONSISTENT.

One does not wonder at the high priest's servants making a fire of coals, for it was cold—and one is not surprised at their standing to warm their hands, for they knew but little, comparatively, of Christ. They had never tasted of His love, they had never seen His miracles, they had not been asked to watch with Him in the garden of Gethsemane, they had never heard Him say, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar Jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you." The marvel is that *Peter* should stand there among them warming his hands! Why did he do so? Not because he was indifferent to his Master. Let us do him justice—it is plain that he was in a dreadful state of mind that night. He was so attached to his Master that he followed Him up to the door of the hall and stopped there till John came out and admitted him. He went up to the fire because he thought he must act as others did, so as to escape suspicion. And as they warmed their hands, he did the same, so as to appear as one of them. It so happened, however, that the light of the fire shone upon his face and lit up his countenance, so that one said, "You are one of His disciples." Then, to get away from observation, we find Peter passing into another part of the hall, where, I suppose, it was darker. The people were talking and Peter must talk, for it was his weakness to do so, and, moreover, he might have been suspected again had he been silent. Then another remarked, "You also are of Galilee, for your speech betrays you." He was discovered, again, and so made for the door, but was known there, also. He was all in a tremble. He did love his Master, weak as his faith was and, therefore, he could not leave Him—and yet he was afraid to confess Him. He was worried and troubled, tossed to and fro between a desire to rush forward and do some rash thing for his Lord—and a fear for his own life! He went to the fire because nobody would think that a follower of Jesus could warm his hands while his Master was being despitefully entreated.

You see the gist of my observation, that for a disciple of Christ to make his own ease and comfort the main thing is most palpably inconsistent with the Christian character! Ah, dear brothers and sisters, our Lord had not where to lay His head. Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor—can it be consistent for the Christian to make the getting of money the main business of life? Is such a disciple like his Master? The Master gives up everything—shall the disciple labor to aggrandize himself?

Some warm their hands, not at the fire of wealth so much as at the fire of honor. They want approbation, respect, esteem—and they will do anything to gain it. Conscience is violated and principle is forgotten to gain the approbation of their fellow men. Whatever happens, they must be respected and admired. Is this as it should be? Are they really disciples of the Nazarene? Is that their Master, despised and rejected, spit upon and jeered? Is He their Lord who made Himself of no reputation? If so, how can they court the smiles of men and sacrifice the truth of God to popularity? What can be more inconsistent than the disciple warming his hands and the Master enduring the contradiction of

sinners against Himself? Dear brothers and sisters, every time our cheek crimsons with shame because of the taunts of the wicked and we lower our colors because of the jeers of the godless, we are guilty at heart of the meanness of seeking to fare better than our Lord! Every time we check a testimony because it would involve us in censure, every time we stay from a labor because we covet ease, every time we are impatient at the suffering which the cross involves, every time we "make provision for the flesh, to obey the lusts thereof," every time we seek ease where He toiled, honor where He was put to shame and luxury where He endured an ignominious death—we are like Peter among the ribald throng—warming our hands at the fire while our Lord is buffeted and shamefully entreated! May the Holy Spirit keep us from this!

III. We now come to our third observation. IT IS MUCH BETTER TO BE COLD THAN TO WARM OURSELVES WHERE WE ARE EXPOSED TO TEMPTATION.

Peter, if he had known it, was better off outside the door than in the hall. I suppose he had forgotten the Master's warnings, for if he had thought of them, he would have said to himself, "Peter, you had better go home. Did not Jesus, in fact, tell you to go home when He said to those who came to seize Him, "If you seek Me, let these go their way'?" It would seem to have been the path of humble obedience to have gone his way and not to have pressed into the hall. Though no doubt the motives which led both Peter and John into the high priest's house were commendable, Peter's position among the soldiers and hangers on around the fire was extremely full of peril and offered no corresponding advantages. Did he not know that "evil communications corrupt good manners"? Did he not know that the men who had taken his Lord prisoner were not fit associates for him? Should he not have felt that though he might have his hands warmed, he would be likely to get his heart blackened by mixing with such company?

Brothers and sisters, I like to warm my hands, but if I cannot warm them without burning them, I would rather keep them cold! Many things are in a measure desirable, but if you cannot obtain them without exposing yourself to the smut of sin, you had better leave them alone. I have known professors far too anxious to mix with what is called, "good society." Now, for the most part, good society, as things are, nowadays, is very bad society for a Christian. The best society in the world for me, I know, is to associate with my brothers and sisters in Christ. Title, rank and wealth are a poor compensation for the lack of true religion! Yet some professors covet the honors of the ungodly world and they say, "It is not so much for ourselves—we are advanced in years—but we want to bring the girls out, and our young men, you know, our sons must have some society." Yes, and for the sake of this dangerous luxury our churches are deprived of successors to godly fathers! Instead of seeing the younger members of Christian households drafted into our ranks, we have continually to begin again with new converts from the outer world. Full often professors who God prospers in this world so train their children that they forsake the spiritual worship of God and turn their backs on principles for which their forefathers dared to bleed and die! I charge you, brothers and sisters, remember that if you cannot be

admitted into "society" without concealing your principles, you are far better off without society! Has not our Lord called us to go outside the camp? Are we not warned against being conformed to this world? Deny yourselves the warm place around society's charcoal fire, for its sulfurous vapor will do you more harm than the cold!

Some whom I have known have ventured very far upon very dangerous ground to win the affection of a chosen object. There is no wiser precept in Holy Scripture than that which commands Christians to marry "only in the Lord." It never can conduce to take comfort of any Christian man or woman to be unequally yoked together with an unbeliever—you had far better remain in the cold of your bachelor or spinster life than warm your hands at the fire of unhallowed marriage!

Not a few are tempted by the cleverness of certain literature to defile their minds with skeptical and even blasphemous writings. Such and such a "Quarterly" or, "Fortnightly," is so very clever that you are regarded as a Philistine and an ignoramus if you do not read it! Yet if you do read it, you are never the better, but very much the worse for your pains—why, then, yield to its more than doubtful influence? Do you pray the better for such reading? Have you more faith in God after perusing such works? No, but doubts which would not otherwise have occurred to you are sown in your mind, difficulties which only exist in ungodly brains are conjured up—and the time which ought to have been spent in devotion and in growing in grace, and in bringing others to Jesus—you waste in battling for the very life of your faith which you have needlessly exposed to assault! I do not believe it to be essential to roll in a ditch every day for the sake of proving the efficacy of the clothes brush! Neither is it worthwhile to seek out infidel doubts in order to try our logical powers upon them! Some tell us that we must keep abreast of the times, but if the times run the wrong way, I see no reason why we should run with them! Rather let us leave the times and dwell in the eternities. If I can be cheered and refreshed by good literature, and be the better and wiser for it, I am thankful. But if I must, in warming my hands, defile them with unbelief, I will sooner let them become blue with cold!

Perhaps, dear friends, our liability to be injured by that which renders us comfortable is one reason why God does not subject some of His best people to the trials of prosperity. Have you not sometimes wished that you were rich? I daresay you have. But perhaps you never will be. You did prosper, once, but it came to an end. Once or twice the prize of wealth seemed within your reach—others seized it—and you are still working hard and earning a bare crust. We do not know what you might have been if you had been allowed to succeed. In warming your hands you might have burned them. Many Christians have been impoverished by their wealth and brought to inward wretchedness by outward prosperity. You have flourished best in the soil in which the Lord has kept you—anywhere else you might have run to seed. Some years since, when the first larch tree was introduced into England, the person who had brought home the specimen put it into his hothouse to grow. It did not flourish, and no wonder, for it delights in a colder atmosphere! The gardener therefore pulled up the spindly thing by the roots and threw it upon the dunghill! And there, to everybody's surprise, it grew

wonderfully! It was created to flourish under trying circumstances—and perhaps you are of the same order. Learn the lesson and be content to be where you are!

IV. A fourth observation is this—IF A CHRISTIAN ACTS INCONSISTENTLY, HE IS PRETTY SURE TO BE FOUND OUT.

Here was Peter warming his hands and he thought that nobody would know him—but his face, as we said before, was illuminated by the light of the fire and one said, "Surely you are one of His disciples." The fire did not merely warm, but it threw light on him and showed him up. And so, when it comes to pass that a Christian gets into association with the ungodly and figures with them, his sin will find him out. I have noticed, in a very wide sphere of observation, that bad men may do wrong for years and not be discovered—and that hypocrites may contrive to carry on their hypocrisy half a lifetime without being unmasked. But a true man, a real child of God, if he shall only do a tenth as much wrong as others, will be certain to be detected! Peter tried to look uncommonly comfortable and calm while at the fire, but he could not do it. He revealed himself by the twitches of his face and the very look of him! And when he spoke, as we have already said, the tones of his voice betrayed him. A Philistine helmet will not sit well upon an Israelite! He wears it awkwardly and is known, though in disguise. Ah, Christian, you had better keep to your own company—it is of no use for you to try to travel *incognito* through this world, for it will detect you! Never go where you will be ashamed to be seen, for you will be seen. A city set on a hill cannot be hid! A lighted candle must be seen. A speckled bird will be noticed where no note is taken of others. Worldlings have lynx eyes with which to spy out erring professors—and they are sure to publish your faults for they are sweet morsels to them! "Report it! Report it!" they say. In vain will you try to pass yourself off as a stranger to Christ—your speech will betray you and the finger of scorn will be justly pointed at you for your inconsistency! Therefore, keep to your own company and walk not in the way of the wicked.

V. The fifth point is this—and you all know it to be true—IT IS A GREAT DEAL EASIER TO WARM YOUR HANDS THAN YOUR HEARTS.

A few coals in a fire suffice to warm Peter's hands, but even the infinite love of Jesus did not, just then, warm his heart. O sirs, what was the scene at the end of the hall? Was not that enough to set all hearts aglow? It was a bush that burned with fire and was not consumed! It was the Son of God struck on the mouth and vilely slandered—and yet bearing it all for love of us! O sirs, there was a furnace at the other end of the hall—a furnace of divine love! If Peter had but looked at his Master's face, marred with agony, and seen upon it the mark of His terrible night's sweat, surely, had his heart been right, it would have burned within him! One marvels that with such a sight before him—if Peter had been Peter—if he had only been true to that true heart of his, he would have braved the malice of the throng, placed himself side by side with his Lord and said, "Do to me whatever you do to Him. If you smite Him, smite me. Take me and let me suffer with Him." If he might not have done that, one would not have wondered if Peter had sat there and wept till he broke his

heart to see his Master treated so! But alas, the sight of his Lord, accused and betrayed, did not warm Peter's heart.

My brothers and sisters, we sometimes wish that we had actually seen our Lord, but seeing Christ after the flesh was of small service to Peter. It was when the Holy Spirit used the glance of Jesus as a special means of grace that Peter's heart was thawed and his eyes dropped with tears of repentance! O Lord and Master, though a bodily sight of You would not warm us if You should walk up these aisles and should show Your pierced hands in this pulpit. Yet, if Your blessed Spirit will come upon us tonight, we shall see You by faith and the sight will make our hearts burn within us, though it is winter! Come, sacred Spirit, shed abroad the love of Jesus in our souls and so shall our love be kindled, and burn vehemently! Grant it, therefore, we pray You, for Your love's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 18:1-27.

Verse 1. *When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where was a garden, into which He entered, and His disciples.* From our Lord's example, we should learn, when trouble is near, to meet it with composure. Our Savior did not sit still, but, as the hour approached for His betrayal and death, "He went out with His disciples." The passing over the black Brook Kidron, through which flowed the filth of the temple, was very significant. King David had crossed that brook long before when he had been driven from his home by Absalom's rebellion—and now the greater David went "over the Brook Kidron, where was a garden." He especially wanted solitude, just then, for one of the best preparations for suffering is to get alone with God. Learn this lesson, also, from your Lord's example and, as He put Gethsemane before Calvary, if you can put an hour of prayerful contemplation before your expected suffering, it will be a great help to you.

2. *And Judas, also, who betrayed Him, knew the place: for Jesus ofttimes resorted there with His disciples.* That dark and gloomy olive garden was no pleasure garden that night! It had often been a place of retirement and of prayer for the Master. What happy memories His disciples must have had of being with Him there for a season of prayer! It was a very choice privilege for them to be with Him when He preached, but it must have been, if possible, a still greater privilege to be with Him when He prayed. It is not recorded that His disciples ever said to Him, "Lord, teach us how to preach," but at least one of them was so struck with His prayers that he said, "Lord, teach us to pray." We may well ask Him to do that for us now. Perhaps some of you would like to be taught how you can become great—it is much more important for you to be taught to become prayerful!

3. *Then Judas, having received a detachment of men and of officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches and weapons.* It does not matter much about the band of men and officers with lanterns and torches and weapons, but the dreadful part of the narrative is that they were led by one who had been a disciple of Christ,

one who had been numbered with the apostles! Is Christ still betrayed by His professed friends? Yes, it is so, but may you and I never be guilty of that terrible crime! Yet why should we not unless the grace of God should prevent it? We are of the same flesh and blood as Judas—and although we might not be tempted by a sum of money, we may be tempted by a sinful pleasure or by a sinful shame. Lest we should be led astray, let us pray that we may not enter into temptation and especially ask that we may be preserved from betraying our Lord as Judas did.

4. *Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth and said to them, Whom are you seeking?* Because of His divinity, He knew all that would come upon Him, but what a wondrous manhood His was that although He knew all that would befall Him, He went forth calm and composed, resigned to His Father's will and said to those who had come to seize Him, "Whom are you seeking?" I think He is saying to some of us, "whom are you seeking?" We have not come here to slay Him. We have not come here to fight against Him and lead Him away to crucify Him. Yet I hope that we can truly say that we have come seeking Jesus. If this is really your heart's desire, it shall surely be fulfilled to you!

5. *They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said unto them, I am He*. Or, rather, "I Am," pronouncing the words with a divine dignity which had a startling effect upon them.

5, 6. *And Judas, also, who betrayed Him, stood with them. As soon, then, as He had said to them, I am He, they went backward and fell to the ground.* It seems as if our Lord intended to let them realize something of His divine power and glory, for the utterance of that august expression, I Am, which is His Father's name, staggered them and they fell to the ground. Do you not wonder that they did not rise up and go away and leave Him after they had fallen at His feet and asked His forgiveness? They did not act so, for the power of fear, when it is not accompanied by love, is very small. There was enough power in it to make them fall down to the ground, but there was not power enough in it to make them fall at Christ's feet confessing their sin!

7, 8. *Then He asked them again, Whom are you seeking? 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.* [See Sermons #2616, Volume 45—CHRIST'S CARE OF HIS DISCIPLES and #2368, Volume 40—THE LIVING CARE OF THE DYING CHRIST—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] It is very cheering to us to think of our Lord meeting all the enemies of His people, gathering up all their weapons into His own heart, that His people might go free. You and I, if we had been in such a case, would have been hurried and worried—and our fears would have made us selfish—we would have forgotten our poor friends who were with us! But Jesus thought not of Himself—He thought of His poor trembling disciples and, therefore, He said, "If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way."

9. *That the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, Of them which You gave Me have I lost none.* He had only said that just a little while before, but this verse shows us that the New Testament is as sure to be fulfilled as the Old Testament. It was a new saying, not then written, yet

it had all the life and power of God in it! So it must live and must be fulfilled.

10. *Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.* Here is every prospect of a fight! Simon Peter has begun it and the armed men will be eager to continue it. We always have our Simon Peters about—men of emotion, men of impulse, men of impetuosity. They are not a bad sort of Christians and I do not know what we would do without them. Our cold, frozen thinkers would not do much without our warm hearted Peters to help to thaw them! Still, Peter was only one of the 12 apostles and though they call him the head of the church, he made a very poor head of the church just then! He drew a sword and began to use that carnal weapon by cutting off the right ear of Malchus! It was a great mercy that the Lord was there to heal the ear and to forbid the use of the sword in His defense.

11. *Then Jesus said unto Peter, Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?* Here is another helpful lesson for any of you who have a trial before you. Do not seek to set the trial aside—use no wrong means to escape from affliction—drink your ordained cup! Though Peter's sword is handy, put it up into its sheath and do not use it. Bear and forbear, on and on and on to the end of the chapter! Drink the cup that your Father gives you. However bitter it is, it is sweetened by the fact that He gives it to you! Shall not a true son of God drink the cup that his Father presents to him? There can be no harm in it and it must work you some real good—so put up your sword and lift the cup to your lips—and drink it to the dregs.

12. *Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus and bound Him.* When you are bound with sickness, or bound with weakness, or bound in any other way, do not complain. Your Master was bound and I think we ought to be willing to be anything that Christ was. What was good enough for Him is good enough for us. "They took Jesus and bound Him."

13, 14. *And led Him away to Annas first, for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, who was the high priest that same year. Now Caiaphas was he who gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.* Christ could not die without the question of expediency turning up. I never knew any great sin in the world, nor any great heresy, nor any great combination of men to maintain it without the question of expediency coming under consideration. Expediency is the great Christ killer! Many, nowadays, say to us, "Do not preach against error—it is not expedient to do so. Do not break away from evil associations—it is not expedient." How many there are of even good men who do certain things, not because they are right, but because they are expedient! But, believers in Jesus, in the name of your Lord I implore you to hate expediency, since it put Jesus to death! It was a wicked expediency that would murder Christ in order to save a nation! But it did not really do so, after all, for the guilt of slaying Christ brought upon the nation the growing crime of deicide.

15. *And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest and went in with Jesus into the*

palace of the high priest. This other disciple was, no doubt, John, who thus veiled himself as he did on other occasions.

16. *But Peter stood at the door outside.* It would have been better for him if he had stayed there—he would probably have been more out of the way of temptation than he was inside the palace of the high priest.

16. *Then went out that other disciple, who was known to the high priest and spoke unto her whom kept the door, and brought in Peter.* John doubtless acted thus out of kindness to Peter, but he was the means of bringing his friend into a place where he was not strong enough to keep his feet. You and I may act like that, perhaps, in perfect innocence and even with commendable kindness—yet we may be unintentionally doing our friends a great wrong! I notice that John seems to have been the first of the apostles to associate with Peter after that terrible fall of his. And in his record of Peter's denial of his Lord, he does not mention his cursing and swearing as Matthew and Mark do. He appears to have felt great tenderness towards Peter—perhaps all the more so because he had been the innocent means of getting him into the place of temptation.

17. *Then said the damsel who kept the door unto Peter, Are not you, also, one of this man's disciples? He said, I am not.* Ah, Peter! Ah, myself! If anyone is trusting in himself, he may soon utter a lie concerning his Lord as Peter did. Keep us, O God, by Your grace, or else it will be so with us. It was nothing but a poor maidservant that cowed this brave Peter—the man whose sword was drawn just now in his Master's defense is not able, truthfully, to answer the maid's question, "Are not you, also, one of this man's disciples? He said, I am not."

18. *And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals, for it was cold: and they warmed themselves. And Peter stood with them and warmed himself.* While his Lord and Master was being maltreated and abused over yonder at the end of the hall, Peter was warming himself at the servant's fire. Ah, he was getting cold spiritually while warming himself physically! And it sometimes happens that when men are warming their bodies, they are at the same time cooling their hearts. I have known a man warm himself at a very big fire through coming into possession of a large amount of property—but he has also grown very cold, spiritually, for these coals of fire do not warm the heart.

19-21. *The high priest then asked Jesus of His disciples and of His doctrine. Jesus answered Him, I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, where the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why do you ask Me? Ask them which heard Me, what I have said unto you: behold, they know what I said.* Our Lord's teaching was never deceptive. He did not say one thing and mean another. He could truly appeal to His hearers concerning His teaching. It is a great thing for a preacher to be able to feel that his hearers know what he has said to them. We cannot always say that, for some of them forget and some of them do not understand what we say. Some of them do not give sufficient attention to know what it is that is said, but Christ's preaching was so clear and plain that He could truly say, "Ask them which heard Me, what I have said to them: behold, they know what I said."

22, 23. *And when He had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Do you answer the high priest so? Jesus answered him*—Not as Paul did, "God shall smite you, you whited wall." The Master is superior to the disciple at all points. Jesus said—

23. *If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why did you strike Me?* Let us pray that whenever we are despitefully treated, we may keep our temper and be as composed as our Lord was. And if we must make an answer to our accusers, let it be as discreet and as justifiable as this answer of our Lord's.

24, 25. *Now Annas had Him sent bound to Caiaphas the high priest. And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself.* John thus resumes the narrative concerning Peter from the 17th verse—"Simon Peter stood and warmed himself."

25. *They said, therefore, to him.* Two or three or more of them speaking at a time said to him—

26-27. *Are not you, also, one of His disciples? He denied it and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being the kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, said, Did not I see you in the garden with Him? Peter then denied it again.* Ah, me, they who lie once will be all too apt to lie again! Those who deny Christ once will be apt to go to still greater lengths in their denial of Him. May they be stopped as Peter was!

27. *And immediately the cock crew.* May the cock crow for some who have been asleep up till now—and warn them that the night is far spent and that it is time for them to awake out of sleep—and wash their eyes with tears and repent of having denied their Lord!

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BOLDNESS AT THE THRONE
NO. 3182

A SERMON
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"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace."
Hebrews 4:16.

[Another sermon by Mr. Spurgeon, upon the same subject, is #1024, Volume 17—"The Throne of Grace"—
Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

PRAYER occupies a most important place in the life of the Christian. "Behold, he prays," was one of the first and also one of the surest indications of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. No one begins to live the life of faith who has not also begun to pray—and as prayer is necessary at the commencement of the Christian career, so is it necessary all through. A Christian's vigor, happiness, growth and usefulness all depend upon prayer. It is—

"His watchword at the gates of death,
He enters heaven with prayer."

I suppose that even there we shall continue to pray. At all events, we read of the souls under the altar crying with a loud voice and saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, do You not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" I imagine that in heaven we shall still lift up our hearts in prayer for the spread of Christ's kingdom, though our principal occupation there will be that of praise. But prayer is always needed *here*—every day, every hour, every moment we have cause for crying unto the Most High—

"Long as they live should Christians pray,"

for only while they pray do they truly live!

It is because of the supreme importance of prayer that we find so much about it in the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit continually encourages us to pray by precept, promise and example. One conspicuous instance of that encouragement is the exhortation we are now to consider—"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace."

So, coming at once to the text, notice that we have here, first, *a description of our great resort for prayer—"*The throne of grace." Secondly, we have a *loving exhortation—"*Let us come unto the throne of grace." Thirdly, we have a *qualifying adverb*, telling us how we are to come—"Let us come *boldly*." Fourthly, we have a reason *given for boldness*. The reason is in the context. We shall also think of other reasons and then shall close with *the* reason upon which Paul laid the stress of the

argument in writing to the Hebrews—"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace."

I. First, then, dear friends, we have A DESCRIPTION OF OUR GREAT RESORT FOR PRAYER—"The throne of grace."

Under the law of God, there was to be an ark overlaid inside and outside with pure gold. And above the ark was to be the mercy seat of pure gold with the golden cherubim covering the mercy seat with their wings. This mysterious emblem no one ever saw except the high priest—and he saw it only once a year—and then but dimly, for he saw it through the smoke of the incense which he presented before the Lord. It was a secret thing, but now it is revealed to us, for the veil has been torn and the symbol taken away that we may now come boldly right up to the throne of heavenly grace.

I was conversing, some time ago, with a member of the catholic and apostolic church who took great pains to instruct me as to the meaning of the various offices and ordinances of the body with which he was connected. After he had explained a great many mysteries to his own satisfaction, if not to my edification, he pointed out the position of the saints at the present day. And then I felt that it was time to answer him, so I said, "I do not believe that Christians are intended to go crawling about the outer court and keeping far off from the Holy Place, for the Apostle Paul said, 'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace,' right into the Holy of Holies, for there is no longer any separating veil to keep us away from the mercy seat. As a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, my place is not in the outer court, nor even in the court of the priests. I have advanced beyond them and come right up to the throne of grace that I "may there obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." That is the position of all true Christians, not only on one day of the year, but every day!

I wish that all believers could realize the privileges to which they were born when they were created anew in Christ Jesus. You may have heard a whole congregation saying, "Lord, have mercy upon us and incline our hearts to keep this law," and you may have seen them all shivering there at the foot of Sinai with the lightning flashing above them, and the thunder pealing around them! Yet it is possible that at least *some* of them may have had the right to come before the Lord as His own dear children through faith in Jesus Christ. And if so, they might have said to Him, "Lord, You have had mercy upon us. You have blotted out all our transgressions and now we are not under the law, but under grace, and are completely delivered from the thralldom of the old covenant of works and are put under the new covenant of grace, that we may serve You in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter." Blessed are they who are enjoying the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free and who, therefore, come boldly right up to the throne of grace!

The mercy seat, then, is where the high priest typically came once each year. But our great High Priest, "by His own blood entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." As He died, He tore down the separating veil and threw the holiest of all open to

all who believe in Him! And He has made them kings and priests unto God, so that where the high priest stood, is where they stand in Christ Jesus! That place is so solemn and awe inspiring that we might fear and quake at the very thought of coming to it were it not for this and other similar exhortations, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Our mercy seat is called "a throne" because *we come there to God as a King* and we, by faith, behold Him in His excellent glory and majesty. He is our Father and our friend, but He is also "the King eternal, immortal, invisible," so we approach even the throne of grace with the deepest awe and reverence. We come to this throne with the utmost confidence, for God gives as a King and, therefore, we ask largely and expectantly! John Newton caught the very spirit of this verse when he wrote—

"You are coming to a King,
Large petitions with you bring!
For His grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much."

It is a throne of grace where no ordinary monarch presides, but where one is sitting who is infinite and all sufficient, one who can bestow upon us more than we ask, or ever think of asking, and yet not impoverish Himself in the slightest degree! Always remember, beloved, in coming to the mercy seat, that you are coming to a King and to one who gives like a King! Always open your mouth wide and ask great things of the King who is so ready to bestow them upon you!

In drawing near to God in prayer, *we come to a King who sits upon a throne of grace*. That word, "Grace," is one of the choicest in the whole description of our great resort for prayer. We might well have trembled if we had been bid to come to a throne of justice! We might have been afraid to come to a throne of power, alone. But we need not hesitate to come to the throne of grace where God sits on purpose to dispense divine grace! It would be terrible if we had to pray to a just God if He were not also a Savior—if we could only see the awful glare of Sinai without the blessed attractions of the atonement made on Calvary! If we can see the "rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald," the token of God's covenant love and grace, then we can pray very differently from the way in which we would pray if we could only see the naked sword of divine justice brandished to and fro to keep us back from the holy God who would not have His peerless majesty polluted by our sinful presence! Let us always remember that when we pray aright, we deal with God on terms of grace—and answers to our petitions come to us not according to what we deserve, but according to His infinite mercy and grace in Christ Jesus our Lord!

It is also very comforting to us to observe that *the God who hears prayer is enthroned and glorified*. The God of grace sits upon the throne of grace and so grace reigns supreme at the place where God meets with us in prayer! The hands of grace are full of blessings through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ—and those hands are happily employed in dispensing royal largess among the poverty stricken sons and daughters

of men! Come here, then, all you who feel your need of grace! Be not afraid to approach the throne of grace. Since Jesus Christ has taken upon Himself our nature and suffered in our place, the throne to which the sinner is bid to draw near is a throne of superlative, unlimited, reigning grace—grace that pardons; grace that regenerates; grace that adopts; grace that preserves; grace that sanctifies; grace that perfects and makes meet for glory! Happy is the preacher whose privilege it is to invite sinners to come to such a blessed meeting place with God, but happier far will be the sinners who shall have the grace to come to that meeting place! May many here be among them!

II. Now, secondly, we have A LOVING EXHORTATION—"Let us come unto the throne of grace."

Who is it that gives this exhortation? Why did he put it in this form? We might have expected the exhortation to be simply, "Come boldly unto the throne of grace." Or even, "Go boldly unto the throne of grace." But it is put in the form of an invitation from someone who urges us to *go with him*—who is this?

Well, first, it is *from Paul who had, himself, proved the power of prayer*. "Paul? Have I not heard his name before?" Oh, yes! "But had he not once another name?" Yes, his name was Saul. "Then, surely, that must have been the man who persecuted the saints of God, who was exceedingly mad against them and against the Christ whom they loved more than they loved their own lives." Yes, that is the man! Only he has been so changed by divine grace that he is a new man in Christ Jesus! And now he confesses that he was the chief of the sinners whom Jesus came to save. It is this saved sinner who is now a saint of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ and who writes to his fellow believers, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace." I think that I can summon up courage to go to the mercy seat in such company as this! If the *chief of sinners* is going to the throne of grace, I, also, may go! Under another aspect I may be the chief of sinners, too, and if so, there will be a pair of us and we will go together!

Yes, it was Paul who gave this exhortation. A man of like passions with ourselves who was once as great a sinner as any of us have ever been. He puts out his hand to us and he says, "Come along, brothers and sisters—let us go boldly to the throne of grace." When he gave this exhortation, Paul had become an experienced believer who had often gone to the throne of grace and there proved the power of prayer. He was no stranger at the mercy seat. He had done much heavenly business with his Master there—so now, having proved the power of prayer—he does not speak as a mere theorist, but as a practical man who had put the matter to the test and, therefore, knew that God answered prayer! So he wrote to those who had not had such a wonderful experience as his had been, to those whose knowledge of divine things was far inferior to his own and, linking himself with them, he said, "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace."

It always does me good to hear an aged Christian talk about the Lord Jesus Christ. I recollect, at this moment, a venerable minister who has

long gone to glory. I heard him make almost his dying speech. He had been blind for many years and when he rose at the communion table and told us of the loving kindness of the Lord toward him, of how he had tried and tested his God in the deep waters of affliction and had always found Him faithful—and when he bade us, "Young people, be sure to put your trust in the Lord, for He is well worth trusting," he did us all good. I think it is in some such way as this that the Apostle Paul, a man of deep and varied experience, writes to the Hebrews—and through them to us—and says, as one who has tried and proved the power of prayer, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace."

It is, however, not only Paul who speaks in this exhortation, but it seems to me that *this exhortation comes through Paul from the whole church of Christ*. Paul was a representative man. And as he penned these lines, it seems as though the entire church of God was speaking through his words. Even the saints in glory appear to cry out to us, "Come boldly to the throne of grace! We can urge you to do so from a remembrance of our own experience, for we long ago tried and proved the efficacy of prayer in every emergency that we had to face." It is certain that all the saints on earth unite in this exhortation, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace." From many a sick bed where aged Christians have been for years pining away—no, I correct myself and say—where they have been melting into glory as the morning star melts into the sunlight—from many such a bed whose faith has triumphed over physical weakness and pain, I hear the cry, "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace." From many a night watcher compelled by terrible pain to lie awake and guard the night with prayer, as the sentinels of the church of God, I hear the cry, Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace." From many another child of God, who, in the midst of activities and trials combined, has daily and hourly to draw his strength from the Most High by fervent supplication, I hear the cry, "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace." And from many who, through prayer, have been enabled to do great exploits in the name of Jesus, having cast themselves by faith upon a prayer hearing and prayer answering God—and who are today the living evidences of what divine grace can accomplish through human instrumentality—from these, also, I hear the cry, "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace." The church militant, with its blood red banner floating in the breeze, marches bravely on to the conflict, crying, "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

But I also hear in this exhortation a voice much more powerful than that of the Apostle Paul, or even of the whole church of Christ, for it seems to me to come *from the Holy Spirit Himself*, for Paul wrote as he was moved by the Holy Spirit. I think I am not going too far when I say that the divine Spirit, who dwells in all the saints, is now speaking through the inspired page and says to us, "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace." Paul wrote to the Romans, "We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself makes intercession for

us with groans which cannot be uttered. And He that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God." It appears to me that in our text the Spirit, speaking in the soft and gentle accents that the Comforter delights to use, is not so much bidding us go to the throne of grace, as *promising that He will go there with us*! And, surely we will go if He will accompany us! As it is His divine voice that says, "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace," let us obey the gracious exhortation! This is not the only time that the Spirit and the church of Christ say the same thing, for we read in the Revelation, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." So here the Spirit and the bride both seem to me to say, "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace." Therefore all you who form part of the mystical bride of Christ, hear the Spirit's gentle call—comply with His exhortation and come boldly unto the throne of grace!

III. Now, thirdly, we have A QUALIFYING ADVERB—"Let us come *boldly* unto the throne of grace."

We must not mistake the meaning of this word, "boldly." Paul does not say, "Let us come *proudly* unto the throne of grace." God forbid that we should do that! Abraham's prayer for Sodom and Gomorrah is an admirable model of how we are to come boldly unto the throne of grace, for although he pleaded again and again for the guilty cities of the plain, he said, "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." The greatest boldness in prayer is perfectly consistent with the lowest self-humiliation.

Neither must we ever think of coming before the Lord arrogantly or presumptuously, for it is to a "Throne" that we are bid to come, although that throne is "the throne of grace." I have heard prayers that have seemed to me like dictating to God rather than the humble, reverent petitions which should be presented by the creature to the Creator, or by the children of God to their loving Father in heaven. We are to come boldly to the throne of grace, yet always with submission in our hearts, even as our Lord, Himself, prayed, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

I think that by this adverb, "boldly," is meant that *we may come constantly*—at all times. Eastern potentates would only admit petitioners to their presence when they pleased. Though Esther was made queen by Ahasuerus, she was not allowed to go near him unless she was especially called. But it is not so with us! The path to the throne of grace is always open—there are no guards to bar the way of those who come in the right spirit. There are no set times for prayer—one hour is as good as any other for coming to the throne of grace. Whenever the Spirit of God inclines the heart to pray, the ear of God is open to hear our supplications—and the mouth of God is open to grant us gracious answers of peace!

"Boldly" also means that *we may come unreservedly;* with all sorts of petitions. Whatever it is that lies as a burden upon your heart, come with it to the throne of grace! Do you really need some great thing? Then come and ask for it! Or do you need some little thing? Then come and ask for

it! Have you some care that is crushing you into the very dust? Come and leave it at the mercy seat! Have you some little care that worries you, some thorn in the flesh, some messenger from Satan to buffet you? Come and tell your God all about it! Cast *all* your care upon Him, for He cares for you. Think not that God will be angry with you for asking too much from Him—and imagine not that you will insult Him by asking Him for little things. If you are a believer in Jesus, God is your Father, so speak to Him as you would to your earthly father—only have far more confidence in coming to Him than you would have in approaching the most affectionate earthly parent.

Further, "boldly," also means that *we may come freely*, with simple words. Do not say, "My words are not good enough to present to God. I must get a book of prayers and try to find suitable words with which to approach the Most High." Oh, do not do it! It is true that in private prayer, in family prayer and even in public prayer it is better to use a form than not to pray at all. I have often said that it is better to walk with crutches than not to walk at all, but what need have you of crutches—for that is what forms of prayer really are? Your Father in heaven does not want you to come to Him in a stiff, formal way, but just to proclaim, as simply and naturally as possible, the desires of your heart. If one of my boys wanted a new suit of clothes, or anything else that it was proper for him to have, I would not like him to come with a written request, as if he were presenting a petition to parliament! I would not feel that he loved me very much if he came in such a fashion as that! But when he asks me for what he needs in a bold, familiar and yet respectful manner, I am only too pleased to supply his needs!

You who are parents know that you do not make your children offenders for a word. When they first learn to talk to you, they pronounce their words very imperfectly and make many blunders. They break all the rules of grammar and their prattle is often so indistinct that strangers who come to your house do not know what they are saying. But you know, Mother. You know, Father. You understand them all right and you like to hear them talk like that—it is the natural speech for little children—and there is the accent of love in it that endears it to you. Well, now, go to your God as your little child comes to you! Tell Him all that is on your heart. Never mind about your words—use such language as your heart dictates—and when you find that you cannot pray as you would, tell Him so. Say to Him, "O Lord, I cannot put my words together properly, but I pray You to take my meaning, O my Father—do not judge my prayer by my broken, faulty speech, but read the desires of my heart and grant them if they are in accordance with Your gracious will!" Perhaps the best prayers of all are those that have no words at all—those that are too deep down in your heart to get shaped into words. We hardly know how they got there, except that we believe God put them there by His Holy Spirit—so He accepts them even if they are never formed into words!

"Boldly" means, too, that we may come hopefully, with full confidence of being heard. It is not a matter of doubt as to whether God hears and answers prayer—if there is any fact in the world that is proved by the testimony of honest men, this is that fact! You know that at a trial before an earthly judge there are often many witnesses who give their testimony as to the facts of the case as far as they are known to them. And the weight of their evidence is very largely determined by their personal character. Now, if this were the right time and I was the counsel in charge of the case, I could bring forward hundreds—even thousands of the best men and women who have ever lived—I mean those who are admitted to be so by all who know them—honest, straightforward witnesses whose evidence would carry weight in any court of law, who would calmly and deliberately declare that, over and over and over again, God has answered their prayers! Answered them so often that it has now become with them a matter of course that when they really need anything, to go to God and get it. "Oh," says someone, "that is only a delusion! There is no such thing as answers to prayer." No, sir, you have no right to say that, for the witnesses have as much right to be believed as you have! Possibly even more, for you may not have the character to support your infidel assertion that these witnesses have to back up their Christian testimony! We can bring forward men who are the equals in learning of any unbeliever, men who are eminent in the ranks of literature, men who are masters of scientific knowledge—yet these very men have been simple as little children in the matter of prayer and they all testify that God has heard them again and again—and granted their requests! That is a strange "delusion" which is a daily fact in the history of millions and which has been proved to be true in the lives of millions who are now before the throne of God on high! So let us still pray knowing that God will hear us and be fully persuaded that He will give us whatever is for His own glory and our own and others' good! The Apostle James reminds us that we must "ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."

Once more, this word, "boldly," means that *we should come perseveringly*, with a fervent importunity that will not be denied. If at our first coming to the throne of grace, we do not get what we want, let us come again and keep on coming until we do get it. God sometimes makes us wait for a blessing in order that we may value it all the more when we do receive it. He would have us ask, and seek, and knock again and again—and not be content until we obtain the blessing we crave. If we are sure that what we are asking is in accordance with the will of God, let us keep on coming like the importunate widow came to the unjust judge—until the desire of our heart is granted to us!

I think this is what is meant by coming "boldly unto the throne of grace."

IV. Now, lastly, we have A REASON GIVEN FOR BOLDNESS—"let us *therefore* come boldly unto the throne of grace."

There are a great many other reasons besides the one to which Paul here alludes. I will give them to you in brief.

First, *we are invited to pray*. God would never have invited us to pray if He had not intended to hear and answer us. No right minded man would invite his fellows to a feast and then send them away empty. So, the very invitation to us to pray implies that there are blessings waiting for us at the mercy seat—"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace."

Let us remember, too, that grace is for sinners, and *we are invited to come to the throne of grace*. It is only on terms of grace that we can expect to obtain the blessings that we need—but it is to the throne of grace that we are bid to come. So let the sinner come, for it is the throne of grace! Let the needy saint come and at the throne of grace, "find grace" to help in time of need." Let us *all* come, good or bad, prepared or unprepared, whoever or whatever we may be—let us come boldly because it is the throne of grace—and divine grace is what we all need.

Let us also remember *the character of the King who sits upon the throne of grace*. He is infinite in mercy and love and He delights to bless His creatures. He is infinite in power and is, therefore, "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." He is infinite in wisdom and is, therefore, able to give us whatever is best for us in the best possible way. He is altogether unlimited in His nature and, therefore, we cannot exceed His power or His willingness to help us, let our requests be as large as they may! Oh, when I think of what God is as He is revealed in Christ Jesus, and remember that it is He who sits upon the throne of grace, I feel that I may well repeat Paul's exhortation, "Let us *therefore* come boldly unto the throne of grace!"

Remember also, O Christian, your relationship to the King who sits upon the throne of grace! You are not merely His servant—you are His child—an heir of God, and joint heir with Jesus Christ! All that you ask for is already yours by right of inheritance and shall be in your possession in due time. Shall a child tremble in his loving Father's presence? Shall a son act as if he were a slave? Shall I, with tremulous hands, present a petition to my own Father whom I love? If I have perfect love to Him, it casts out all fear. So, because we are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, "let us *therefore* come boldly unto the throne of grace."

I have already reminded you that the Holy Spirit has been given to teach us how to pray. Now the Holy Spirit knows the mind of God and, therefore, He never moves us to pray for anything which God does not intend to give us. Prayer is often the shadow of God's coming blessing. Before the divine decrees are fulfilled, they often cast their blessed shadow across the believer's heart by the power of the Holy Spirit so that when the believer prays in the Spirit, he is only asking God to do what He has from all eternity determined to do! If we came to the throne of grace with petitions which we had ourselves prepared, we might well

tremble! But when we come with a Spirit written petition, we may well "come boldly unto the throne of grace."

Then, beloved, there is one sweet thought which should always encourage you to "come boldly unto the throne of grace," and that is, the many "*exceedingly great and precious promises" in the Scriptures*. If we had to ask for unpromised blessings, we might come tremblingly. But there are promises in God's word to meet every emergency. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." "As your days, so shall your strength be." "Whatever you shall ask the Father in My name, He will give to you." I might go on quoting promises by the hour, together, but it will be more profitable for you to search them out for yourselves, especially if you remember what Paul writes concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, "for all the promises of God in Him are yes, and in Him, Amen, unto the glory of God by us." These promises are all the more precious to us because they are free promises, not made to us because of our merits, but solely because of God's grace! And all the promises are made by that faithful God who cannot lie, and by that Almighty God who is as able to fulfill the promises as He was to make them! "Let us *therefore* come boldly unto the throne of grace."

If we need any more reasons to encourage us to come boldly to the throne of God, let us remember that *God has already given us His dear Son*, and let us ask again the question that Paul asked so long ago, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" You and I, if we are believers in Christ, are already saved with an everlasting salvation! Then after God has given us this greatest of all blessings, will He refuse to bestow upon us the lesser mercies? Brothers and sisters in Christ, as the Lord has already done such great things for us, He cannot turn a deaf ear to our petitions, especially when they are inspired by His own gracious Spirit! "Let us *therefore* come boldly unto the throne of grace."

Besides, some of us have had *many years' experience in the power of prayer*. Some of you have had 50 years of soul enriching communion with God at the mercy seat. Do you not remember many times when you were in deep trouble and prayer brought you deliverance from it? Do you not recollect some seasons of terrible depression of spirit when prayer brought the sunlight back to you? Do you not recall that time when you were bereaved and when, as you stood weeping by the open grave, prayer brought you sweet relief and dried up your tears? Do you not remember when you were in poverty and prayer obtained bread for you? The ravens did not bring it, nor did a widow sustain you, yet you were fed by the God of Elijah in answer to your earnest supplication! What is there that prayer has not done for us? Oh, there are multitudes of instances which come to our memory when prayer has unlocked mercy's door—and they all say, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace."

Now I will close by briefly referring to the reason which the apostle gives why we should come boldly to the throne of grace. I have given you many good reasons, but this is the best reason of all—"We have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities;

but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us *therefore* come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." That is to say, we are to come with boldness to the throne of God because there is pleading for us there, a man who is also God, to whom every petition put up by those who trust in Him is a very precious thing which He, as the great representative man before the throne presents to His Father, for He is God's own dear Son! Yes, He is one with the Eternal and His will is the will of the infinite Jehovah to whom we address our prayers in Christ's name! This glorious God man mediator continually presents before His Father His one great sacrifice for sin. There will never be a repetition of it and it will never need to be offered again, "for by one offering He has perfected forever them that are sanctified," that is, those who are set apart unto Himself. This one sacrifice He perpetually pleads before the throne—and our prayers, therefore, ascend to God with the merit of Christ's atoning blood giving them acceptance with His Father. So they must have power with God, for they come before Him signed, as it were, with the name of His well-beloved Son. He lays His hand upon each petition and so leaves the print of the nails upon it—and therefore it must prevail with God!

Remember, too, that this same Jesus Christ was once a man upon earth like ourselves, except that He was "without sin." When your prayer is broken through grief, recollect that He also knew what a broken hearted prayer meant. The sighs and tears of Gethsemane taught Him that. He was made perfect through suffering that He might perfectly sympathize with all His suffering saints. Do not imagine that you can ever get into any condition in which Jesus Christ cannot comprehend you and, consequently, cannot sympathize with you. If you are in the depths, as Jonah was, remember that Jonah was but a type of Christ, who therefore knows all about your present experience and also knows how to deliver you out of it! If you seem to be altogether deserted by God and know not why it is so that you have to cry, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" that is an experience through which Jesus, Himself, passed. Yet—

"In every pang that rends the heart
The man of sorrows had a part"—

so that we have, before the throne of God, a High Priest who is as sympathetic as He is powerful! "Let us *therefore* come boldly unto the throne of grace."

Remember, too, that every blessing which you have a right to ask for through Christ is yours already, "for all things are yours; things present, or things to come; all are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's." Every right prayer that you offer is but putting in a claim for that which is rightly yours through your union to Christ. Therefore come boldly to the throne of grace because you have such a pleader to appear there for you and such a plea to urge with God through Him!

Dear brothers and sisters, let us begin to pray more boldly for sinners! Let us pray more boldly for London! Let us pray more boldly for our country! Let us never cease praying to the Lord to send a great revival

throughout the whole world! And O, you sinners, you may come, too, for it is, "the throne of grace" to which we are invited! And it is before that throne that Jesus stands interceding for the transgressors. Come and welcome to Jesus Christ! This is your "time of need." You are full of sin and need mercy to forgive it and cleanse you from it. You are full of weakness and need the help of God. Come to the throne of grace and ask for His grace to help you in your time of need and you shall surely have it! God has not left off being a prayer hearing and prayer answering God, so come to Him! Yes, let us all "come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

What I have been saying to you, I have said far more to myself than to anyone else here, for if there is one who needs more prayer than all the rest, I am that one, burdened as I am with incessant service and overwhelming responsibilities. Yet, after taking to myself more of the sermon than I pass on to any of you, I venture to say that there is not one person in this building whose condition does not make prayer necessary for him. I do not know what the special need of each one of you may be, but I think everyone here who seriously thinks about the matter, must say, "Well, if there is anybody in this place who can do without prayer, I am not the one! I *must* pray! There is something about my case that drives me to the mercy seat." Thank God that it is so, but be sure that you go to the throne of grace that you may obtain the help you need.

It is a blessed trouble that drives us to the mercy seat, yet one would scarcely wish to have the kind of trouble that Mr. Fraser, a good old Scotch minister, had. He had a wife who tormented him dreadfully, yet, when someone jestingly said to him that he would not drink to her health, he replied, "I hope she will live long, for she has driven me to my knees ten times a day when, otherwise, I might not have prayed." One would not wish to be driven to prayer in such a fashion as that, yet I venture to say that Mr. Fraser was a gainer by it! Real prayer must make us more like our Master. "Let us *therefore* come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

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CHEER FOR DESPONDENCY
NO. 3183

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1910.

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

"You know not what a day may bring forth."
Proverbs 27:1.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon, upon the whole verse is #94, Volume 2—TOMORROW—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

WHAT a great mercy it is that we do not know "what a day may bring forth"! We are often thankful for knowledge, but in this case we may be particularly grateful for ignorance. It is the glory of God, we are told, to conceal a thing and it most certainly is for the happiness of mankind that He should conceal their future. Supposing that bright lines were written for us in the book of destiny and that we could read those bright lines now, and be sure of them—we would probably loiter away our time until we arrived at them—and would have no heart for the present. If, on the other hand, we knew that there were dark days of trouble in store for us, and had a full conviction as to when they would come, probably the thought of them would overshadow the present so that the joys which we now drink would be left untasted by reason of our nervous fears as to the distant future! To know the good might lead us to presumption—to know the evil might tempt us to despair. Happy for us is it that our eyes cannot penetrate the thick veil which God hangs between us and tomorrow, that we cannot see beyond the spot where we now are and that, in a certain sense, we are utterly ignorant as to the details of the future. We may, indeed, be thankful for our ignorance!

Although, however, we do not know what a day may bring forth or though we cannot see into what I may call, "the immediate future," yet we have reason to be thankful that we do know something about what is to come and that we do know what is in the far-reaching future. We differ from the animals in this respect. When, two or three nights in the week, I pass on my way home a flock of sheep, or a little herd of bulls—all going down to the butcher's, travelling in the cold, bright moonlight towards the slaughterhouse—I feel thankful that they do not know where they are going, for what would be their misery if they knew anything about death? The lamb's thoughts are in the fold and all unconscious of the shambles. It licks the hand that kills it, not knowing of its coming speedy death. It is the happiness of the brute not to know the future!

But in our case, we know that we must die—and if it were not for the hope of the Resurrection and of the hereafter, this knowledge would distinguish us from the brutes only by giving us greater misery. There must

be an intention on God's part for us to live in a future state or else He would, out of mere benevolence, have left us ignorant of the fact of death. If He had not meant our souls to begin to prepare for another and a better existence, He would have kept us ignorant, even, of the fact that this one will pass away. But having given us an intellect and a mind which, both from observation and inward consciousness must know that death will come, we believe that He would have us prepare for that which will follow and look out for that which is beyond. We do know the future in its great rough outlines. We know that if the Lord comes not first, we shall die. We know that our soul shall live forever in happiness or in woe and that, according to whether we are found in Christ or without Christ, our eternal portion shall be one of never-ending agony or of ceaseless bliss! We may be thankful that we do know this, so that we may be prepared for it. But still—to return to that with which we started—we may also be thankful that we do not really know the great future in its details, that it is shut from our eyes lest it should have an evil influence upon our life.

Now, Solomon, in the Book of Proverbs, applied the truth that we know not about tomorrow to the boaster, the man who said, "Tomorrow I will go into such a city and buy, and sell, and get gain, and then go to another city, and get more gain, and then, when I have amassed so much wealth, I will say, 'Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years; take your ease—eat, drink and be merry.'" Solomon seems to come in and put his hand upon the man's shoulder and to say, virtually, "You fool, you know nothing about all this! You do not know what shall be on the morrow—your goods may never come to you, or you may not be here to trade with these goods at all. So you build a castle in the air! You think your fancies are true. You are as one that dreams of a feast and wakes to find himself hungry! How can you be so foolish?" Solomon dwells upon the text very solemnly and says, "Boast not yourself of tomorrow, for you know not what a day may bring forth."

I do not intend, however, to use the text with this objective tonight. It struck me that as Solomon uses it here with one design, it might be very properly used for another. That as he intends to shame our growing pride and certainty of prosperity, so it might be used especially to cheer those who have a tendency to gloom—and to shed a ray of light into the thick darkness of their fear.

I. It will, first, comfort THOSE WHO ARE FEARING AND TREMBLING CONCERNING SOME EVIL WHICH IS YET TO COME.

My friend, you are afraid tonight. You cannot enjoy anything you have because of this terrible and fearful shadow which has come across your path of an evil which you say is coming tomorrow, or in one or two months' time—or even in six months. Now, at least, you are not quite certain that it will come, for you know not what may be on the morrow. You are as alarmed and as afraid as if you were quite certain that it would appear. But it is not so, "You know not what a day may bring forth," and *since it is uncertain whether it shall be or not*, had you not better leave your sorrow till it is certain? And meanwhile, leave the uncer-

tain matter in the hands of God, whose divine purposes will be wise and good in the end, and will be even seen to be so! At the very least, slender as the comfort may be, yet there is still comfort in the fact that you know not what may be on the morrow!

Let us expand this thought a little to those of you who are fearing about tomorrow. We very often fear what never will occur. I think that the major part of our troubles are not those which God sends us, but those which we invent for ourselves. As the poet speaks of some who—

"Feel a thousand deaths in fearing one"—

so there are many who feel a thousand troubles in fearing one trouble, which trouble, perhaps, never will have any existence except in the workshop of their own misty brain! It is an ill task for a child to whip himself—it might be good for him to feel the whip from his father's hand, but it is of little service when the child applies it himself! And yet, very often the strokes which we dread never come from God's hand at all, but are the pure inventions of our own imagination and our own unbelief working together. There are more who have to howl under the lash of unbelief than there are who have to weep under the gentle rod of God's providential dispensation. Now, why should you go about to fill your pillow with thorns grown in your own garden? Why so busy, good sir, about gathering nettles with which to strew your own bed? There are clouds enough without your thinking that every little atom of mist will surely bring a storm. There are difficulties enough on the road to heaven without your taking up stones to throw into your own path to make your own road rougher than there was any need that it should be! You know not what may be on the morrow. Your fears are absurd! Perhaps your neighbor knows they are absurd, but certainly you ought to know it is so! Do you not know that the trouble you are dreading, God can utterly avert? Perhaps tomorrow morning there will come a letter which will entirely change the face of the matter. A friend may interpose when least you could expect one, or difficulties which were like mountains may be cast into the depths of the sea. "You know not what a day may bring forth," and the trouble which you so much dread may never occur at all!

Moreover, do you not know that *even if the trouble should come, God has a way of overruling it?* So that even you, poor trembler, shall stand by and see the salvation of God and wonder at two things—your own unbelief and God's faithfulness! You say that the sea is before you, that the mountains are on either side and that the foe is behind you—but you know not what shall be on the morrow! Your God shall lead you through the depths of the sea and put such a song in your mouth as you never could have known if there had been no sea, no Pharaoh and no mountains to shut you in! These trials of yours shall be the winepress out of which shall come the wine of consolation to you! This furnace shall rob you of nothing but your dross, which you will be glad to be rid of—but your pure gold shall not be diminished by so much as a drachma, but shall only be the purer after it all! The trouble, then, may not come to you at all, or if it comes, it may be overruled.

And there is one thing more. Supposing the trial does come, *your God has promised that as your days, so shall your strength be*. Has He not said it many times in His word, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you"? He never did promise you freedom from trouble. He speaks of rivers and of your going through them! He speaks of fires and of your passing through them! But He has added, "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." What matters it to you, then, whether there is fire or not if you are not burned? What matters it to you whether there are floods or not if you are not drowned? As long as you escape with spiritual life and health and come up out of all your trials the better for them, you may rejoice in tribulations! Thank God when your temptations abound! And be glad when He puts you into the furnace because of the blessing which you are sure to receive from it. So then, since you know not what may be on the morrow, take heart, you fearing one, and put your fears away! Do as you have been told—delight yourself in the Lord—and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you. He will never suffer the righteous to be moved. Did not David say, speaking by the Holy Spirit, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all"? I charge you, therefore, to be of good comfort since you know not what may be on the morrow. This is the message to fearful saints.

II. But now we will use the text to another class of Christians whose painful position really deserves more pity than that of those who only invent their fears, or who are troubled about the future. I mean THOSE WHO ARE AT THE PRESENT MOMENT DISCONSOLATE THROUGH IMMEDIATE DISTRESS AND PRESENT AFFLICTION.

We little know, my brothers and sisters, when we gather here, how many cases of distress may be assembled in this house at any one time. Verily the poor have not ceased out of the land! The poor we have always with us and some of the poor, too, who need to have other mouths to speak for them, since from their very independence of spirit and their Christian character they are slow to speak for themselves. There may be a trouble in my neighbor's heart which is almost bursting it while I am sitting peacefully enjoying the word. We should remember those who are in bonds, as bound with them—and sympathize with those who are troubled as being ourselves, also, in the body.

It will not be a waste of time, then, if I say *to you who are troubled about worldly matters* that there is comfort for you in this passage. "You know not what a day may bring forth." You say, "It is all over with me! I will give up in despair." No, friend, do not do so for one day longer, for you know not what *a day* may bring forth! And if tomorrow bring you not deliverance, hope on at least for one day more, for, "you know not what a day may bring forth." And I would keep on with the same advice till the last day of life! At least for one day more there is no room for despair. You cannot conclude that God has forsaken you, or that providence has utterly turned against you! At least you know not what may be on the

morrow, so wait till you have seen that day out! Give not yourself up as a hopeless victim to despair till you have seen what tomorrow may bring you!

What unexpected turns there have been in the lives of those who have trusted in God! You who are trusting in yourselves may help yourselves as best you can, but you who are trusting in God have ample reasons to expect that God will come to your assistance! It is yours to watch and yours to work as if everything depended upon you, but it is yours, also, to remember that everything does *not* depend upon you! Sometimes God has come in to help His servants so exactly at what we call, "the nick of time," that they have hardly been able to believe their own senses! "Strange," they say, "it is like a miracle!" And so, indeed, it is, for the difference between the old dispensation and the new is that God used to work His wonders by suspending the laws of nature, whereas now He does greater things than this, inasmuch as He achieves His purposes quite as marvelously and lets the laws of nature remain as they are! He does not make the ravens bring His people bread and meat, but He lets them have their bread and their meat when they need them.

God does not, nowadays, make the manna drop down from heaven. No doubt some people would like Him to do so, but still He brings the manna, for all that—there is the bread and there are the clothes—and therewith should the Christian be content! He supplies His people's needs by ordinary means and herein is He to be wondered at and to be adored! Look up, then! Wipe away that tear. Do not talk for a moment of murmuring against God. Do not go home with that sorry tale to your wife and children and tell them that God is not faithful to you. Wait till tomorrow, at any rate, for "you know not what a day may bring forth."

And *to you who are disconsolate about spiritual things* I might quote the same text. You say, "Ah, I have been hearing the word a very long time and all that I have got from it is a sense of sin, or hardly that. Oh, how I wish that God would bless the word to my soul! I am longing to be saved! What would I not give to be a Christian—a true and sincere Christian—one in whom the Spirit of God has worked a new heart and a right spirit! Oh," you say, "I have sought it by listening to the word and I have sought it in earnest prayer—but months have passed and I have made no advance. I have no more hope, now, than I had long ago! I seem as far off the attainment of eternal life as I was when first I heard the word. No, if possible, I am further off! The word has been a savor of death unto death to me, and not a savor of life unto life." Well, my dear friend, do not give up listening to the word! Do not give up treading the courts of the Lord's house, for if you have up to now got no blessing, yet, being in the way, the Lord may meet with you—for you know not what may be on the morrow!

How many years these poor creatures waited around the pool when they expected that an angel would, at a certain season, come and trouble the water! There they waited. And though they were disappointed scores of times by others stepping in before them, yet, seeing it was the only

hope they had, they waited! Now, it is in the use of the means that *you* are likely to get a blessing. "Faith come by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Do not, therefore, be persuaded to cease hearing, for you know not what may be on the morrow! The very next sermon you shall hear may be the means of your enlightenment! The very next address at the prayer meeting may give you encouragement. The very next time the gospel trumpet sounds, you may obtain your liberty—and what a blessing will that liberty be! When you do find it, you will say it was well worth waiting for.

Let me add another exhortation. Do not give up praying! It is a common device of Satan to say to the seeking soul, "The Lord will never hear *you.* You are one of the *reprobate*! He has never written your name in the Book of Life." Soul, pray as long as you have breath! Let it be your firm resolve to remain at the throne of grace! Say to yourself—

"If I perish, I will pray,
And perish only there."

It is not said that the gate of mercy will open at the first knock. If it were, there would be no room for the virtue of importunity! But the Lord, who delights in our importunity, encourages us with the promise that one day the gate will be opened. "Ask and *it shall be* given you; seek and you *shall* find; knock and *it shall be* opened unto you." And who knows how soon this may be? Why, before you close your eyes tonight, you may be able to look to Christ Crucified and find joy and peace in believing! Instead of the weeping prayer at the bedside, there may be a happy prayer of another kind—not with tears of sorrow, but with tears of holy joy—to think that the Lord has enlightened your darkness, that you have looked unto Christ and now your face is not ashamed! Why should it not be so tonight? Why should it not be so on the morrow? God grant, poor disconsolate one, that it may be so very speedily!

At any rate, will you let me repeat the advice I have already given? Since you cannot know that God will not hear you. Since it never was revealed to any man and never will be, that God will *not* regard his cry, if you can get no further than the King of Nineveh did, yet go on and, "who can tell" what may be, for you know not what a day may bring forth! I will tell you one thing and you may take it as being God's own truth—if you go to Christ empty-handed, guilty, yet willing to take all your salvation from Him as a free gift—and if you cast yourself upon Him, I will tell you what the day *will* bring forth! It will bring forth eternal life to you—salvation, joy and peace! It will bring forth adoption, for you shall be received into the divine family! It will bring forth to you the foretaste of the heaven which God has prepared for His people! You shall know a blessed day here that shall be a foretaste of a never-ending day hereafter—a day that shall be as one of the days of heaven upon earth!

I wish that the Lord would bless these words of mine to disconsolate ones. I think there may be some who may be sustained for a while and kept up by what I have said. But it will be better, still, if they shall now be filled with a desperate resolve to cast themselves at the foot of the cross. Then little do they know what the day will bring forth! They cannot

imaging the joy they shall have, nor the peace they shall receive! The pardon which Christ shall give them is far more rich than they have thought it could be—and the success with which their prayers shall be crowned is far more marvelous than even their best hopes have conceived! "You know not what a day may bring forth."

III. Now thirdly, turning this time not to those who are fearing the future, nor yet to those who are disconsolate about present affliction, I thought of addressing a few words to THOSE WHO ARE WEARIED IN THE MASTER'S SERVICE.

I can scarcely sympathize, as I could wish to do, with those who have worked for Christ unsuccessfully. To say, "Master, I have toiled all the night and have taken nothing," has never been my lot and, therefore, I can only speak from what I suppose to be the feeling of unsuccessful men. For these many years I have been preaching the gospel in this great London and I know not that at any time God has blessed us more than He is blessing us now! Neither can I say that at any time He has blessed us less, for it seems as if He has always been giving us more than we can receive and blessing the word exceedingly above what we asked or ever thought! There is room for nothing in my case but gratitude and encouragement, for humble dependence upon God for the future and adoring joy for the past and the present.

But, what hard work it must be for a minister or a Sunday school teacher to go on preaching and laboring positively without success, or with so little that it is only like a cluster here and there upon the topmost bough! I can imagine such brothers and sisters feeling that they can speak no more in the name of the Lord. And, as they weep over their failure, saying with Isaiah, "Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" I should not wonder but that my text may whisper in their ears a comfortable thought, "You know not what a day may bring forth."

Do not cease from your labor, dear brother! You are fainting today, but *tomorrow you may arise with new strength.* Or feeling as if you were but weakness, itself, in the morning, though you may hardly know how it came about, in the evening you may be happy and cheerful! The divine Presence may overshadow your heart and drive your fears away, consoling you in your distress and making you feel as if it were well to be God's servant even if one had no present reward!

And what if, coming at the back of this, *you should find yourself, next time you go to your work, discharging it with unusual zest and with new power?* What if the pulpit, instead of being, as it has been, a prison to you, should suddenly come to be a palace? What if, instead of there being a mere bush in the wilderness, God should dwell in the bush and make it all ablaze, like that unconsumed burning bush which Moses saw? What if the stammering tongue should suddenly be unloosed and the cold heart be all aglow with divine enthusiasm? What if the poor tongue of clay should suddenly become a tongue of fire? What a change it would be! Ah, but "you know not what a day may bring forth."

And what if, while you are yourself thus quickened, *there should fall a like spirit upon the people*, upon the children in the class, upon the hearers in the House of prayer? What if, instead of the dull, lead eyes which looked as if Death, itself, were gazing from them—what if, instead of stony and motionless hearers, there should suddenly be a holy sensitiveness given to the people—what would you say to that? Yet why should there not be? Sometimes such grace comes all at once! The rock has been long smitten, yet it would not break—but, all of a sudden there has come a blow of the hammer, and that, perhaps, not so hard as many that have fallen before, but it has hit the rock in the right place and lo!—the mass of stone flies to shivers! "Oh!" you say, "I could keep on at my work if I thought that this would happen." Keep on at your work, then, v, for you do not know what will come next! Pray for great things and you may then expect them! You may not make sure of such blessing, of course, if you have not prayed for it! But, having sought it, why should it not come?

I believe all Sunday school teachers find that sometimes such sudden melting comes over their classes, and ministers often realize that all of a sudden, they scarcely know how, but there is a change in the very aspect of their hearers, so that it is quite a different thing to preach. I am very conscious of the difference there is between the various congregations I address. Almost every day, and sometimes twice a day, I am preaching. Occasionally it is dreadful misery because, say what we will, we know we have not a sympathizing audience. We feel as though we were dragging a plow over the rough ground! But when we feel that the Spirit of God is there, then we realize that we are sowing this good seed, that it is falling on good ground—and we *expect the joyful sheaves which are to be our reward!* And yet, brothers and sisters, we are as much the servants of God when we are doing the one thing, as when we are doing the other—and are as much in His service when we are unsuccessful as when we are successful! We are not responsible to God for the souls that are saved, but we are responsible for the gospel that we preach and for the way in which we preach it. And "who can tell" whether those of us who have been least successful may not suddenly exchange our heavy toil for the most delightful service, for we know not what a day may bring forth!

And how do you know, my brothers and sisters, what may yet happen? You were saying, this morning, "It is a dark age for the church." Well, so it is. You were saying, "I believe it is quite a crisis." So it is. Every year, in fact, seems to be a crisis. "Ah," you say, "but there are peculiar dangers now." No doubt there are! And I think the oldest man here remembers that there were peculiar dangers when he was a boy—there always have been and always will be peculiar dangers! But if there is danger from this revival of Ritualism and, no doubt there is—yet who among us can tell what a day may bring forth? Are we certain that God will not yet turn back the tide of Romanizing error? Are we sure that He has not a man somewhere, or even 50 men who shall be the instruments of accomplishing this? Has it not often occurred that the very men who have been the hottest advocates of a certain system have afterwards been

the greatest enemies of that system? The Christian church could never have expected to get an apostle from among the Pharisees and, least of all, could they have supposed that they would find in Saul of Tarsus, the blood-thirsty persecutor, the great apostle of the Gentiles—not one whit behind the very chief of the twelve! You and I do not know what God has in store. There may be somewhere at this very moment a man, unknown to you, who is reading the word and, as he reads it, he may, like the monk, Luther, get such of the Light of God through the reading that he who once helped to build up, will be the instrument in God's hand to destroy! I am getting more and more hopeful about these matters. I entertain the most sanguine expectation that the God who has put His enemies to rout in years gone by will do it now once again! And instead of sitting down in anything like heaviness of spirit, or oppression of heart, I would speak hopefully and have you, my brothers and sisters, be filled with hope, for we do not know what a day may bring forth!

Suddenly the whole current of the public mind may be turned! *There may come a great tide of conversions* which shall be the strength and the joy of the Christian church! On a sudden, slumbering churches may awake, gracious revivals may come! Upon the land the Holy Fire may once again descend from heaven. The Christian church may start up to find that the God who answered by fire is still in her midst! The mourning Christian may put off his ashes and sackcloth, and put on his beautiful array and a shout of joy may go up, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" where you and I expected to hear nothing but, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

Let us, then, if we are working for the Master, instead of growing tired with service, hear Him say to us, "Be not weary in well doing, for in due season you shall reap if you faint not." Let us, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as we know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord. You know not how soon you shall see this success, for you know not what a day may bring forth. I hope every city missionary who hears me, every Bible woman, every minister, every tract-distributor, every Sunday school teacher, will try and look this very sweet thought in the face! Expect that God is going to do great things and He will do them, for He does very much according to His people's expectations. According to your faith shall it be done unto you!

IV. I will now say a few words, in the fourth place, to THOSE WHO ARE DISPIRITED IN PRAYER—to some who have been engaged in special supplication for some objective, but who, up till now, have received no answer—and are ready to give up praying. Let me encourage such to persevere by repeating to them the words of Solomon, "You know not what a day may bring forth."

There is a story I have often heard told by our Methodist friends of a woman who had long prayed for her husband. She resolved that she would pray for him every day a certain number of times. I think it was for 10 years and after that, she would pray no longer, supposing that if her prayer was not heard by that time, it would be an intimation that God

did not intend to grant the blessing. I do not think she was right in setting any limit to God at all, or that she had any right to act so. However, on this occasion, God winked at His servant's infirmity and, so the story goes—and I do not doubt its correctness—on the day on which she was to cease from prayer, her husband suddenly turned thoughtful and asked her the question which she had so longed to hear from him, "What must I do to be saved?" I am sure that those who have watched over their success in prayer will have met with cases quite as startling as that—things which your neighbor would not believe if you were to tell him, but which you treasure up among those inward experiences which are true to you, however improbable they may seem to other people! You know, dear friends, that you have obtained answers to prayer, very amazing ones, and have obtained them very promptly and very punctually. You have had your prayers met just as an honest merchant meets his bills at the appointed time. On the expected day God has met with you and given you what you wanted and what you sought for—just at the very time you needed it.

But now I will suppose that you are tried thus. That dear child of yours, instead of hopefully rewarding your prayers, seems to be going from bad to worse! Perhaps, dear v, it is your son. And I know there are many such cases. The devil has told you that it is no use to pray for him, for God will never hear you. Or else good sister, it is your brother—and your prayers for him has been incessant—indeed, it has been a constant burden on your mind. Now, in such cases, I charge you, I earnestly entreat you never to listen to the malicious insinuation of Satan that, "you may as well leave off praying, for you will not be heard," for, at the very least, and I am now putting it on the very lowest ground, possible, "You know not what a day may bring forth." You cannot tell but that the hard heart may yet be softened and the rebellious will be subdued. You would be surprised to go home and find your son converted, would you not? Well, but such things have occurred! You would be surprised if your wife came in some Sunday evening and said, "I have been hearing so-and-so, and God has met with me." Yet why should it not be so? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Is His arm shortened that it cannot save? Is His ear heavy that it cannot hear? Even if you should die without seeing your children converted, or your dear ones brought in—you do not know, even then, what a day may bring forth! They may be converted after you are dead—and it will tend, possibly, to swell the joy of heaven when you shall see them, after years of wandering, brought to follow their father, their father whom in life they despised, but whom after he was gone they came to imitate! Persevere in prayer, Christian! "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Praying breath is never sent in vain. Still besiege the throne of God! The city may hold out for a while, but prayer should capture it. Beleaguer the throne of grace—it is to be taken. Never raise the siege until you get the blessing—the blessing shall certainly be yours.

V. And now I cannot talk longer on this matter, so I will close with just another thought to THOSE OF US WHO ARE CHEERFUL AND HAPPY.

I hope there are many of us who are neither afraid and fretting about the future, nor depressed about the present, neither worn out with toil in the Master's service, nor dispirited in prayer. There are some of us to whom the Lord is so gracious that our cup runs over. Now we may just put another drop on the top of the full cup. Dear friend, "you know not what a day may bring forth." It may perhaps bring forth to you and to me our last day. What a blessed day that would be—our last day! Our dying day! No, do not call it so, but the day of our translation—the day of our great change, the day of our being taken up—that of our being carried away in the fiery chariot to be forever with the Lord!

You know not but what this may be your case tomorrow. Oh, what joy! I am doubting and fearing, today, but I may see His face tomorrow! And see it so as never to lose sight of it again! From my poor tenement of poverty I am going to the mansions of eternal blessedness! From the sickbed, where I have tossed in pain, I shall mount to everlasting joy! The streets of gold may be trod tomorrow and the palm branch of victory may be waved tomorrow—the streets trod by these weary feet and the palm branch waved by these toil-worn hands! Yes, tomorrow the chants of angels may be in your ears and the swell of celestial music may make your soul glad. Tomorrow you may see the beautiful vision and may behold the King in His beauty in the land that is very far off. I like to live in the constant anticipation of being "with Christ, which is far better." Do not put it off, Christian, as though it were far away! If we had to wait a hundred years they would soon pass, like a watch in the night. But we shall not live as long as that. We may be with our Lord tomorrow! We may sup here on earth and breakfast in heaven! We may breakfast on earth and hear Christ, say, "Come and dine," or we may go from our Communion Table here to the great supper of the Lamb above, to be with Him forever!

This is the best of it. When somebody said to a Christian minister, "I suppose you are on the wrong side of fifty?" "No," he said, "thank God, I am on the right side of fifty, for I am sixty and am, therefore, nearer heaven." Old age should never be looked upon with dismay by us—it should be our joy! If our hearts were right in this matter, instead of being at all afraid at the thought of parting from this life, we should say—

"Ah me! Ah me that I
In Kedar's tents here stay!
No place like this on high.
There, Lord! Guide my way.
O happy place!
When shall I be,
My God, with You,
And see Your face?"

I have not time to say much to others here who are not concerned in these sweet themes, but I will at least say this. *Let the careless and thoughtless here remember that they do not know what a day may bring forth.* Tomorrow it may not be that grand party to which you are intending to go. Tomorrow it may not be that sweet sin of which your evil nature is thinking. Tomorrow may see you on a sickbed. Tomorrow may see you on your deathbed. Tomorrow, worst of all, may see you in hell! O

sinner, what a state to live in—to be in daily jeopardy of eternal ruin, to have the wrath of God, who is always angry with the wicked, abiding on you—and not to know but that tomorrow you may be where you can find no escape, no hope, no comfort! Tomorrow in eternity! Tomorrow banished from His presence forever! Tomorrow to have that awful sentence thrilling in your soul, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

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MAROTH—OR, THE DISAPPOINTED
NO. 3184

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"For the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the LORD unto the gate of Jerusalem." Micah 1:12.

THE village of the bitter spring, for that is probably the meaning of this name, Maroth, experienced a bitter disappointment. At the time when the Assyrians invaded the land, the inhabitants expected that deliverance would come to them from some quarter or other. From the context, I judge that they placed some sort of reliance upon the Philistines. They possibly had some hope that the king of Egypt would come up to attack Sennacherib. Evidently they looked for help everywhere except to God and, consequently, as no good came to them from the men upon whom they had relied, trial and overwhelming distress came to them from the hand of God. He was angry at their trust in men and their lack of trust in Himself and, therefore, He punished their unbelief by their total overthrow! The Assyrian swept over them and stopped not till he reached the gate of Jerusalem, where Hezekiah's faith in God made the enemy pause and retreat.

The fact recorded in the text suggests to us, first, *sad disappointments*—"the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came." And secondly, *strange appointments*—evil came down from the LORD." When we have considered these two things, we will change the subject, altogether, and speak about *expectations which will not end in disappointment*.

I. First, then, we are to think of SAD DISAPPOINTMENTS. "The inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came."

Disappointments are often extremely painful at the time. Even in little things, we do not like to be disappointed. If our expectations are not realized, we feel as if a sharp thorn has pierced our flesh. But in great matters, disappointment is much more serious. In the case of the inhabitants of Maroth, it was fatal—they expected to be delivered from the Assyrians, but they were either slain on the spot, or carried away captive to Nineveh. It would be the most terrible disappointment of all if our expectations concerning our souls should not be realized! It would be painful to the last degree to discover upon our dying bed that the good we had looked for had not come—to find that we had built our house upon the sand and that when we most needed its shelter, it was swept away! O Lord, disappoint not Your servant's hope! All my expectation is from You and You have said, "They shall not be ashamed that wait for

Me." Any other expectation beside this, concerning our eternal interests, will only bring us pain and misery forever.

Disappointments in this life, however, although they are at times very painful, are sometimes of such a character that *could we know all the truth, we would not lament them.* There are many who have looked forward to a change in their condition in life, or their position in society—and they have been disappointed. For a time they have been ready to wring their hands in anguish, yet if they knew what the consequences would have been if their expectations had been realized, they would fall down upon their knees and devoutly praise the Lord for the disappointment which had been so great a blessing in disguise to them! You, my brother, had expected to be rich by this time, but God knew that had you been rich, you would have been proud and worldly and would have ceased to enjoy fellowship with him—so He kept you poor that you might still be rich in faith! You, my friend, had expected to be in robust health at this time, but had you been so, you might not have been walking so humbly before the Lord as you are now doing. You, my oft bereaved brother, had hoped to see your family spared to grow up, so that you might have had sons and daughters upon whom you could have leaned in your declining days—yet they might have proved a plague and a sorrow to you instead of a comfort and a blessing. Complain not that they were taken from you in their childhood by that kind hand which made them blest forever and only deprived you for a while of their companionship, which might not have been an unmixed blessing to you. Rest assured, O child of God, that whatever happens to you is as it should be! Believe that if you could have infinite wisdom, and the helm of your life's vessel could be entrusted to your hands, you would steer it precisely as God steers it! You would not always guide the ship through smooth water any more than He does. If you could be unerring in judgment and could be your own guide, you would choose for yourself the track which God has chosen for you. It is divine love and infallible wisdom that have ordered all things for you up to this very moment, so whatever your disappointments may have been, comfort yourself with the assurance that they have been among your greatest blessings!

There are some expectations which are certain to be disappointed. When a man expects to prosper through wrongdoing, his expectations will certainly not be realized—at least not in the long run, however much he may seem to prosper for a while. When a man thinks that happiness can be found in the ways of sin, he will be bitterly disappointed sooner or later. When a man expects that by self-reliance he will be able to gain all that he needs without trusting to a stronger arm than his own, his expectations will not be realized. When a man is relying upon his fellow creature—when he thinks that the all-important matter for him is to have some rich patron or powerful friend—and he is under the delusion that he can do without any help from heaven—he is sure to be disappointed! And he who is depending upon his own good works and trusting to his own unaided resolutions to hold on in the way of holiness will be terribly disappointed unless he repents before it is too late! There are some things which only fools will expect—things which are contrary

to the laws of nature, and things which are contrary to the rules of divine grace! The man who never sows good corn, but yet expects to reap at harvest time, is a fool and his disappointment will come in the form of thorns and thistles all over his fields! The sluggard who lies in bed and lazily says, "A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep," may expert in that way to become wealthy, but Solomon long ago said to him, "Your poverty shall come as one that travels and your need as an armed man." This is true in spiritual things as well as in temporal. God gives blessing to effort and diligence—not to idleness and lethargy!

Besides this, *in many cases disappointments are highly probable*. Some of our familiar proverbs relate to such cases as these. One says, "Those who wait for dead men's shoes are pretty sure to go barefoot." Another is, "If they never drink milk till they get their uncle's cow, they will be long thirsty for the lack of it." Yet there are persons who waste a great part of their lifetime in vain expectations of what they call, "windfalls." We know that the "windfalls" in the orchard generally fall because they are rotten and are not worth picking up! And other "windfalls" are often no more valuable. There are men who might have prospered if they had not foolishly sat down in the expectation that somehow or other, a great fortune would hunt them out and make them independent—such expectations are usually doomed to disappointment. If any of you have fallen into the pernicious habit of reading works of fiction and so have formed romantic ideas of what is likely to occur to you, the great probability is that your daydreams will be only dreams—and your castles in the air will never be inhabited by you! I pray you not to fritter away your time and opportunities in vain expectations which most probably will never be fulfilled. Expect to receive not quite all you earn, nor all you lend, and probably your expectations will not be disappointed, but, as another of our proverbs puts it, if you count your chickens before they are hatched, it is highly probable that your expectations will not be realized.

There are also *other expectations that will possibly end in disappointment*. Even the most legitimate hopes are not always realized. "There's many a slip between the cup and the lips." When we feel almost sure that a certain plan will succeed, suddenly it turns out to be all a mistake. We think that as prudent men, we have arranged matters so wisely that they have to succeed, yet in the issue we are grievously disappointed. Be not hasty in condemning those who do not succeed in business, for at least in *some* cases, failure has come through no fault of theirs. Do not judge harshly all who are in need—no doubt there are all too many instances in which poverty is the result of idleness or drunkenness—but there are other cases in which poverty is blameless and even honorable. Men may toil hard, do the very best they can and seek God's blessing upon their efforts—and yet they may not be permitted to secure a competence. If you, my friend, reckon upon seeing all your schemes succeed, you are very likely to be disappointed. If you, my Christian brother, imagine that between here and heaven, the way

will be laid with smooth turf, well rolled, you will certainly be disappointed! If you think that the sea will always be calm as a lake and that no storm will ever ruffle it, you will be disappointed. There will be some things that will fulfill your expectations, but there will be others that will not—and in those you will be like that inhabitants of Maroth who "waited carefully for good, but evil came."

In every case *disappointments should be borne with the greatest possible patience and equilibrium*. I am sorry to say that we do not all bear them so, not even all of us who profess to be Christians. Remember that God has never promised that all our expectations shall be fulfilled—it would have been a doubtful blessing if such a thing had been guaranteed to us—and we might easily have expected ourselves into utter misery! Who are you that everything should happen just as you wish? Should the weather be fine simply because you want it to be so when a thousand fields are gasping for rain? Should you have the channels of trade turned in your direction when if that were the case, scores of others would be bankrupts? Is everything in this world to be so arranged that you shall be the darling and pet of providence? It cannot be right for such a state of things to prevail! Therefore, when we are disappointed, whether it is in little matters or great ones, let us bear the disappointment bravely and lay the whole case before the Lord in prayer. Let us ask Him why He contends with us. And if there is any reason for it which we can discover in ourselves, let us endeavor to remove it. Or if we can find no cause, let us believe that God acts in wisdom and in love—and let us cheerfully submit to whatever He appoints for us.

We would bear our disappointments with all the greater equilibrium if we would always remember that *disappointments are often exceedingly instructive*. What do they teach us? Well, first they teach us that our judgment is very fallible. We learn from them that we are not such prophets as we thought we were! We fancied that if we said that such and such a thing was going to happen, it would surely be so. But when the result proved to be just the opposite, we found that our judgment was not as reliable as we thought it was and, therefore, our forecast was quite inaccurate. So our disappointments teach us our need of greater wisdom than our own—and also teach us the folly of trusting to our own understanding.

They also teach us the uncertainty of everything that is earthly. What is there, here, that can be depended upon for a single hour? The life of the most robust may suddenly end! The current of affairs may change more rapidly than the tide. Riches take to themselves wings and fly away. The greatest wisdom becomes the greatest folly. All is vanity and vexation of spirit. If our disappointments teach us this lesson, we shall be well repaid for having suffered them!

Let them also teach us to speak correctly, as Christians should. You know how the Apostle James writes, "Come now, you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain. Whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow…For that you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.'" Let our past disappointments warn us to speak with bated

breath about tomorrow and the more distant future, and not to say without any qualification what we will do as if all time were at our disposal and we were the disposers of all events. Even if we do not always use the words, "If the Lord wills," "If God pleases," "If we are spared," or similar expressions, let the spirit of them always be in our mind so that we do not think and speak unconditionally concerning the unknown future!

Let our disappointments also teach us to submit—absolutely and unquestioningly—to the Lord's will. We wish to have things in a certain fashion, but God plainly indicated that they are not to be so. Therefore let us cheerfully surrender our wish to His will. Surely, O child of God, you would not think of wanting to have your way when once you learn that it is contrary to your heavenly Father's way! If you are right minded, you will at once give up your wish and will say, "Not my will, O my Father, but Your will be done!" You will probably do that all the more decidedly if some disappointment has burnt into your soul the truth that God is wiser than you are—and that His will must always prevail above yours. Stand to the surrender at all times and say to the Lord, "Show me Your way, and let me hear the voice behind me saying, 'This is the way; walk you in it.'"

Let me also add that *disappointments may be greatly sanctified*. They are not always so, for sometimes they irritate and so cause sin—or they create a murmuring spirit against God and so make us worse than we were before. But sanctified disappointments are part of that rod of the covenant which is so beneficial in the hands of a chastening God. Sometimes a grievous disappointment has changed the whole current of a person's life. A man was looking forward to what he hoped would be a happy marriage, but his intended bride suddenly died—and then he surrendered his heart to Jesus, who became the Bridegroom of his soul! A son had expected to inherit a large estate, but by some means the wealth came not into his possession—and when he found himself poor, he sought true riches in Christ! A strong man had hoped to build up a prosperous business, but he was unexpectedly struck with serious illness, his former prosperity departed from him—and then he fixed his hopes upon the ever blessed Son of God and so he attained to bliss which no earthly success could ever have brought him! I remember meeting a man who told me that he could never see spiritually until he had lost his natural eyesight! And there have, doubtless, been many who were never rich until they became poor, and others who were never happy until their earthly happiness was blighted and blasted, and then they sought and found true happiness in Jesus. What a blessed disappointment it is that leads us to a Savior's love!

Disappointments are also sanctified to believers when they help to wean them from the world. There is a sort of glue about this world that makes it adhere to us and makes us adhere to it. David found it so when he wrote, "My soul cleaves unto the dust." Earth naturally clings to earth, but I will guarantee you that David cared little enough for earth when his handsome son, Absalom, became a rebel and when his house,

which had been such a comfort to him, became a terror and when his subjects, who had almost worshiped him, joined in rebelling against him! Then did he plaintively sigh, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest." Yes, disappointments wean us from the world and makes us plume our wings, ready to be up and away to that fair country where hope shall reach its full fruition and disappointment shall be unknown forever!

Moreover, brothers and sisters, when we meet with disappointments in this life, we prize all the more, the faithfulness of our God! When you have had an unkind word from one whom you have loved, how much more closely you have nestled down in the embrace of your ever loving Savior! When you have been betrayed by a friend in whom you trusted, what sweet communion you have had with the friend that sticks closer than a brother! When your gourd above you has withered and you have lost its welcome shade, however more you have prized the shadow of a great rock in a weary land! It is a good thing for us to have all earthly props knocked away, for then we value more than ever the faithfulness of the God who never fails those who put their trust in Him. Those who always remain on dry land will never learn by practical experience what the sailors know—"They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters: these see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep." And it is when, like the storm tossed mariners, our soul is melted because of trouble, that our dear Lord and Master, coming to us upon the crest of the wave, becomes tenfold more precious to us than He had ever been before! If our disappointments would only make us hold with a loose hand all we have—house, lands, children, health, reputation and everything else, so that if God should take them all away, we would still continue to bless His name because we never reckoned that they were ours to keep, but were only lent to us during our Lord's good will and pleasure—if our disappointments only brought us to such a condition as that, they would be, indeed, most soul enriching things!

II. Now I must leave this part of the subject and turn to the second portion which is STRANGE APPOINTMENTS—"The inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the LORD."

This expression must not be misunderstood. "Evil came down from the LORD." The word, "evil," here means *trial*, *affliction*, *chastisement*, and to a Christian this kind of, "evil," is often for his highest good! It does seem singular to a child of God that even that which he thinks to be evil should come down from the Lord. How can it be that God is loving and kind when He deprives one of His children of her husband, or takes away her babe from her bosom? How can it be that God is infinitely wise, yet He sometimes casts His poor weak children into difficulties where they are at their wits' end and know not what to do? How is it that He loves the righteous and is gracious to them, yet He puts some of the best of them into the hottest part of the furnace and makes it burn most furiously like that of Nebuchadnezzar of old? If our aches and pains came from Satan; if our losses were the result of chance, or if our sufferings arose only from the malevolence of the wicked—they would be comprehensible—but it is oftentimes a marvel and a mystery to a

Christian why the Lord sends the trials which lays upon him! Be patient, brothers and sisters! What you know not, now, you shall know hereafter—so be content to wait until God reveals the mystery to you if He pleases to do so—and then it will make you marvel that your Lord should have taken such pains in training you for the service He has for you yet to render Him!

Perhaps I am addressing some child of God who is sorely puzzled as to why certain things have happened to him. But, Father, does your child always understand all that you do to him and for him? It was not long ago that your boy was sent away to school—perhaps he thought you unkind in treating him so—yet is was real love to him that prompted you to send him away from you to be all the better trained for whatever may lie before him in his later life. He does not understand all that is in your mind and you can never comprehend all that is in the infinite mind of your Father who is in heaven. Be satisfied that whatever God does must be right.

Yet, remember that in a certain sense, *all trials do come from God*. There may be secondary agents coming in between, but let us not quibble at them, or quarrel with them. When Shimei cursed David, Abishai said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over, I pray you, and take off his head." But David said, "Let him curse, because the Lord has said to him, 'Curse David.'" He felt that he deserved to be cursed so he looked upon Shimei's insults as being a form of chastisement from God. If you strike a dog with a stick, he will bite the stick—but if he had more sense, he would try to bite *you*. And when we are chastened, it is foolish for us to be angry with the rod that God employs—and we dare not be angry with God! There may be sin in the person who causes us to suffer, as there was in the case of Shimei, but we must look beyond him even as David did—and learn what God's intention is in thus chastening us—and submissively accept whatever God appoints.

There are some trials which come very distinctly from God. Perhaps you have lost one who was very dear to you. Let it comfort your heart that it was the Lord who took away your loved one. There is an empty chair in your house and every time you look at it your eyes fill with tears—yet never forget that it was the Lord who called to Himself the one who used to occupy that chair. Or possibly your trouble is that you are gradually fading away by consumption or some other deadly disease. Well, if it is so, that is God's appointment for you in the order of His providence, so do not rebel against what is clearly His will. Or it may be that your trial is that you have struggled hard to gain an honest livelihood for yourself and your family, but instead of attaining that end, you are constantly getting further and further away from it. If it is so, look upon your trouble as coming from God and bear patiently what you are unable to alter!

This leads me to say to every Christian whose trial is distinctly from the Lord—my brother or sister, *this makes it all the easier for you to submit without murmuring at God's will*. When such a trial comes, there

is nothing for a believer to say but this, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him." There may be cases in which submission will best be indicated by silence before the Lord. When Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, offered strange fire before the Lord and there went out fire from the Lord and devoured them, it must have been a terrible trial to their father, yet we read, "Aaron held his peace." As if he thought, "Since God has done it, what can I say?" You know the oft repeated story of the gardener who had a favorite rose, and when it was plucked, he was very angry. But when he was told that the master had taken it, he said no more about the matter. May not the owner of the garden take any flowers in it that he pleases? And may not the Lord take away His beloved ones from us whenever He chooses to do so? We ought not to be vexed with Him when He does so, but we ought to say with Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." No, my Lord, I must not and I will not quibble at anything that You have done. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth, but let not man strive with his Maker. In our case, it would not only be striving with our Maker—it would be striving with our best friend, our Father, our all in all—and that we must never do. So, if the trial has come distinctly from God, it should be easy to submit to it.

And, further, if it comes distinctly from God, *it gives us all the more powerful plea in prayer*. One may plead thus, "O Lord, this trouble is not of my own making. You have sent it to me for Your own wise purposes—will You not bring me through it?" Another may say, "O Lord, I am very poor, yet this is not because I have been imprudent or extravagant, but because You have permitted it—so will You not help me in my time of need?" A sister pleads, "O Lord, I am in deep distress. My dear husband has been taken away and I am left with many children and with very scanty means. But as You have put me into this furnace, will You not be with me in it and keep me from being consumed?" When a soldier is sent on a campaign, he is not expected to bear his own charges. And if the great captain of salvation has sent you out to fight for Him, He will meet your expenses. He will also cover your head in the day of battle and make you more than conqueror through His might. Did the Lord ever lay a heavier burden on any man than that man was able to bear unless He also gave him extra strength to enable him to bear it? Rest confident concerning the trial which God sends you, that He will also send you deliverance from it, or divine grace to glorify Him in it! If His left hand smites you, His right hand will support you. If He frowns upon you, today, He will smile upon you tomorrow. If He leads you into deep waters, He will bring you up again to the hills where He will gladden you with the light of His countenance! The deeper your sorrows, the higher shall be your joys! As your tribulations abound, so also shall your consolations abound by Jesus Christ! The groans of earth shall be surpassed by the songs of heaven and the woes of time shall be swallowed up in the hallelujahs of eternity! Therefore if in any of these senses evil comes down upon you from the Lord, I pray that He may give you the grace to accept it and even to rejoice in it!

III. Now we are to close by thinking of EXPECTATIONS WHICH WILL NOT END IN DISAPPOINTMENT.

For instance, I expect, and so do you if you are the Lord's children, that God will keep His promises. It is not always so with men, for they make many promises which they never fulfill. There are men who are so rich and so reliable that their signature to a check is as good as gold to the full value of the check—and God's promise is His check which can be cashed at the bank of faith in every time of need! We are all too apt to rely upon our fellow men, even though they have failed us again and again. But we sometimes find it difficult to depend upon our God, although He has never failed anyone who has trusted Him. O beloved, what wickedness lurks in that fact! If you believe every promise that God has given, you will be able to endorse the testimony that Joshua gave to the children of Israel just before he died, "You know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you; all are come to pass unto you and not one thing has failed thereof."

Then next, *expect much from the merits and work of the Lord Jesus Christ*. If you have really believed in Him, expect to be justified by Him. Expect that He will answer every accusation that can be brought against you either now or at the last great judgment day. Expect also to be preserved and kept by Him. Expect that He will go before you as your shepherd, making you to lie down in green pastures and leading you beside the still waters. Expect that He will plead for you in heaven and that He will soon come to take you up to dwell at His right hand forever! You cannot expect too much of Christ—and large as your expectations may be—none of them shall be disappointed.

And, beloved, *expect much from the work of the Holy Spirit*. If the Spirit of God has quickened you from your death in sin, what is there that He cannot and will not do? Are you in trouble? He can comfort you. Are you depressed? He can cheer you. Are you in the dark? He can enlighten you. Are you at this moment fighting against sin? He can enable you to gain the victory! I am sure that many of God's children do not expect half as much as they ought from the Holy Spirit. They seem to imagine that there are some sins that cannot be driven out of them! They do not, in the power of the Spirit, put the sword to the throat of all their sins. Yet this should be the constant aim of every Christian—to drive out the Canaanites and kill the last Amalekite with the edge of the sword! The Spirit of God is able to subdue the fiercest temper. He is able to impart activity to the most slothful nature. He is able to repress the wildest and most evil desires. He is able to excite us to those virtues which seem to be directly opposite to our natural temperaments and characters. "All things are possible to him who believes." If he will but wholly trust to the Holy Spirit, he shall be able to do great exploits in the war that has to be waged within his own heart and also in the fight against evil which is raging all around him!

If time would permit, I might go on urging you to cherish expectations which are not likely to be disappointed, but I can only summarize them

very briefly. Expect tonight that God will bless you as you offer up your evening prayer. Expect that the Lord will be with you tomorrow sustaining you amid all the cares and toils of the day. Expect for all the days of your active life that as your days, so shall your strength be. And when your declining years come, expect that consolation will be given to you to meet every emergency. In sickness, expect to receive sustaining grace. In death, itself, expect the Lord's very special presence. Expect a glorious resurrection! Expect the triumph that you shall share with Christ in His millennial glory. Expect an eternity of bliss with Him as He has promised, and rest assured that none of these expectations shall be disappointed!

I fear that there are some here who have no right to cherish any of these expectations. You have probably had disappointments about many things. I cannot pity you very much concerning the trivial disappointments of this life—but if you do not seek the Savior where He is found, there is a disappointment in store for you that might well fill all Christian hearts with tender pity and compassion. There is a man who has lived a life of selfish pleasure. He has been clothed in scarlet and fine linen and has fared sumptuously every day. But all of a sudden the voice of God declares that he must die. What will be his horror when he sees all his treasures melting away and himself doomed to depart out of this world as naked as when he entered it? Imagine the case of the man who has been what he calls religious, who has attended to all the ceremonies of his church, or who has been orthodox after the fashion of the sect to which he belongs—but who has had no new birth and, consequently, none of the life of God in his soul—no indwelling Spirit, no vital connection with the Lord Jesus Christ, the one and only Savior! Yet he has expected to be ferried across the bridgeless river by one called Vain-Hope—and when the hour of death has come, God has opened his eyes to let him see his real position and the dread future that is awaiting him! Oh, the terror of that man when his vain and unfounded hopes are disappointed! We have read of some who have offered a great portion of their wealth if they might only be allowed to live another hour, but it was all in vain, for die they must! God save all of you, my dear hearers, from such a doom as that! In order that it may be so, put not your trust in things below—be not like the inhabitants of Maroth who looked to the Philistines and the Egyptians to help them—and so waited in vain for the good that never came. But turn your eyes unto Him who says, "Look unto Me, and be you saved," and then your expectations shall not be disappointed. So may it be, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 4.

(This Exposition belongs to sermon No. 3182, Volume 56—"Boldness at the Throne," but there was no space available for it there—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.)

Verse 1. *Let us therefore fear lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.* Not only dread

coming short, but dread the very *appearance* of it! Oh, that we might now enter into that rest and so clearly enjoy it that there should not even be a seeming to come short of it!

2. *For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.* [See Sermon #2089, Volume 35—PROFITABLE MIXTURE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] They were not united to it by faith. Consequently, as they did not receive the word, it was taken away from them.

3. *For we who have believed do enter into rest.* [See Sermons #866, Volume 15—REST—and #2090, Volume 35—A DELICIOUS EXPERIENCE—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Faith brings us into this rest, even as unbelief shut them out.

3. *As He said, As I have sworn in My wrath they shall not enter into My rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.* That is God's rest, the rest of a finished work—and into that rest many never enter. The work by which they might live forever, the finished work by which they might be saved, they refuse, and so they never enter into God's rest.

4, 5. *For He spoke in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all His works. And in this place again, they shall not enter into My rest.* There are many professing Christians who do not understand what it is to rest because the work of salvation is done. They do not even seem to know that the work *is* done! They understand not that dying word of the Lord Jesus, "It is finished." They think there is something still to be added to His work to make it effectual. But it is not so.

6-8. *Seeing therefore it remains that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief, again He designates a certain day saying in David, Today after so long a time; as it is said, Today if you will hear the voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus had given them rest, then would He not afterward have spoken of another day.* We read of this in the 95th Psalm, where David was urging those to whom he was writing to hear God's voice, and not be like the unbelievers in the wilderness, so that the rest still remained to be entered upon by somebody. Joshua had not given them rest, or else David would not have spoken of entering into rest.

9, 10. *There remains, therefore, a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into His rest, he also has ceased from his own works, as God has from His.* He says, "It is finished. I am no longer going to do my own works, I have done with them—I now trust the finished work of Christ—and that gives me rest. But as to all that wearied me, before, and made life a continual task and toil, it is now ended." God is not a cruel taskmaster to His people. He gives rest to those who trust in Him—and some of us have entered into that rest.

11. *Let us labor, therefore, to enter into that rest lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.* Let us not repeat the story of unbelieving Israel in our own lives. Let us not live and die in the wilderness, but let

us go in and take possession of the Promised Land, the promised rest, in the power of the Holy Spirit!

12. *For the word of God is quick, and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* This verse may be interpreted with reference to the Incarnate Word or to the inspired word—they are so closely united and related to one another that we need not attempt to separate them, but see Christ in the word, and the word in Christ—and learn that both Christ and the word do for us all that the apostle here declares!

13. *Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.* However great a revealer the word of God may be, however clear a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, the God who gave the word is even more so!

14. *Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.* Shall we desert Him, now that He has gone into heaven to represent us? Now that He has fought the fight and won the victory on our behalf, and gone up to heaven as our representative? God forbid!

15, 16. *For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.* [See Sermon #2143, Volume 36—THE TENDERNESS OF JESUS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

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"A SONG OF MY BELOVED"
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"My beloved is mine, and I am His: He feeds among the lilies. Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether."
Song of Solomon 2:16, 17.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon, upon parts of the same passage, are #1190, Volume 20—A SONG AMONG THE LILIES; #2442, Volume 41—"MY BELOVED IS MINE" and #2477, Volume 42—DARKNESS BEFORE THE DAWN—Read/download all the sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org .]

IT has been well said that if there is a happy verse in the Bible, it is this one—"My beloved is mine, and I am His: He feeds among the lilies." So peaceful, so full of assurance, so bursting with happiness and contentment is it, that it might well have been written by the same hand which penned the 23rd Psalm—"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters." The verse savors of Him who, just before He went to Gethsemane, said to His disciples, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you...In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Let us ring the silver bell of this verse again, for its notes are exquisitely sweet! "My beloved is mine, and I am His: He feeds among the lilies."

Yet there is a shadow in the latter part of the text. The prospect is exceedingly fair and lovely—earth cannot show its superior—but it is not entirely a sunlit landscape! There is a cloud in the sky which casts a shadow over the scene. It does not dim it—everything is clear and stands out sharply and brightly—"My beloved is mine, and I am His." That is clear enough, yet I say again that it is not altogether sunlight—there are shadows—"Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away." There is also a mention of the "mountains of Bether"—the mountains of division—and to have anything like division is bitterness. I see here a paschal lamb, but I see bitter herbs with it. I see the lily, but I think I see it still among the thorns. I see the fair and lovely landscape of assured confidence, but a shadow, just a slight shadow, takes away some of its glory. And he who sees it has to still look for something yet beyond—"till the day breaks and the shadows flee away."

The text seems to me to indicate just this state of mind. Perhaps some of you may at this time exemplify it. You do not doubt your salvation—you know that Christ is yours. You are certain of that, albeit you may not be at present enjoying the light of your Savior's countenance. You know that He is yours, but you are not feeding upon that precious fact. You realize your vital interest in Christ, so much so that you have no shadow of a doubt that you are His and He is yours—but still, His left hand is not under your head, nor does His right hand embrace you. A shade of sadness is cast over your heart, possibly by affliction, certainly by the temporary absence of your Lord. So even while exclaiming, "My beloved is mine, and I am His," you are forced to fall on your knees and pray, "Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of division."

We may occupy the time profitably if God the Holy Spirit shall enable us in speaking upon these matters. We have here, first, *a soul enjoying personal interest in the Lord Jesus Christ* or, personal interest assured. We have next, *a soul taking the deepest interest in Christ and longing to know where He is* or, the deepest interest evinced. And then we have *a soul anxiously desiring present communion with Christ* or, visible fellowship, conscious communion sought after.

I. We have here, first, PERSONAL INTEREST IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST ASSURED.

I do not mean to try to preach tonight. I should like my text to preach. And the way in which I should like it to preach would be to see how far we can get hold of it. How we can take it word by word and drink it in! Come to each word as to a well and sit down on the brink and drink a refreshing draught! Come to each word as to a palm tree and eat of the fruit thereof!

The text begins with the words, "my beloved." Come, soul, can you venture to call Christ your beloved? Certainly He should be beloved by you, for what has He not done for you? Favors rich and rare have been the gifts of His hands—gifts purchased by His own most precious blood! If you do not love Him, my heart, you are a most ungrateful thing, indeed! You are deceitful, rotten, loathsome above all things and desperately wicked, O my heart, if Jesus, being your Savior, you do not love Him! He ought to be loved by the most of you here, for you profess to have been redeemed by His blood and adopted into the family of God through Him. You professed, when you were baptized, to be dead with Him—and when you come to this communion table, tonight, you will profess that He is your meat and your drink, your life, your soul's stay and comfort! So, if you do not love Him, what shall I say to you? I will let you say it to yourselves—

"A very wretch, Lord! I should prove,
Had I no love for Thee—
Rather than not my Savior love,

Oh may I cease to be!"

"My beloved." He ought to be so and He has been so. There was a time when you and I did not love Him, but that time is over. We recollect the happy moment when first, by faith, we saw His face and heard Him say, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." Oh, the happiness of the day of conversion! You have not forgotten it. How alive and zealous some of you were then! In those first months when you were brought into the house of mercy and were washed and clothed, and had all your needs supplied out of the fullness that is treasured up in Christ Jesus, you did, indeed, love Him! You were not hypocrites, were you? And you used to sing with such force of voice as well as of heart—

"Jesus, I love Your charming name,
'Tis music to my ear—
Gladly would I sound it out so loud
That earth and heaven should hear!"

Yes, we did love Him, but we cannot stop at that—we *do* love Him! With all our faults, imperfections and frailties, the Lord, who knows all things, knows that we do love Him. Sometimes, brothers and sisters, it is not easy to know whether we love Christ, or not. I have heard many remarks about the hymn containing that line—

"Do I love the Lord, or no?"

but I believe that every honest Christian sometimes asks that question and I think one good way of getting it answered is to go and hear a faithful minister. Last Sabbath morning, I sat and listened to a very simple-minded preacher in a Wesleyan chapel. He was a most unsound Wesleyan, but a thoroughly sound Calvinistic brother. And when he began to preach about the love of Jesus Christ, the tears streamed down my cheeks. I could not help letting them fall upon the sanded floor as I sat there—and I thought to myself, "Well, now, I do love the Savior." I had thought that perhaps I did not, but when I heard of Him and the preacher began to play upon my heartstrings, the music came! When I did but have Christ set before me, that woke up my soul if, indeed, it had been asleep before. When I heard of Him, though only in broken accents, I could not but feel that I did love Him and love Him better than life itself! I trust that it is true of many here that Christ is our "beloved."

But the text says, not only, "beloved," but, "*my b*eloved is mine," as if the spouse took Him all to herself. It is the nature of love, you know, to monopolize. There is a remarkable passage in the third chapter of the prophecy of Hosea, which I need not quote except in outline, where the prophet is bid to take one who had been unclean and unchaste, and to say to her, "You shall be for me, so will I also be for you." This was meant to be typical of what Christ does unto His church. Our love goes gadding abroad unto 20 objects until Christ comes! And then *He* says, "You silly thing, now you shall fly abroad no more. Come, you dove, I will give you a new heart and my wounds shall be your dovecot, and you shall never

wander away again. I will be altogether yours and you shall be altogether Mine—there shall be a monopoly between us. I will be married to you and you shall be married to Me. There shall be communion between us. I will be yours, you wandering sinner, as your husband, and you shall be Mine."

Every heart that has been subdued by sovereign grace takes Jesus Christ to be the chief object of its love. We love our children, we love all our dear ones—God forbid that we should ever fail to love them—but, over and above them all, we must love our Lord. There is not one among us, I think, who would make it a matter of question which we would sooner part with—it would be a melancholy experience to have to follow the partner of one's bosom to the grave—but if it were a choice between wife and Savior, we could not deliberate for a moment! And as for the children of our love, whom we hope to see springing up to manhood and womanhood, it would be a sorry blow to us to have them laid low, but it would not take us a second to decide whether we should lose our Isaacs or lose our Jesus! No, we should not feel that they were lost if God took them from us, but we could not afford to think for a single instant of losing Him who is our everlasting all in all. The Christian, then, makes Christ his beloved beyond all besides! Let other people love what they will, but as for him, he loves his Savior! He stands at the foot of the cross and says, "This once accursed tree is now the blessed bulwark of my confidence." He looks up to the Savior and He says, "Many see no beauty in Him that they should desire Him, but to me He is the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely." Let the scholar take his classics, let the warrior take his weapons of war, let the lover take his tender words and his ardent lyrics, but as for the Christian, he takes the Savior! He takes the Lord Jesus to be to his Alpha and Omega, the beginning, the end, the midst, the all in all—and in Him he finds his soul's solace!

Some people have thought that there is a repetitiveness in the text when it says, "My Beloved *is mine*." Why, of course, if He is my beloved, He is mine—what need is there to say that? Well, those who are acquainted with the Christian's experience know that all believers are subject to many doubts and fears, and that they feel that they cannot make their assurance too sure, so they like to double their expressions of assurance when they can, so each of them says, "My beloved is mine." There is no repetitiveness—the speaker is only giving two strokes of the hammer to drive the nail home! It is put so that there can be no mistake about it, so that the spouse means what she is saying, and intends others to also understand it! "My beloved is mine."

But I think it may mean more than that because we may love a thing, and yet it may not be our own. A man may call money his beloved, yet he may never get it. He may pursue it, but not be able to reach it. The lover of learning may court the love he covets in all the academies of the world, yet he may not be able to win the attainment of his desires. Men may

love, and on their dying beds may have to confess that their beloved is not theirs—but every Christian has that upon which his heart is set—he has Christ! He loves Him and possesses Him, too.

Besides, dear friends, you know that there is a time when men are not able to say that their beloved is theirs. He who has been most wealthy or most wise can take neither his wealth nor his wisdom with him to the tomb. And when the sinner who died and was buried, wakes up in another world, Croesus will be as poor as Lazarus—and the wisest man without Christ will find himself devoid of all wisdom when he wakes up in the day of resurrection! They may stretch out their hands, but they will only clutch emptiness and have to cry, "Our beloved is not ours!" But when we shall wake up in the image of Christ and shall see Him—whether we shall fall asleep or whether we shall be changed, in either case we shall be present with Him—then shall each believer say, "Yes, He is mine, still mine! I have Him, truly have Him! 'My beloved is mine.'" I am inclined to think that if a man can truly say this, he can say the grandest thing that ever man said, "My beloved is mine." "Look," says the rich man, "do you see far away beyond those stately oaks, yonder? Do you see as far as that church spire? Well, as far as you can see, that is all mine!" "Ah," says Death, as he lays his bony hand upon the man, "Six feet of earth, *that* is yours." "Look," says the scholar, as he points to the volumes on his shelves, "I have searched through all these and all the learning that is there is mine." "Ah," says Death, again, as he smites him with his cold hand, "who can tell the difference between the skull of the learned and the skull of the ignorant when the worm has emptied them both?" But the Christian, when he can point upwards and say, "I love my Savior," has a possession which is surely his forever! Death may come, and *will* come, even to him, but all that Death can do is open the door to admit the Christian into still fuller enjoyment of that which was already his. "My beloved is mine." So although I may have but little, I will be satisfied with it! And though I may be so poor that the world will pass me by and never notice me, yet I will live quite content in the most humble possible obscurity because, "my beloved is mine," and He is more than all the world to me! "Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You."

Now I want to stop and see whether we have really got as far as this. How many of us have said, "My beloved is mine"? I am afraid there may be some poor Christian here who says, "Ah, I cannot say that." Now, my dear hearer, I will ask you a question—Do you cling to Christ? Is He your only hope? If so, then He is yours! When the tide goes down, have you ever seen the limpets clinging to the rocks, or holding fast, perhaps, to the pier? Now, is that what your faith does with Christ? Do you cling to Him? Is He all your trust? Do you rest on Him? Well then, if you do, you do not need any other mark or sign—that one is quite enough—if you are

clinging to Christ, then Christ is yours! She who did but touch the hem of His garment received the virtue which came out of Him. If you can cling to Him and, putting away every other confidence and renouncing all other trust, can say, "Yes, if I perish, I will cling to Christ alone," then do not let a single doubt come in to take away the comfort of your soul, for your beloved is yours!

Or perhaps, to put it another way, I may ask you—do you love Jesus? Does His name wake up the echoes of your heart? See the little child in its mother's arms—you want to take it for a little while, but no, it will not come away from its mother. And if you still want to take it, it puts its little arms around its mother's neck and clings there. You could pull it away, perhaps, but you have not the heart to do so. It clings to its mother and that is the evidence to you that she is its mother. Do you cling to Christ in that way? And though you feel that the devil would pull you away from Christ if he could, do you still cling to Him as best you can? Do you remember what John Bunyan said about the prisoner whom Mr. Greatheart rescued from Giant Slay Good's clutches? Mr. Feeble-Mind said, "When he had got me into his den, since I went not with him willingly, I believed I would come out alive again." Is that the case with you? Are you willing to have Christ if you can have Him? Are you unwilling to give Him up? Then you shall never give Him up! He is yours! Do not think that Christ needs a high degree of faith to establish a union between Himself and a sinner, for a grain of mustard seed of faith is sufficient for salvation, though certainly not for the highest degree of comfort. If you can but trust Christ and love Christ, then let not Satan stop you from saying, in the words of the text, "My beloved is mine."

Well, we have got so far, but we must remember the next words, "*I am His*." Now this is true of every Christian. I am His by Christ having made me His. I am His by choice—He elected me. I am His by His Father's gift—God gave me to Him. I am His by purchase—He bought me with His blood. I am His by power, for His Spirit has won me. I am His by my own dedication, for I have vowed myself unto Him. I am His by profession, for I have joined with His people. I am His now by my own deliberate choice of Him, moved by His grace to choose Him! Every Christian here knows that this is true—Christ is yours and you are Christ's. You are the sheep of His pasture. You are the partners of His love. You are members of His body. You are branches of His stem. You belong to Him!

But there are some persons who get at a more practical meaning of this sentence, "I am His," than others do. You know that in the church of Rome they have certain orders of men and women who devote themselves to various benevolent, charitable, or superstitious work—and who come to be especially considered the servants of the Lord Jesus. Now, we have never admired this form of brotherhoods and sisterhoods, but the spirit of the thing is just that which ought to enter into the heart of every Christian man and woman. You members of Christian churches, if you

are what you ought to be, are wholly consecrated to the Savior. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father" should be practiced by the whole church of Christ, not merely by certain "orders" and then to be called "religious"! Every Christian woman is "a sister of mercy." We hear of men who belong to the order of Passionists, but every believing man ought to be of the order of Passionists, moved by the passion of the Savior to consecrate himself to the Savior's work!

"I am His." I would like to have you take this for your motto, you professed Christians, if you can honestly do so. When you wake in the morning, breathe a short prayer while you are dressing, and before bowing the knee, feeling, "I am Christ's, and the first thing when I wake must be a word with Him and for Him." When you go abroad into the world, I want you to feel that you cannot trade as other men trade, that you cannot imitate their tricks and sharp practices because something whispers within your heart, "I am His! I am His! I am different from other men! They may do what they will, for their judgment is yet to come, but I am different from them, for I am Christ's." I wish all Christians felt that the life they live is given to them that they may glorify Christ by it. Oh, if the wealth that is in the Christian church were but devoted to God's cause, there would never be any lack of the means of sustaining missions, or of building houses of prayer in the dark localities of London! If some rich men gave to the cause of Christ as some poor men and women that I know of, do, there would never be any lack in the treasury! I have sometimes rejoiced over some of you. I have had to bless God that I have seen in this church, apostolic piety. I have known men and women who, out of their little, have given almost all that they had and whose one objective in life has been to spend and be spent for Christ—and I have rejoiced over them. But there are others of you who have not given a tithe, no, not a fiftieth part of what you have to the cause of Christ. Yet, perhaps, you stand up and sing—

"I love my God with zeal so great
That I could give Him all."

Stop that! Do not sing lies, for you know very well that you *would not* give Him all and *do not* give Him all! And you also know very well that you would think it the most absurd thing in all the world if you were to give Him all, or even to dream of doing so! Oh, for more consecration! We are, most of us, up to our ankles in our religion—very few of us are up to our knees. But oh, for the man that swims in it, who has got off the earth altogether and now swims in consecration, living wholly unto Him who loved him and gave Himself for him!

I am afraid I shall have to stop here and ask the question, without getting any answer to it—How far can we get toward this second sentence, "My beloved is mine, and I am His"? Do you feel as if you could not say that? Do you feel that you *cannot* say it? Then let this be your prayer, "Lord, if I have not yet done all that I can do; if there is anything left

which I might have done for You, and which I have not done, give me grace that I may do all I can for You and give all I can to You!" There ought not to be an unconsecrated hair on a Christian's head, nor an unconsecrated drop of blood in his veins. Christ gave Himself wholly for us—He deserves that we should give ourselves wholly to Him! Where reserve begins, there Satan's dominion begins, for what is not Christ's is the property of the flesh, and the property of the flesh is the property of Satan! Oh, may the spiritual consecration be so perfect in each one of us that if we live, we may live unto Christ—or if we die, it may still be unto Him! I hope, though we may have to make many grave confessions that we can still say, "My beloved is mine, and I am His." If He stood here at this moment; if we could just clear a space and all of a sudden He should come and stand in our midst, with His wounds still visible, it would be so sweet to be able to then say, "My beloved is mine, and I am His." But I am afraid that in His presence we would have to say, "Jesus, forgive us. We are Yours, but we have not acted as if we were. We have stolen from You what was Your purchase and what You have the right to keep. From this day may we bear in our body the marks of the Lord Jesus and may we be wholly Yours!"

II. I cannot say much upon the second part of the subject, for our time is already nearly gone. THE SOUL, BEING ASSURED OF ITS PERSONAL INTEREST IN CHRIST, LONGS TO KNOW WHERE HE IS.

"Where is He?" asks the soul, and the answer comes from the text, "He feeds among the lilies." The worldling cares not where Christ is, but that is the Christian's one subject of thought—

"Where He is gone I gladly would know
That I might seek and find Him, too."

Jesus is gone, then, among the lilies—among those snow white saints who bloom in the garden of heaven—those golden lilies that are round about the throne of God! He is there in—

"Jerusalem the golden
With milk and honey blest"—

and it makes us long to be there that we may feed with Him among the lilies.

But, still, there are many of His lilies here below, those virgin souls who—

"Wherever the Lamb does lead,
From His footsteps never depart."

If we would find Christ, we must get into communion with His people. We must came to the ordinances with His saints, for though He does not feed *on* the lilies, He feeds *among* them—and there, perhaps, we may meet with Him. You are here, tonight, dear friends, many of you members of this church, and some of you members of other churches and you have come to the place where Christ feeds His flock. Now that He feeds among the lilies, look for Him! At the communion table, do not merely partake of the elements, but look for Him! Look through the bread and

the wine to His flesh and blood of which they are the symbols. Care not for my poor words, but for Him! And as to anything else of which you have been thinking, get beyond that unto Him. "He feeds among the lilies," so look for Him where His saints gather in His name!

If you would meet with Him, look, too, in the blessed lily beds of Scripture. Each book of the Bible seems to be full of lilies, yet you must never be satisfied merely with Scripture, but must get to the Christ of Scripture, *the* Word of God, the sum and substance of the revelation of the Most High! "He feeds among the lilies." That is where He is to be found. Lord Jesus come and feed us among the lilies tonight! Come and feed our hungry souls and we will bless Your holy name!

III. I must leave that part of the subject unfinished because I want to speak of THE SOUL, ASSURED OF CHRIST'S LOVE, DESIRING HIS CONSCIOUS PRESENCE. "Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether."

You observe that the soul speaks here of the day breaking. All of us who love the Lord have to look for daybreak, but the sinner has a night to come. Sinner, this is your day! And when you die, that will be your long and awful night—unbroken by a single star of hope! But Christian, this is your night, the darkest period that you will ever have—but your day will break! Yes, the Lord will come in His glory, or else you shall sleep in Him and then your day shall break. When the resurrection trumpet shall sound, the day of the Lord will be darkness and not light to the sinner, but to you it will be an everlasting daybreak! Perhaps at the present moment your life is wrapped in shadows. You are poor, and poverty casts a shadow. You have a sick one at home, or perhaps you are sickly in body—that is a shadow to you. And the reflection of your sin is another shadow, but when the day breaks the shadows will flee away! No poverty then! No sin then, which is better still! And—

"No groans to mingle with the songs
Which warble from immortal tongues."

Brothers and sisters, it is so sweet to know that our best things are ahead. O sinner, you are leaving your best things behind and you are going to your worst things! But the Christian is going to his best things. His turn is coming. He will have the best of it before long, for the shadows will flee away! No longer shall he be vexed, and grieved, and troubled, but he shall be eternally in the light, for the shadows *shall* flee away!

While the shadows last, you perceive that the soul asks Jesus Christ to turn, as though He had withdrawn His face from her. She says, "Have you turned away from me, my Master? Then turn to me again. Have I grieved and vexed you by growing worldly, carnal, careless, reckless? Then turn to me, my Lord. Have You been angry with me? Oh, love me! Have You not said that Your anger may endure for a moment, but that Your love is everlasting? In a little wrath You have hidden Your face from

me, but oh, now turn unto me!" You know that the proper state for a Christian to be in is not a state in which Christ turns away His smiling face, but the state in which Christ's love is beaming full in His face. I know that some of you think it is best for you to be in the shade but, beloved, do not think so! You need not have shadows forever—you may have the presence of Christ even now to rejoice in! And I would have you ambitious to get two heavens—a heaven below and a heaven above—Christ here and then Christ there! Christ here making you as glad as your heart can be, and the Christ forever filling you with all the fullness of God. May we seek after that double blessing and may we get it!

Then the soul says, "Turn, my beloved, and be You like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether." Dr. Thomson, who wrote *The Land and the Book*, tells us that he thinks he knows the mountains of Bether. It matters little whether he does or does not, but he has seen the roes and the harts skipping over the precipices. Certainly those wild creatures that are accustomed to craggy rocks will go where human footsteps would not dare to follow. And such is the love of Jesus Christ! Our love is easily turned aside. If we are badly treated, we soon forget those who seemed to be so fond of us. But Christ is like a roe or a young hart and He skips over the mountains of our sins and all the dividing mountains of our unbelief and ingratitude which might keep Him away. Like a young hart, He skips over them as though they were nothing at all, and so hastens to have communion with us. There is the idea of fleetness here—the roe goes swiftly, almost like the lightning's flash, and so does the Savior come to the soul in need! He can lift you up from the lowest state of spiritual sorrow to the highest position of spiritual joy—may He do so! Oh, cry to Him! Cry to Him! There is nothing that means so much to a mother than the voice of her child, and there is nothing that means so much to Christ than the voice of His dear people, so come to Him! Say, "Savior, show Your love to me. Dear Savior, do not hide Yourself from Your own flesh. I love you. I cannot live without You. I am grieved to think that I should have driven You away. Come to me! Come to me! Return to me and make me glad in Your presence." Cry thus to Him and He will come to you!

And you, poor sinner, who have never comfortably seen His face—remember that there is life for a look at Him! God give you grace, now, to trust Him—and may you see His face, here, so that you may see Him hereafter with everlasting joy!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 THESSALONIANS 1.

[This exposition belongs to Sermon #3179, Volume 56—
A COMPREHENSIVE BENEDICTION—
but there was not sufficient space available for its insertion there.—Read/download
the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

Verse 1. *Paul, Silvanus and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians.* Paul loved to associate his fellow workers with himself when writing to his brothers and sisters in Christ. Although he had a superior experience to theirs, he put Silvanus, and Timothy, his own son in the faith, with him as his fellow evangelists in writing to "the church of the Thessalonians."

1. *in God our Father.* What a wonderful expression! The church is in God as God is in the church! What a blessed dwelling place for the people of God in all generations. "in God our Father."

1, 2. *And the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* This is the apostle's usual salutation when he is writing to a Christian church. When he is writing to a minister, it is, "Grace, mercy, and peace," for God's most prominent servants especially need great mercy on account of their heavy responsibilities and many shortcomings. But to the church, Paul's greeting is, "Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

3. *We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith* [See Sermons #205, Volume 4—A LECTURE FOR LITTLE-FAITH; #1856, Volume 31—THE HISTORY OF LITTLE-FAITH and #1857, Volume 31—THE NECESSITY OF GROWING FAITH—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *grows exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other abounds.* What a kind of sacred network Christian love makes, intertwisting every believer in Christ with every other believer! "The love of every one of you all toward each other abounds." Oh, that this might really be the case in all the churches of our Lord Jesus Christ!

4, 5. *So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure: which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God.* One of the clearest proofs of the judgment to come is to be found in the present sufferings of the saints through persecutions and tribulations, for if they, for the very reason that they love God, have to suffer here, there must be a future state and time for rectifying all this that is now so wrong!

5-7. *That you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which you suffer: seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us.* For us who believe in Jesus there is a long Sabbath yet to come, to be spent with the apostles and the other holy ones around the throne of God and of the Lamb, even as Paul wrote to the Hebrews, "There remains, therefore, a rest to the people of God."

7-11. *When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be*

punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day. Therefore we also pray always for you. The very people in whom Paul gloried, and over whom he rejoiced, were those for whom he continued to pray! And he did well, for the highest state of grace needs preserving—and there is a possibility of going beyond the utmost height to which any have yet attained. Hence Paul says, "Therefore we also pray always for you"—

11, 12. *That our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power: that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

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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PETER'S SHORTEST PRAYER
NO. 3186

A SERMON
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"Lord, save me."
Matthew 14:30.

I AM going to talk about the characteristics of this prayer in the hope that there may be many who have never yet prayed aright, who may make this their own prayer, tonight, so that from many a person here present this cry may silently go up, "Lord, save me."

Where did Peter pray this prayer? It was not in a place set apart for public worship, or in his usual place for private prayer. He prayed this prayer just as he was sinking in the water! He was in great peril, so he cried out, "Lord, save me." It is well to assemble with God's people for prayer if you can, but if you cannot go up to His house, it matters little, for prayer can ascend to Him from anywhere in the world! It is well to have a special spot where you pray at home—probably most of us have a certain chair by which we kneel to pray and we feel that we can talk to God most freely there. At the same time, we must never allow ourselves to become the slaves even of such a good habit as that—we must always remember that if we really want to find the Lord by prayer—

"Wherever we seek Him, He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground."

We may pray to God when engaged in any occupation if it is a lawful one. And if it is not, we have no business to be in it! If there is anything we do over which we cannot pray, we ought never dare to do it again. And if there is any occupation concerning which we have to say, "We could not pray while engaged in it," it is clear that the occupation is a wrong one.

The habit of daily prayer must be maintained. It is well to have regular hours of devotion and to resort to the same place for prayer, as far as possible. Still, the *spirit* of prayer is better than the *habit* of prayer. It is better to be able to pray at all times than to make it a rule to pray at certain times and seasons. A Christian is more fully grown in divine grace when he prays about everything than he would be if he only prayed under certain conditions and circumstances. I always feel that there is something wrong if I go without prayer for even half an hour in the day. I cannot understand how a Christian can go from morning to evening without prayer. I cannot comprehend how he lives and how he fights the battle of life without asking the guardian care of God while the arrows of temptation are flying so thickly around him! I cannot imagine how he can decide what to do in times of perplexity, how he can see his own imper-

fections or the faults of others without feeling constrained to say, all day long, "O Lord, guide me, O Lord, forgive me! O Lord, bless my friend!" I cannot think how he can be continually receiving mercies from the Lord without saying, "God be thanked for this new token of His grace! Blessed be the name of the Lord for what He is doing for me in His abounding mercy! O Lord, still remember me with the favor that You show unto Your people!" Do not be content, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, unless you can pray everywhere and at all times—and so obey the apostolic injunction, "Pray without ceasing."

I have already reminded you, dear friends, that Peter prayed his prayer when he was in circumstances of imminent danger. Beginning to sink, he cried, saying, "Lord, save me!" "But," asks someone, "ought he not to have prayed before?" Of course he ought—but if he had not done so, it was not too late! Do not say concerning any trouble, "Now I am so deeply in it, I cannot go to God about it." Why not? "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" It would have been well if the disciples had prayed before the first rough breath of the tempest began to toss their little boat, yet it was not too late to pray when the vessel seemed as if it must go down. As long as you have a heart to pray, God has an ear to hear. Look at Peter—he is "beginning to sink." The water is up to his knees, it is up to his waist, it is up to his neck, but it is not yet too late for him to cry, "Lord, save me!" And he has no sooner said it, than the hand of Jesus is stretched out to catch him and to guide him to the boat. So, Christian, cry to God though the devil tells you it is no use to cry! Cry to God even if you are beneath the tempter's foot! Say to Satan, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy—when I fall, I shall arise." But do not forget to cry to the Lord! Cry to God for your children even when they are most ungodly, when their ungodliness almost breaks your heart. Cry to God on behalf of those whom you are teaching in the Sunday school, even when you seem to think that their characters are developing in the worst possible form, still pray for them! Never mind though the thing you ask for them should appear to be an impossibility, for God "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

I would also say to any unconverted person who is here, under conviction of sin—Dear friend, if you are beginning to sink, yet still pray. If your sins stare you in the face and threaten to drive you to despair, yet still draw near to God in prayer. Though it seems as if hell had opened its mouth to swallow you up, yet still cry unto God. "While there's life, there is hope."—

"While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return"—

and the vilest sinner who returns shall find that God is both able and willing to save him! Never believe that lie of Satan that prayer will not prevail with God. Only go as the publican did, beating upon your breast and crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and rest assured that God is waiting to be gracious to you.

I cannot help feeling that Peter's short, simple prayer was uttered in a most natural tone of voice—"Lord, save me." Let us always pray in just such a way as the Spirit of God dictates to us and as the deep sorrow and humiliation of our heart naturally suggest to us. Many men who pray in public get into the habit of using certain tones in prayer that are anything but natural. And I am afraid that some even in private fail to pray naturally. Any language that is not natural is bad—the best tone is that which a man uses when he is speaking earnestly, and means what he says—that is the right way to pray. Speak as if you meant it—do not whine it, or cant it, or intone it—but pour it out of your soul in the most simple, natural fashion that you can. Peter was in too great peril to put any fine language into his prayer! He was too conscious of his danger to consider how he might put his words together—he just expressed the strong desire of his soul in the simplest manner possible—"Lord, save me!" And that prayer was heard! And Peter was saved from drowning, just as a sinner will be saved from hell if he can pray after the same fashion.

I. Now, coming to Peter's prayer, itself, and suggesting that it is a suitable prayer for all who are able to pray at all, my first observation upon it is that IT WAS A VERY BRIEF PRAYER.

There were only three words in it. "Lord, save me." I believe that the excellence of prayer often consists in its brevity. You must have noticed the extreme brevity of most of the prayers that are preserved in Scripture. One of the longest is the prayer of our Savior recorded by John which would, I suppose, have occupied about five minutes. And there is the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple which may have taken six minutes. Almost all the other prayers in the Bible are very short ones and, probably, in our public services, we pray far longer than all of them put together! This may, perhaps, be excused when there are many petitions to be presented by one person on behalf of a large congregation. But at our prayer meetings, where there are many to speak, I am certain that the longer the prayer is, the worse it is. Of course, there are exceptions to this rule. The Spirit of God sometimes inspires a man in such a way that if he would keep on praying all night, we would be glad to join with him in that holy exercise! But, as a general rule, the Spirit of God does no such thing. There are some who pray longest when they have the least to say, and only go on repeating certain pious phrases which become almost meaningless by monotonous reiteration. Remember, dear friends, when you are praying, whether in public or in private, that you have *not to teach the Lord a system of theology*—He knows far more about that than you do! You have no need to explain to the Lord all the experience that a Christian ought to have, for He knows that far better than you do! And there is no necessity for you always to go round all the various agencies and institutions and mission stations. Tell the Lord what is in your heart in as few words as possible—and so leave time and opportunity for others to do the same.

I wonder if anyone here ever says, "I have no time for prayer." Dear friend, dare you leave your house in the morning without bowing the knee before God? Can you venture to close your eyes at night and wear the image of death, without first commending yourself to the keeping of God during the hours of unconsciousness in sleep? I do not understand how you can live such a careless life as that! But, surely, you did not really mean that you had no time to offer such a prayer as Peter's, "Lord, save me." How much time does that take? Or this—"God be merciful to me a sinner." If you realized your true condition in God's sight, you would find time for prayer somehow or other, for you would feel that you must pray! It never occurred to Peter, as he was beginning to sink, that he had no time for prayer. He felt that he must pray—his sense of danger forced him to cry to Christ, "Lord, save me." And if you feel as you should feel, your sense of need will drive you to prayer and you will never again say, "I have no time for prayer." It is not a matter of *time* so much as a matter of *heart*—if you have the heart to pray, you will find the time.

I would urge you to cultivate the habit of praying briefly all day. I have told you before of the Puritan who, in a debate, was observed to be taking notes. But when they were afterwards examined, it was found that there was nothing on the paper except these words, "More light, Lord! More light, Lord! More light, Lord!" He needed light upon the subject under discussion and, therefore, he asked the Lord for it! That is the way to pray. During the day, you can pray, "Give me more grace, God. Subdue my temper, Lord. Tell me, O my God, what to do in this case! Lord, direct me. Lord, save me." Pray thus and you will be imitating the good example of brevity in prayer which our text sets before you.

II. Notice next, that brief as Peter's prayer was, IT WAS WONDERFULLY COMPREHENSIVE AND ADAPTED FOR USE ON MANY DIFFERENT OCCASIONS. "Lord, save me."

It covered all the needs of Peter at that time, and he might have continued to use it as long as he lived. When his Master told him that Satan desired to have him that he might sift him as wheat, he might well have prayed, "Lord, save me." When he had denied his Master and had gone out and wept bitterly, it would have been well for him to pray, "Lord, save me." When he was afterwards journeying to and from preaching the gospel, he could still pray, "Lord, save me." And when, at last, he was led out to be crucified for Christ's sake, he could hardly find a better prayer than this with which to close his life—"Lord, save me."

Now, as Peter found this prayer so suitable for him, I commend it to each one of you. Have you been growing rich lately? Then you will be tempted to become proud and worldly. So pray, "Lord, save me from the evils that so often go with riches. You are giving me this wealth; help me to be a good steward of it and not to make an idol of it." Or are you getting poor? Is your business proving a failure? Are your little savings almost gone? Well, there are perils connected with poverty, so pray, "Lord, save me from becoming envious or discontented. Let me be willing to be poor rather than do anything wrong in order to get money." Do you, dear

friend, feel that you are not living as near to God as you once did? Is the chilling influence of the world having its effect on you? Then pray, "Lord, save me." Have you fallen into some sin which you fear may bring disgrace upon your profession? Well then, before that sin grows greater, cry, "Lord, save me." Have you come to a place where your feet have well near slipped? The precipice is just before you and you feel that if some mightier power than your own does not interpose, you will fall to your serious hurt, if not to your destruction. Then at once breathe the prayer, "Lord, save me." I can commend this prayer to you when you are upon the stormy sea, but it will be equally suitable to you upon the dry land—"Lord, save me!" I can commend it as suitable to you when you are near the gates of death, but it is just as much adapted to you when you are in vigorous health—"Lord, save me!" And if you can add to the prayer, "And, Lord, save my children, and my kinsfolk, and my neighbors," it will be even better! Still, for yourself, personally, it is an admirable prayer to carry about with you wherever you go. "Lord, save me."

III. Peter's prayer had a third excellence, IT WAS VERY DIRECT.

It would not have done for Peter, just then, to have used the many titles which rightly belong to Christ, or to have been asking for a thousand things. But he went straight to the point of his immediate need and cried, "Lord, save me." When one of our dear friends, who has lately gone to heaven, was very ill, one of his sons prayed with him. He began in a very proper way, "Almighty Father, Maker of heaven and earth, our Creator"—but his sick father stopped him and said, "My dear boy, I am a poor sinner and I need God's mercy. Say, 'Lord, save him.'" He wanted his son to get to the point. And I can sympathize with him! Often, when some of our dear brothers and sisters have been praying here, and have been beating about the bush, I have wished that they would come to the point and ask for what they really needed. They have kept on walking round the house, instead of knocking at the door and seeking to enter! Peter's prayer shows us how to go directly to the very heart of the matter. "Lord, save me."

Many persons fail to receive answers to their prayers because they will not go straight to God and confess the sins that they have committed. There was a member of a Christian church who had, on one occasion, fallen very shamefully through drink. He was very penitent and he asked his pastor to pray for him—but he would not say what his sin had been. The pastor prayed, and then told the brother to pray. The poor man said, "Lord, you know that I have erred, and done wrong," and so on, making a sort of general confession, but that brought him no peace of mind. He felt that he could not go away like that, so he knelt down again, and said, "Lord, you know that I was drunk. It was a shameful sin that I committed, but I am truly grieved for it. O Lord, forgive me, for Jesus' sake!" And before his prayer was finished, he had found peace because he had plainly confessed his sin to God and had not sought to hide it any longer. You remember that David could get no peace until he came to the point

and prayed, "Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, You God of my salvation." Before that, he had tried to smother his great sin—but there was no rest for his conscience until he had made a full confession of his guilt! And after that he could say, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." Let our prayers, whether for ourselves or others, and especially our confessions of sin, go straight to the point—and not go beating about the bush. If any of you have been using forms of prayer which have not obtained for you any answers to your supplications, put them all aside, and just go and tell the Lord plainly what you need. Your prayer will then probably be something like this, "O God, I am a lost sinner! I have been careless about divine things. I have listened to the gospel, but I have not obeyed it. Lord, forgive me, save me, make me Your child and let me and my household, too, be Yours forever." That is the way to pray so that God will hear and answer you.

IV. Another characteristic of Peter's prayer was that IT WAS A VERY SOUND DOCTRINAL PRAYER. "Lord, save, me."

Peter does not appear to have had any idea of saving himself from drowning. He does not seem to have thought that there was sufficient natural buoyancy about him to keep him afloat or that he could swim to the ship. But, "beginning to sink, he cried, 'Lord, save me.'" One of the hardest tasks in the world is to get a man to give up all confidence in himself and from his heart, pray, "Lord, save me." Instead of doing that, he says, "O Lord, I do not feel as I ought. I need to feel my need more, I need to feel more joy, I need to feel more holiness." You see, he is putting feelings in place of faith! He is, as it were, laying down a track along which he wants God to walk instead of walking in the way which God has marked out for all who desire to be saved! Another man is seeking to reform himself and so to make himself fit for heaven. And he prays in harmony with that idea and, of course, gets no answer. I like to hear such a prayer as this, "O Lord, I cannot save myself and I do not ask You to save me in any way that I prescribe. Lord, save me anyway, only do save me! I am satisfied to be saved by the precious blood of Jesus. I am satisfied to be saved by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. I know I must be born again if I am ever to enter heaven—quicken me, O you ever blessed Spirit! I know I must give up my sins. Lord, I do not want to keep them—save me from them by Your grace, I humbly entreat You. I know that only You can do this work. I cannot lift even a finger to help You in it, so save me, Lord, for Your great mercy's sake!" This is sound doctrinal truth of God—salvation all of grace, not of man, nor by men—"not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." This is salvation according to the eternal purpose of God, by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit, through the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ! When a sinner its willing to accept salvation on God's terms, then the prayer shall ascend acceptably to the Most High! "Lord, save me."

V. Notice, also, that PETER'S PRAYER WAS A VERY PERSONAL ONE. "Lord, save *me*."

Peter did not think of anybody else just then—when a soul is under concern about its eternal interests, it had better at first confine its thoughts to itself and pray, "Lord, save *me*." Yes, and in the Christian's life, there will come times when he had better, for a while, forget all others and simply pray, "Lord, save me." Here we are, a great congregation gathered together from very various motives and, perhaps, some here who are not yet personally interested in Christ—yet we are vaguely hoping that God will bless somebody in this assembly. But if the Holy Spirit shall begin to work upon some individual heart and conscience, the convicted one will begin to pray, "Lord, save *me*. I hear of many others being brought to Jesus but, Lord, save *me*. My dear sister has been converted and has made a profession of her faith but, Lord, save *me*. I had a godly mother, who has gone home to glory—and my dear father is walking in Your fear—let not their son be a castaway. Lord, save me!"

I entreat everyone here to pray this personal prayer, and I beg you who do love the Lord to join me in pleading with Him that it may be so. I see some little girls over there. Will not each one of you, my dear children, pray this prayer? I pray the Holy Spirit to move you to cry, "Lord, save little Annie" or, "Lord, save little Mary." And may you boys be equally moved to pray, "Lord, save Tom" or, "Lord, save Harry." Pray for yourself in just that simple way and who knows what blessing may come to you? Then you mothers will surely not let your children pray for themselves while you remain prayer-less—will not each one of you pray, "Lord, save me"? And you working men, whom I am so glad to see at a weeknight service, do not go away without presenting your own personal petitions! The Apostle Peter had to pray for himself. The most eminent servants of God had to pray for themselves and you must pray for yourselves. If all the saints of God were to pray for you with one united voice as long as you live—you would not be saved unless you, also, cried to God for yourself! Religion is a personal matter. There is no such thing as religion by proxy! You must repent for yourselves and pray for yourselves—and believe for yourselves if you would be saved! May God grant that you may do so!

VI. I want you to notice, next, that PETER'S PRAYER WAS A VERY URGENT ONE. "Lord, save me."

He did not say, "Lord, save me tomorrow." Or, "Lord, save me in an hour's time." He was "beginning to sink." The hungry waves had opened their mouths to swallow him and he would soon be gone! He had only time to cry, "Lord, save me," but he no doubt meant, "Lord, save me *now*, for I am in danger of being drowned. Lord, save me *now*, for if You should delay, I shall sink to the bottom of the sea." "And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him," and so saved him. There are many people who would like Jesus to save them, but when? Ah, that is the point which they have not settled yet. A young man says, "I should like Christ to save me when I grow older, when I have seen a little more of life." You mean when you have seen a great deal more of death, for

that is all you will see in the world—there is no real life except that which is in Christ Jesus! Many a man in middle life has said, "I mean to be a Christian before I die, but not just yet." He has been too busy to seek the Lord, but death has come to him without any warning and, busy or not, he has had to die quite unprepared.

There is hope for a sinner when he prays, "Lord, my case is urgent, save me now! Sin, like a viper, has fastened itself upon me, Lord, save me now from its deadly venom! I am guilty and already condemned because I have not believed in Jesus. Lord, save me now, save me from condemnation, save me from the damning sin of unbelief! Lord, I know I am now upon the brink of death and I am in danger of hell as well as of death as long as I am unforgiven. Therefore, be pleased to let the wheels of Your chariot of mercy hurry and save me even now O Lord!" I have known some who have been so deeply under the influence of the Holy Spirit that they have knelt down by their bedsides and said, "We will never give sleep to our eyes, or slumber to our eyelids, till we have found the Savior." And before long they have found Him. They have said, "We will wrestle in prayer until our burden of sin is gone." And when they have reached that determination, it has not been long before they have obtained the blessing they desire. When nothing else succeeds, importunity will surely prevail! When you will not take a denial from God, He will not give you a denial! But as long as you are content to be unsaved, you will be unsaved. When you cry with all the urgency of which you are capable, "I must have Jesus or die! I am hungering, thirsting, pining, panting after Him as the hart pants after the water brooks," it shall not be long before you clasp that priceless treasure to your heart and say, "Jesus is my Savior! I have believed in Him."

VII. Now, lastly, I must remind you that PETER'S PRAYER WAS AN EFFECTUAL ONE. "Lord, save me," and Jesus did save him.

There may be comfort to some here present in the thought that although this was the prayer of a man in trouble, and a man in whom there was a mixture of unbelief and faith, yet it succeeded. Imperfections and infirmities shall not prevent prayer from speeding if it is but sincere and earnest. Jesus said to Peter, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" Which shows that he doubted although there was some faith in him, for he believed that Christ could save him from a watery grave. Many of us, also, are strange mixtures, even as Peter was. Repentance and hardness of heart can each occupy a part of our being—and faith may be in our heart, together with a measure of unbelief—even as it was with the man who said to Jesus, "Lord, I believe—help You my unbelief."

Do any of you feel that you need to pray, and yet cannot pray? You would believe in Jesus, but there is another law in your members which keeps you back. You would pray an effectual prayer, like that of Elijah, never staggering at the promise through unbelief but, somehow or other—you cannot tell why—you cannot attain to that prayer. Yet you will not give up praying. You feel that you cannot do that. You still linger at the mercy seat even when you cannot prevail with God in prayer. Ah,

dear soul, it is a mercy that God does not judge your prayer by what it is in itself—He judges it from another point of view altogether! Jesus takes it, mends it, adds to it the merit of His own precious blood and then, when He presents it to His Father, it is so changed that you would scarcely recognize it as your petition! You would say, "I can hardly believe that is my prayer, Christ has so greatly altered and improved it." It has happened to you as it sometimes happens to poor people who are in trouble—as it *did* happen to one whom I knew some time ago. A good woman wanted me to send in a petition to a certain government office concerning her husband, who was dead, and for whose sake she wanted to get some help. She drew up the petition and brought it to me. About one word in ten was spelt correctly and the whole composition was unfit to send. She wanted me to add my name to it and post it for her. I did so, but I first rewrote the whole petition, keeping the subject matter as she put it, but altering the form and wording of it. That is what our good Lord and Master does for us—only in an infinitely higher sense—He rewrites our petition, sets His own signature to it—and when His Father sees that, He grants the request at once! One drop of Christ's blood upon a prayer must make it prosper!

Go home, therefore, you who are troubled with doubts and fears, you who are vexed by Satan, you who are saddened by the recollection of your own past sins—notwithstanding all this—go to God, and say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before You," and ask for His forgiveness, and His forgiveness you shall receive! Keep on praying in such a fashion as this, "Lord, save me for Jesus' sake! Jesus, You are the Savior of sinners. Save me, I beseech You. You are mighty to save. Lord, save me! You are in heaven pleading for transgressors. Lord, plead for me!" Do not wait till you get home, but pray just where you are sitting, "Lord save me." May God give grace to everyone here to pray that prayer from the heart, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 6:5-34.

Verse 5. *And when you pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.* We ought to pray in the synagogue and we may pray at the corners of the streets—but it is wrong to do it to "be seen of men," that is, to be looking for some present reward in the praises that fall from human lips.

5-7. *Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, enter into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place and your Father who sees in secret shall reward you openly. But when you pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.* They seem to attribute a sort of power to a certain form of

words, as if it were a charm—and they repeat it over and over again. Not only do the poor Muslims and heathens "use vain repetitions," but the members of the Roman Catholic and other churches that I might name do the same thing—words to which they attach but very slight meaning, and into which they put little or no heart—are repeated by them again and again, as if there could be some virtue in the words themselves! Let it not be so with you, beloved. Pray as long as you like in secret, but do not pray long with the idea that God will hear you simply because you are a long while at your devotions.

8. *Be not you, therefore, like them: for your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him.* He does not need to be informed, nor even to be persuaded! Mere words are of no value in His ears. If you must use many words, ask men to lend you their ears, for they may have little else to do with them. God cares not for words only, it is the *thought*, the *desire of the heart* to which He always has regard.

9. *After this manner therefore pray you.* Here is a model prayer for you to copy as far as it is suited to your case—

9-13. *Our Father in heaven,* [See Sermon #312, Volume 4—THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.* [See Sermon #1778, Volume 30—A HEAVENLY PATTERN FOR OUR EARTHLY LIFE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation,* [See Sermon #1402, Volume 24—"LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *but deliver us from evil: for Yours is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.* And then, as if there was one part of the prayer that would be sure to arrest the attention of His hearers, namely, that concerning forgiving our debtors, the Savior makes the following remarks—

14, 15. *For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* Therefore, in order to succeed in prayer, we must have a heart purged from a spirit of revenge and from all unkindness! We must, ourselves, be loving and forgiving, or we cannot expect that God will hear our supplications when we come to crave His forgiveness.

16. *Moreover when you fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast.* They seemed to say to everyone who looked at them, "We have been so engrossed with our devotions that we have not found time even to wash our faces." But the Savior says to His followers, "Do not imitate those hypocrites! Do not make public your private religious exercises—perform them unto God—not unto men. As for those hypocrites"—

16. *Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.* And a poor reward it is.

17, 18. *But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face; that you appear not unto men to fast, but unto your Father, which is in secret: and your Father, which sees in secret, shall reward you openly.* May God give us that modest, unselfish spirit which lives unto Him and does not want to walk in the sham light of men's esteem! What matters it, after all, what men think of us? The hypocrite proudly boasts if he wins a little praise from his fellows—but what is it except so much wind? If all men should speak well of us, all that we would gain would be this, "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets."

19, 20. *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.* Christ here first teaches us how to pray, and then teaches us how to really live. He turns our thoughts from the objective in life which allures and injures so many, but which is, after all, an objective unworthy of our search. And He bids us seek something higher and better—"Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven."

21. *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* It is sure to be so—your heart will follow your treasure. Send it away, therefore, up to the everlasting hills! Layup treasure in that blessed land before you go there yourself!

22, 23. *The lamp of the body is the eye: if, therefore, your eye is good, your whole body shall be full of light. But if your eye is evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!* [See Sermon #335, Volume 6—A SINGLE EYE AND SIMPLE FAITH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] If your eye is brooked up with gold dust, or if you are living for self and this world, your whole life will be a dark life—and the whole of your being will dwell in darkness. "But," says someone, "may I not live for this world and the next, too?" Listen—

24. *No man can serve two masters.* He may serve two individuals, who have conflicting interests but they cannot both be his masters.

24. *For either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.* Either the one or the other will be master! They are so opposed to each other, they will never agree to a divided service. "You cannot serve God and mammon." It is the Lord Jesus Christ who says this, so do not attempt to do what He declares is impossible!

25. *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life*—It should be, "Take no distracting thought for your life"—

25. *What you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor yet for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than food, and the body than raiment?* You are obliged to leave your life with God. Why not leave with Him all care about your food and your raiment?

26. *Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they?* Do you believe that after all your earnest labor and your industry, God will permit you to starve, when these creatures, that labor not, are fed?

27-29. *Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? And why do you worry about your raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was never arrayed like one of these.* Christ asks them whether, by worrying, they can add a single cubit to their lives, for I take his question to mean, whether they could, by any means, make the standard of existence any longer than it was. They could not do so—they could shorten it, and very often worrying has brought men to their graves. Then Christ bade them note how the lilies grow, so that even Solomon could not excel them for beauty!

30-33. *Therefore, if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore, worry not, saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? Or, How shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for our heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But seek you first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.* [See Sermons #1864, Volume 31—FIRST THINGS FIRST; #2515, Volume 43—SOMETHING WORTH SEEKING and #2973, Volume 52—THOUGHT CONDEMNED, YET COMMANDED—Read/download all the sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] If you want string and brown paper, you need not go into a shop to buy them. But if you buy certain articles, you get string and brown paper in the bargain! So, when you go to God, seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness, these other things, which are but the packing, as it were—the string and the brown paper—are given to you in the bargain. He who gives you the golden treasures of heaven will not allow you to want for the copper treasures of earth!

34. *Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.* You cannot live in tomorrow, so do not fret about tomorrow! You live in today, so think of today—spend today to God's glory and leave the care about tomorrow until tomorrow comes.

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THE GREAT POT AND THE TWENTY LOAVES
NO. 3187

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

"Set on the great pot."
2 Kings 4:38.

"Then bring meal."
2 Kings 4:41.

"Give unto the people that they may eat."
2 Kings 4:42.

WE scarcely need go over the story. There was a shortage of food in the land. Elisha came to the college of the prophets, which consisted of about a hundred brothers and found that they were in need as the result of the famine. While he was teaching the young men, he observed that they looked as if they needed food and he found that there was none in the house. Elisha, therefore, ordered his servant to take the great pot, which generally stood upon long legs over the fire, and make a nourishing soup in it. True, there was nothing to put in this pot, but he believed that God would provide. It was for him to set the pot over the fire, and it was for the Lord to fill it! Some of the young men were not so sure as Elisha was that God could fill it without their help—and one, with great eagerness, went out to gather something from the fields. His help turned out to be of small service, for he brought home poisonous cucumbers, cut them up and threw them into the broth. And, lo, when they began to pour it out, it was acrid to the taste, gave them a terrible colic, and made them cry out, "There is death in the pot!"

Then the prophet said, "Bring meal." This was put into the steaming cauldron, the poison was neutralized, the food was made wholesome and the students were satisfied. This miracle was in due time followed up by another. A day or two afterwards, the young prophets were still needing food and the pantry was again empty. Just at that time, a devout man comes from a little distance, bringing a present for the prophet which consisted of a score of loaves similar to our penny rolls. The prophet bids his servitor set this slender quantity before the college. He is astonished at the command to feed a hundred hungry men with so little, but he is obedient to it. And while he is obeying, the little food is multiplied so that the hundred men eat and are perfectly satisfied—and there is some left!

I believe there are lessons to be learned from these two miracles and I shall try to bring out these lessons in three forms. First, as they shall relate to *the present condition of religion in our land.* Secondly, as they may

be made to relate to *the condition of backsliders*. And thirdly, as they may afford comfortable direction to *seeking sinners*.

I. First, then, our text, as in a parable, sets forth in a figure our course of action in connection with RELIGION IN THIS LAND.

And first, there is a great need of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We have not a hundred men famishing nowadays, but hundreds of thousands—and even hundreds of millions in this great world who are perishing for lack of heavenly food! *The church must feed the people*. It is not for us to say, "We hope they will be saved," and leave it there. Or set it down as a work that cannot be done till the millennium and, therefore, we have nothing to do with it. Our business is in the strength of God to grapple with the present condition of things! Here are the millions famishing—shall we let them famish? I remember seeing similar sentences under the likeness of the late Richard Knill—"The heathen are perishing! Shall we let them perish?" "But," says one, "how can we possibly supply them with food?" Look what Elisha did—the people were hungry and there was no food in hand, except a little meal, yet he said, "Set on the great pot."

Faith always does as much as she can—if she cannot fill the pot, she can, at any rate, put it on the fire. If she cannot find meat for the pottage, she pours in the water, lights the fire—and prays and waits. Some have not this faith, nowadays, and until we have it, we cannot expect the blessing! Thus says the Lord, "Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of your habitation." Why? Because, "you shall break forth on the right hand and on the left." Few will regard such a summons as this. The feeble faith of our time finds it difficult to enlarge the tent even after the increase has come and the people are there to fill it! Great faith would enlarge the tent and expect the Lord to keep His promise and multiply us with men as with a flock! The church of God greatly needs not foolish confidence in herself, which would lead her to be wild eyed, but simple confidence in God which would enable her to be apostolic, for she would go forth believing that God would be with her and great things would be accomplished by her! She would open her mouth wide, expecting that God would fill it, and fill it He would! Faith does what she can, and waits for her Lord to do what He can. Brother, sister, what is your faith doing? Are you putting a great pot on the fire in expectation of a blessing?

"Set on the great pot," said the prophet, "and boil the pottage." He was not in jest. He meant what he said. Often, when we get as far as setting on the pot, it is not for boiling pottage! We feel the desire to carry out spiritual work, but we do not come to practical action as those who work for immediate results. Oh, for practical common sense in connection with Christianity! Oh, for reality in connection with the idea of faith! When a man goes to his business to make money, he goes there with all his wits about him—but frequently when men come to prayer and Christian service—they leave their minds behind and do not act as if they were transacting real business with God. Elisha, when he said, "Set on the great pot," expected God to fill it! He was sure it would be so and he waited in all patience till dinner was ready. O church of God, set on the pot, and the great pot, too! Say, "The Lord will bless us." Get your granary cleaned out, that the Lord may fill it with His good corn! Put the grist into the

hopper and look for the wind to turn the sails of the mill. O you doubters, throw up the windows that the fresh breeze of the divine Spirit may blow in on your sickly faces! Expect that God is about to send the manna and have your omers ready! We shall see greater things than these if we awake to our duty and our privilege! It is the church's business to feed the world with spiritual bread—she can only do so by faith— and she ought to act in faith in reference to it!

The faith of Elisha was not shared by all the brothers. There were some who must go and fill the pot, as we have said, but they gathered the gourds of the colocynth vine and poisoned the whole mess! And it became necessary to find an antidote for the poison. We here see our second duty—the church must provide an antidote for the heresies and poisonous doctrines of the time. There has entered into the public ministry of this country a deadly poison. We may say of the church in general, "O you man of God, there is death in the pot!" Zealous persons, whose zeal for God is not according to knowledge, have gone about and gathered the gourds of the wild vine. I think I could tell you what kind of gourds they are—some of them are very pretty to look at, and they grow best on the Seven Hills of Rome, they are called "ritualistic performances." These they shred into the pot. There are gourds of another kind, very delicate and dainty in appearance, which are known as "liberal views" or, "modern thought." As a philosopher once talked of extracting sunbeams from cucumbers, so the wild gourds are said to consist of "sweetness and light," but the light is darkness and the sweetness is deadly! They have shred these into the pot and nobody can taste the doctrinal mixture which is served out from some pulpits without serious risk of soul poisoning for, "there is death in the pot." What Scriptural doctrine is there which men do not deny and yet call themselves Christians? What truth of God is there which our fathers held which is endorsed by those who think themselves the leaders of advanced thought? Have they not polluted the entire sanctuary of truth and lifted up their axes against all the carved work of the temple? On the other hand, have we not, almost everywhere, put aside Christ for the crucifix? And the blessed Spirit thrust into a corner by the so called "sacraments"? Is not the outward made to drown the inward, and is not the precious truth of the gospel overlaid by the lies of Rome?

There is death in the pot! How is the church to meet it? I believe it is to imitate Elisha. We need not attempt to get the wild gourds out of the pot—they are cut too small and are too cunningly mixed up. They have entered too closely into the whole mass of teaching to be removed. Who shall extract the leaven from the leavened loaf? What then? We must look to God for help and use the means indicated here. "*Bring meal.*" Good wholesome food was cast into the poisonous stuff and, by God's gracious working, it killed the poison. And the church must cast the blessed gospel of the grace of God into the poisoned pottage—and then false doctrine will not be able to destroy men's souls as it now does. We shall not do much good by disputing, denouncing and refusing to associate with people. I call such things *barking*, but preaching the gospel is *biting*. The surest remedy for false doctrine is preaching the truth of God. Christiani-

ty is the cure for Popery! Preach up Christ and down go the priests! Preach grace and there is an end of "masses." I am more and more persuaded that the good old Calvinistic truths which are now kept in the background, are the great Krupp guns with which we shall blow to pieces the heresies of the day if once more they are plainly and persistently preached in harmony with the rest of revealed truths of God!

Is the remedy too simple? Do not, therefore, despise it! God be thanked that it *is* simple, for then we shall not be tempted to give the glory to man's wit and wisdom when the good result is achieved. In this work you can all help, for if only meal is needed, a child may bring his little handful. One man may contribute more than another, but the humblest may put in his pinch of meal, and even the most common servitor in the house may assist in this work. Spread the gospel! Spread the gospel! Spread the gospel! A Society for Prosecuting Puseyites, will that do the work? Appeals to Parliament, will they be effectual? Let those who choose to do so cry to lawyers and Parliaments, but as for us, we will preach the gospel! If I could speak with a voice of thunder, I would say to those friends who are for adopting other means to stop the spread of error, "You waste your time and strength! Give all your efforts to the preaching of the gospel. Lift up Christ and lay the sinner low! Proclaim justification by faith, the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and the grand old doctrines of the Reformation and your work will be done—but by no other means." "Bring meal," said the prophet, and our word at this time is, "Preach the truth of God as it is in Jesus."

Some of the grossest errors of our own day may yet be overruled by God for the promotion of His truth. There are men who believe in Sacramentarianism who love the Lord Jesus very ardently. When I read some of the poetry of this school, I cannot but rejoice to see that the writers love my Lord and Master—and it strikes me that if the whole gospel could be put before them, we might expect to see some of them become noble preachers of the truth of God and, perhaps, save the orthodox from dead dry doctrinalism by reviving a more direct devotion to the Savior. Perhaps they will not, with us, talk often of justification by faith, but if they extol the merit of the precious blood and wounds of Jesus, it will come to much the same thing. For my part, I care little for the phraseology, if essential truths of God are really taught and the Lord Jesus is exalted!

Some of the doubters, too—"thinkers"—as they prefer to be called, if our Lord renewed them by His Spirit, might bring out the old truths with greater freshness than our more conservative minds are able to do. I love to hear those who have known the vanity of error speak out the truth! They are more sympathetic towards the tempted and are generally more conversant with the grounds of our faith.

Who knows? Who knows? I have a hope which may not prove a dream. I hope that thousands are feeling their way into the light of God and will come forth soon. Let us not despair, but keep to our work which is gospel preaching, telling about Jesus and His dear love, the power of His blood, the prevalence of His plea and the glory of His throne and who knows but that a multitude of the priests may believe, and the philosophers, also,

may become babes in Christ's school? "Bring meal," and thus meet the poison with the antidote!

Another lesson comes from the second miracle. Let us look at it. The loaves brought to Elisha were not quarter loaves like ours, but either mere wafers of meal which had been laid flat on a hot stone and so baked, or else small rolls of bread. That store was but little, yet Elisha said, "Feed the people," and they were fed. That is the third lesson, *the church is to use all she has and trust in God to multiply her strength.* Nowadays, individuals are apt to think they may leave matters to societies, but this is highly injurious. We should, everyone, go forth to work for God and use our own talents, be they few or many. Societies are not meant to enable us to shirk our personal duty under the idea that our strength is small. Little churches are apt to think that they cannot do much and, therefore, they do not expect a great blessing. What can these few cakes do towards feeding a hundred men? They forget that God can multiply them! Do you limit the Holy One of Israel? Do you think He needs our numbers? Do you think He is dependent upon human strength? I tell you, our weakness is a better weapon for God than our strength! The church in the apostolic times was poor and mostly made up of unlearned and ignorant men—but she was filled with power. What name that would have been famous in ordinary history do you find among her first members? Yet that humble church of fishermen and common people shook the world! The church nowadays is, for the most part, too strong, too wise, too self-dependent to do much. Oh, that she were more God reliant! Even those whom you call great preachers will be great evils if you trust to them! This I know—we ought never to complain of weakness, or poverty, or lack of prestige—but should consecrate to God what we have.

"Oh, but I can scarcely read a chapter!" Well, read that chapter to God's glory! You who cannot say more than half a dozen words to others? Say that little in the power of the Spirit! If you cannot do more than write a letter to a friend about his soul, or give away a tract to a stranger in the streets, do it in God's name! Brother, sister, do what you can and in doing this, God will strangely multiply your power to do good and cause great results to flow from small beginnings. Active faith is needed—and if this is richly present, the Lord in whom we trust will do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask, or even think!

II. And now, briefly, but very earnestly, I desire to speak TO BACKSLIDERS.

In all our churches there are members who are no better than they should be. It is very questionable whether they ought to be allowed to be members at all—they have gone very far back from what they used to be, or ought to be. They scarcely ever join the people of God in public prayer, though they once professed to be very devout. Private prayer is neglected and family prayer given up. Is it not so with some to whom I address myself? Have you not lost the light of God's countenance and gone far away from happy communion with Christ? It is not for me to charge you—let your own consciences speak! I hope that you are now beginning to feel an inward hunger and to perceive that your backslidings have brought

famine to you. What shall I bid you do? Go and attempt your own restoration by the works of the law? By no means—*I bid you bring your emptiness to Christ and look for His fullness*. Yours is a great empty pot—set it on the fire and cry to God to fill it! Jesus says to lukewarm Laodicea, "If any man hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him." "Alas," says the Laodicean, "I have nothing in the house!" Your confession is true, but when our Lord comes to sup, He brings His supper with Him! He stands at the door of every backslider and knocks. Will you let Him in? "Oh," you say, "I wish He would enter." Dear brothers and sisters, open your heart, now, just as you did at the first when, as a poor sinner you went to Him. Say to him, "Blessed Lord, there is nothing in me but emptiness, but here is the guest chamber. Come in all Your love and sup with me, and let me sup with You. I am nothing, come and be my all in all." "But," says the backslider "may I really come to Jesus, just as I did at the first?" Listen! "Return, you backsliding children, for I am married unto you, says the Lord." He is married to you! And though you have behaved badly, the marriage bond is not broken. Where is the bill of divorcement which He has sued you? Is it not written ,"He hates putting away"? Come just as you are and begin anew—for He will accept you again.

"But," you say, "alas for me, I have been gathering wild gourds!" What have you been doing, professor? You have left undone what you ought to have done and you have done many things you ought not to have done and, therefore, there is no health in you. You have been trying to find pleasure in the world and you have found wild vines. You have been tempted by love of music, love of mirth, love of show—and you have gathered wild gourds, a lap full, almost a heart full! You have been shredding death into the pot and now you cannot feel as you used to feel—the poison is stupefying your soul. While we were singing, just now, you said, "I want to sing as saints do, but there is no praise in me." When you meet with a man who is mighty in prayer, you say, "Alas, I used to pray like that, but my power is gone." The poison is paralyzing you! If you are a worldling, and not God's child, you can live on that which would poison a Christian, but if you are a child of God, you will cry out, "O you man of God, there is death in the pot!" Some of you have become rich and have fallen into worldly fashionable habits—these are the colocynth cucumbers. Others of you are poor and necessarily work with ungodly men and, perhaps, their example has lowered the tone of your spirit and led you into their ways. If you love this condition, I grieve for you—but if you loathe it, I trust you are a child of God, notwithstanding your state.

What are you to do who have in any way fallen? Why, receive afresh the soul saving gospel! "Bring meal"—simple, nourishing, gospel truth—and cast it into the poisoned pottage! Begin anew with Jesus Christ, as you did at first! Say to Him, "God be merciful to me a sinner." "Repent and do your first works." Do you not recollect the period when first your eyes lighted on His cross and you stood there burdened and heavy laden, fearing that you would sink to hell until you read in His dear wounds that your sins were put away? There you found peace as you saw your transgressions laid on Jesus and removed from you. Oh, how you loved

Him! Come, brother, come, sister, let us go tonight again to the cross and begin to love Him again. That will cure you of the world's personal influences and bring back the old feelings, the old joys, the old loves—and take the death out of the pot! Backslider, you see now exactly what you needed at first, namely, faith in Jesus. Come repenting, come believing in the Savior and He will remove the ills which the gourds of earth's wild vines have brought upon you!

"Ah," say some of you, "we can understand how the Lord Jesus can fill our emptiness and heal our soul's sicknesses, but how shall we continue in the right way? Our past experience has taught us our weakness—we are afraid that even the great pot will only last us for a little while and then our souls will famish." Then remember the other part of our text, in which we read that when the few loaves, and the ears of corn in the husks, were brought to Elisha, the Lord multiplied them. Though you may have very little grace, that grace shall be increased. "He gives more grace." We receive grace for grace, daily grace for daily need! Between this and heaven you will need a heaven full of grace and you will have it! No one knows what drafts you will make upon the sacred bank of the King of kings, but His treasury will not be exhausted! "Trust in the Lord and do good—so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed."

III. Our third and last word is TO THE SEEKING SINNER.

Many of you, I trust, desire salvation. The subject before us has much comfort in it for you. You are hungering and thirsting after Christ, but have not yet found peace in Him. You lament your own emptiness of all that is good. Then, poor soul, do just what the prophet bade his servant do, "set on the great pot," that is, confess your emptiness unto the Lord! Tell the Lord what a sinner you are. I know not whether the story is true of Mr. Rowland Hill's leading the landlord of an inn to pray. Mr. Hill would have family prayer wherever he stayed—and if this was refused, he would order out his horses and go on. On one occasion, he is reported to have asked the landlord to act as priest in his own house, but the man replied, "I can't pray, I never prayed in my life." However, after a while, Mr. Hill had him on his knees and when the man said, "I cannot pray," Mr. Hill cried out, "Tell the Lord so and ask Him to help you." The man exclaimed, "O God, I can't pray, teach me!" "That will do," said Mr. Hill, "you have begun." Whatever your state is, tonight, if you desire salvation, go and tell the Lord your condition! Say, "Lord, I have a hard heart—soften it." If you cannot feel, tell Him so and ask Him to make you feel. Begin at the root of the matter—set on the great pot, empty as it is. Be honest with the Most High. Reveal to Him what He knows so well, but what you know so little—the evil of your heart and your great necessity. If you cannot come *with* a broken heart, come *for* a broken heart! If you cannot come with anything good, the mercy is that nothing good is needed as a preparation for coming to Christ. Come just as you are! Do not wait to fill the pot, but set it on to be filled.

Do I hear you reply, "Ah, you don't know who I am. I have lived many years in sin"? Yes, I know you. You are the young man that found the wild vine and went and gathered of its gourds a lapful—a horrible lapful. Some of you rebellious sinners have ruined yourselves, body and soul,

and perhaps in estate as well, by your sins. We hear of people sowing their wild oats—that is a bad business. They had better never do it, for the reaping of those wild oats is terrible work! You have poisoned your life, man, with those wild gourds. Can the pottage of your life be made wholesome again? Yes! *You* cannot do it with your own efforts, but, "bring meal," and it will be done. If you believe on the Lord Jesus, He will be the antidote to deadly habits of sin! If you will simply trust in Him who bled for you, the tendency of your soul to sin shall be overcome, the poison which now boils in your veins shall be expelled, and your soul shall escape as a bird out of the snare of the fowler! Your flesh upon you, in a spiritual sense, shall become fresher than a little child's. Though you are full of the poison till every vein is ready to burst with it, the great physician will give you an antidote which shall at once and forever meet your case! Will you not try it? Incline your ear and come unto Him—hear, and your soul shall live! May God put the meal of the gospel into the pot tonight!

"Ah," you say, "but if I were now pardoned, how should I hold on? I have made a hundred promises and always broken them. I have resolved scores of times, but my resolutions have never come to anything." Ah, poor heart, that is when you have the saving of yourself, but when God has the saving of you, it will be another matter! When we begin to save ourselves, we very soon come to a disastrous shipwreck! But when God, the eternal lover of the souls of men, puts His hand to salvation work and Jesus puts forth the hand once fastened to the cross, there are no failures!

I have tried to preach a very simple sermon and to say some earnest things. But it is likely that I may have missed the mark with some and, therefore, I will again draw the gospel bow in the name of the Lord Jesus. O Lord, direct the arrow! If God will bring souls to Jesus, I will bless His name throughout eternity! Poor lost souls, do you know the way of salvation, do you know how simple it is? Do you know the love of God to such poor souls as you are and yet do you refuse to attend to it? Do you know that He does not exact any hard conditions of you, but He points to His Son on the cross and says, "Look"? Can it be that you will not look? Does Jesus die to save, and do you think it is not worth your while to think about salvation? What is the matter with you? Surely you must be mad! When I look back on my own neglect of Christ till I was 15 years old, it seems like a delirious dream! And when I think of some of you who are 30 or 40 and yet have never thought about your souls, what can be invented to excuse you? I see some of you with bald heads, or with the snow of wintry age lying upon them and you have not yet considered the world to come. I would say to you, "Men, are you mad?" Why, you are worse than mad, for if you were insane, you could be excused! Alas, the madness of sin has responsibility connected with it and, therefore, it is the worst of all insanities! I pray you, by the living God, you unsaved ones, turn unto the Savior tonight! Whether you are saved or lost cannot so much matter to me as it will to you. If I faithfully beseech you to look to Jesus, I shall be clear, even if you reject the warning. But for your own sakes, I beseech you to turn to Jesus! By death, which may be so near to you. By judgment, which is certain to you all. By the terrors of hell, by

the thunderbolts of execution, by eternity and, better still, by the sweets of Jesus' love, by the charms of His matchless beauty, by the grace which He is prepared to give, by the heaven whose gates of pearl are glistening before the eyes of faith, by the sea of glass unruffled by a single wave of trouble—where you shall stand forever blest if you believe in Jesus—by the Lord Himself, I entreat you, seek Him at once, while He may be found! May His Holy Spirit lead you to do so! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 KINGS 4:1-37.

Verse 1. *Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Your servant, my husband, is dead; and you know that your servant did fear the LORD. And the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen.* According to the very cruel custom of those times, if a man were in debt and had no means of payment, his children were sold for slaves. Here was a poor widow whose husband had been one of the sons of the prophets, but he had died in debt. He was evidently one who was known to Elisha as a faithful, God fearing man and, perhaps that partly accounted for his poverty. The false priests were fed at Jezebel's table, but because this man worshiped Jehovah, the one living and true God, he had probably been persecuted and hunted down until he had lost what little he formerly had and, therefore, when he died, he could leave his wife no other legacy than that of debt. And in consequence, the creditor came to seize her two sons to be bondmen.

2. *And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for you? Tell me, what have you in the house? And she said, Your handmaid has not anything in the house, save a pot of oil.* They used oil extensively in the preparation of their food as well as for lighting their dwellings. This woman was so poor that she had no meal in the house, but she had a little oil. When our Lord was about to feed the five thousand, He asked His disciples, "How many loaves have you?" So here the prophet asked the poor woman, "What have you in the house?" and she told him she had only "a pot of oil."

3. *Then he said, Go, borrow the vessels abroad of all your neighbors, even empty vessels; borrow not a few.* [See Sermon #2063, Volume 35—THE FILLING OF EMPTY VESSELS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Evidently the poor woman's credit was good, though her debts were heavy. Her neighbors knew she would have paid her creditor if she could, so they were willing to grant her request though they probably wondered why she wanted so many empty vessels.

4-7. *And when you have come in, you shall shut the door behind you and your sons, and shall pour out into all those vessels, and you shall set aside that which is full. So she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured out. And it came to pass when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil ceased.* [See Sermon #1467-A, Volume 25—THE OIL AND THE VESSELS—

Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Then she came and told the man of God. As it was through obeying his directions she had miraculously obtained this large supply of oil, she would not make use of it without further counsel from the man of God who had already given her such good advice.

7. *And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay your debt.* "That is your first duty—'pay your debt'"—

7, 8. *And live, you and your children, on the rest. Now it happened one day that Elisha went to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in there to eat bread.* The prophet had helped a poor woman. Now a rich woman helps him. God sometimes pays His servants in kind very speedily for anything they have done for those who belong to Him. At other times, He puts it to the credit of their account.

9-13. *And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passes by continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray you, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it will be that whenever he comes to us, he can turn in there. And it happened one day that he came there and he said to Gehazi, his servant, Call this Shunammite. And when he had called her, she stood before him. And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, You have been careful for us with all this care. What can I do for you? Do you want me to speak on your behalf to the king or to the captain of the army?* God's servants must not be ungrateful for any kindness that is shown to them. If they receive hospitality, they must be ready to give a return of such things as they have. Elisha was willing to do anything in his power for this hospitable Shunammite, so he said to her, "Do you want me to speak on your behalf to the king, or to the captain of the army?"

13. *And she answered, I dwell among my own people.* She had no desire for earthly greatness and she was very wise, for, usually, happiness is to be found in that middle state which Agur desired when he said, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." This Shunammite had no wish to be moved to the trying and perilous atmosphere of the court or the army—so she answered, "I dwell among my own people."

14-19. *And he said, What then is to be done for her? And Gehazi answered, Verily she has no child and her husband is old. And he said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the door. And he said, About this season, according to the time of life, you shall embrace a son. And she said, No, my lord. Man of God, do not lie to your handmaiden. And the woman conceived, and bore a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her according to the time of life. And the child grew, and one day he went out to his father to the reapers. And he said unto his father, My head, my head!* The sun had been too hot for the child. Sunstroke had seized him.

19, 20. *And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother. And when he had taken him and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon and then died.* How transient are all our earthly treasures! The child was well, and ill and dead in the course of a few hours! Hold with a loose hand all things earthly! Make not your gourds into gods, for they will

soon wither and die. Very often we destroy our own comforts by thinking too much of them. As soon as we make anything that we have into an idol, it will be broken in pieces, or taken from us, or in some way turned into a curse to us! See how this good woman acted when she had suffered this great sorrow.

21, 22. *And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out. And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray you, one of the young men, and one of the donkeys, that I may run to the man of God, and come again.* She did not tell him her errand. She wished to keep the trouble to herself for a while.

23. *And he said, Why will you go to him today? It is neither new moon, nor Sabbath.* "It is not the ordinary time for going to the prophet."

23. *And she said, (Salem, that is, Peace, as we read it), It shall be well.* She must have been a woman of great faith. She checked her natural emotions and believed in God that all would be for the best. "It shall be well."

24-26. *Then she saddled a donkey and said to her servant, Drive, and go forward; slack not your riding for me, except I bid you. So she went and came unto the man of God at Mount Carmel. And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi, his servant, Behold, yonder is that Shunammite: run now, I pray you, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with you, is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well.* It is heroic faith when we can feel that if the child shall die, it is well. If this husband shall die, it is well. And if we ourselves shall die, all is well, for He who has the arranging of all that concerns us cannot arrange otherwise than well! Alas, that often our rebellious spirit says, with poor old Jacob, "All these things are against me," but true faith sits humbly down at the feet of the great disposer of all events and says, "He has done all things well."

27. *And when she came to the man of God at the hill, she caught him by the feet.* As if she feared lest he should go away before she had poured into his ears the story of her grief.

27. *But Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone, for her soul is vexed within her: and the LORD has hid it from me, and has not told me.* Those ancient prophets of God had only limited knowledge. The Spirit of God taught them some things, but not all things, so Elisha was made to feel that he was but man, even though the Spirit of God often spoke through him.

28. *Then she said, Did I desire a son of my lord? Did I not say, Do not deceive me?* Then he learned what her trouble was, and understood that the child was dead. Before she had said as much as that, he read the news in the tones of her voice.

29, 30. *Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up your loins, and take my staff in your hand, and go your way; if you meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute you, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the child. And the mother of the child said, As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you.* She did not believe in Gehazi, nor yet in the staff, and herein she was a wise woman. God would not bless the prophet's staff to the child's restoration, lest relic worship should spring

up among the Israelites, or lest they should begin to attach some value to outward signs!

30-34. *And he arose, and followed her. And Gehazi passed on before them and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but there was neither voice, nor hearing. Therefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not awaked. And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. He went in, therefore, and shut the door upon them and prayed unto the LORD. And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm.* See the power of prayer? The very gates of death are made to open when Elisha, a man of like passions with ourselves, bows before the Lord in prayer! Learn a lesson also from Elisha's attitude toward the dead child, for often God is pleased to give spiritual life through the power of human sympathy. When we put ourselves into the condition of the sinner—hope for him, pray for him, agonize for him in brokenhearted sympathy on his account, putting ourselves as far as we can into his place—God often makes us the instruments by which His Spirit quickens the dead in sin!

30-37. *Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times,* [See Sermon #1461-A, Volume 25—THE SEVEN SNEEZES—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *and the child opened his eyes. And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up your son. Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.* Her heart was too full for speech just then, so she took up her son and went out.

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DISCIPLINE IN CHRIST'S ARMY
NO. 3188

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 1910,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 13, 1879.

"Pass through the host, and command the people."
Joshua 1:11.

[When the "Army Discipline and Regulation Bill" was before the House of Commons, Mr. Spurgeon delivered this discourse upon it. Shortly afterwards, he published a summary of the sermon in The Sword and the Trowel, with a prefatory note in which he said, "We hope to print the whole discourse for the use of soldiers." With this view, he had commenced to revise it, but had not completed it, and it is now published for the first time. Workers among soldiers will find the sermon specially suitable for them.]

BELIEVERS are called to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ. As many of us as believe in Him and have obtained eternal life through Him, are now enlisted beneath His banner to fight the battles of holiness against sin and of truth against error. We war not, however, with flesh and blood, but with spiritual enemies. We slay lust and lying, drunkenness and blasphemy—and we wage a never ending warfare against everything which is dishonest, unkind, selfish, or ungodly. He who died upon the cross out of love to the undeserving has taught us how to endure hardness for His sake as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Our ambition is to fight a good fight and keep the faith. And by the power of the Holy Spirit we hope to do so and to receive from our great commander's mouth the blessed commendation, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Being soldiers, we come under discipline, and it is well for all who are about to enlist to know what the discipline is, for our glorious captain, the Lord Jesus Christ, says to all who wish to join this army, "Count the cost." We, too, would say to all who propose to be soldiers of the cross and followers of the Lamb—"Count the cost." Do not join the ranks blindly and then change your mind and desert. Enlist with your eyes open and stay in the service till you are veterans. There's nothing like knowing what you are doing—and choosing Christ's service deliberately. It is to that end that I shall speak upon the discipline of Christ's army, for perhaps some who are in the army of Christ in name, but not in truth, may find out their mistake and endeavor, by sincere repentance, to make sure work of the matter so that they may not be deceived. It will be an awful thing to be found out to be a hypocrite and to be drummed out of the Lord's army at the last.

I have here a copy of the "Army Discipline and Regulation Bill" sent to me by a member of the House of Commons, with this written in the corner of it, "May not the Christian soldier derive some profit from this?" I feel sure he may. May the Holy Spirit enable us to do so!

This Bill contains a list of offenses for which a soldier on active service is liable to death—and those offenses are excellent figures of certain spiritual offenses which must not be committed by the soldiers of Christ! If they fall into them, and continue in them, it will prove that they are already under sentence of death and are not Christ's servants at all. If any complain that the discipline of our Lord Jesus is strict, it will be of benefit to them to see how severe is the discipline of every army. Nothing can make Christ's service sweet except love to Him—His service appears hardest to those who have hard hearts—and just as men grow right and true, they find the Lord's yoke to be easy and His burden light. Judging Christianity from the outside, it will always seem to unregenerate men a very strict Puritanical system. But judging it from the inside, when the heart is renewed and the soul is charmed with the blessed person of their divine Redeemer, we love our Lord's service and find intense delight in it. We consent to His law, that it is good, and we long with all our hearts to keep His statutes even to the end. We are glad to know what offenses are, that we may pray to be kept from them for we would not willingly offend so good a Lord.

In this Bill, we read that "A Person subject to Military Law, when on Active Service, is punishable with Death, if he commits any of the following offenses"—

(1). "Shamefully abandons or delivers up any garrison, place, post, or guard, or uses any means to compel or induce any governor, commanding officer, or other person, to shamefully abandon or deliver up any garrison, place, post, or guard, which was the duty of such governor, officer, or person to defend."

This is a grievous offense in the church of God and I am sorry to say that it has often been committed. We are put in trust with the gospel of Jesus Christ—that is the citadel which we are to defend at all hazards—so what a sad thing it is when professed Christ's ministers give up truth of God after truth in order to please the public! "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon," that professed servants of Christ have betrayed the gospel itself to the enemy! O you who follow the banner of Jesus, never do this! Defend it with your lives! Die in the defense of it, as the martyrs did, and never be ashamed of it in any company. You may not be an officer and, therefore, you cannot give up a garrison or castle to the enemy—but you have your own post to guard—take care that you guard it! Never give up the Bible—no, not a leaf of it! Never give up prayer—stand sentry there and let no man laugh you out of it! Whatever post the Lord Jesus commits to you, take care that you hold it till He comes, or till you, yourself, are called home to the heavenly headquarters. Hold fast, as with a grip of steel, every doctrine which the Lord has taught you whether others approve of it or not! Hold fast, also, and

endeavor, by the aid of God's Spirit, to put into practice every precept of the Lord. Value the practical part of Christianity as well as the doctrinal—and prize them both beyond gold. Be not of the mind of those who say of Christ's rules, "These are of little consequence." No! Your Master's command cannot be a trifle! And the spirit which thinks little of anything which Jesus commands is an evil spirit! We must pray against it and strive against it. Make it a matter of conscience to follow Jesus at all hazards wherever He goes. Stand up for the Scriptures and the true gospel—and "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." Do not give up a hair of the head of the truth of God, nor let her enemies take away so much as a lace of her shoes.

I believe in the invincibility of truth. Only give truth time and God, being with her, she must prevail. I believe also in the invincibility of the church which is built upon the rock, Christ Jesus, and against which the gates of hell shall never prevail. I am quite willing to be in a minority upon a great many questions. I would not believe any more than I do even if everybody else believed it—and I would not be any the less confident of its truthfulness if it was accepted by only a hundredth or a thousandth part of those who now believe it! Get hold of a truth of God, my dear brother or sister, and you have laid hold of that in which God dwells! Know your Bible thoroughly and believe what the Bible reveals. And then, if there are arrayed against Biblical truth—all the powers of Christendom, all the kings and princes and prelates and priests joined together—you may rest assured that they will only be as so much chaff driven before the wind! If they believe error, and advocate error, all their pomp and power will be but as the wind, the earthquake and the fire in which God was not! But in your calm, quiet adherence to the truth of God—with a tenacity that would brave even martyrdom rather than renounce what God has revealed to you in His word and by his Spirit, there is a power that must win in the long run—so hold to it and be not afraid!

(2). "Shamefully casts away his arms, ammunition, or tools in the presence of the enemy."

This is a terrible crime, indeed, in a Christian soldier. "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense of reward." Never let go your shield of faith! Under ridicule and persecution, buckle it to your arm. Grip firmly that blessed sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God! Let no man take from you a single text of it! Speak up for the blessed truth of God and stand to your gun—this will gall the enemy and protect yourself. Rally to the colors and wrap them around your heart when they seem to be in peril—I mean, the blood red colors of the cross of Christ!

Dear young brothers and sisters who love the Lord, I know you have a hard fight of it when you get among your friends who are so mean as to ridicule you. But never say, "Die"—never give up your faith, never yield to their sins, nor give them countenance by so much as joining in their laughter! Do not be misled by false teachers, but obey the Word of God

and follow that alone. Read it for yourselves and what you see there lay hold upon, and let it be your religion. I have often said to myself—

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

Let us, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, still hold without wavering to our confidence in the gospel as God's great battleaxes and weapon of war! Let us be fully persuaded that this is the chosen instrument by which the Lord will glorify Himself and subdue the nations of the earth. We may take it for granted that God's providential dispensations will always tend in that direction and that the ponderous wheels full of eyes are always revolving in such a way as to work out the eternal purposes of grace in the salvation of those whom Christ has redeemed. But, for all that, *the* power which God mostly blesses is the energy of the Holy Spirit exerted through the preaching of the gospel of Christ—not by kings and princes, or learned doctors or eloquent men—but through the gospel as preached by humble and earnest believers, illustrated by gracious and holy lives, and supported by fervent and unceasing prayers! So, beloved, have faith in the gospel! Do not put your confidence in anything that is not authorized by the New Testament. Do not be so foolish as to use any means which are not in accordance with God's word. And do not enter into any alliance with the world under the delusion that you will, by so doing, help the gospel! Be satisfied that God is in the still small voice and, as He is there, give good heed to the message that He utters—and gad not about to seek any other ground of confidence, but be content with, "Thus says the Lord."

(3). *"Treacherously holds correspondence with or gives intelligence to the enemy, or treacherously or through cowardice sends a flag of truce to the enemy."*

This is another thing that Christian soldiers must never do. Their orders are clear—"Come out from among them and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." This battle of ours against sin admits of no truce whatever—no terms of compromise—no going a certain way with sinners in the hope of inducing them to come a little way with us! No, there must be nothing of the kind. Let the word, "compromise," with regard to evil never even cross your thoughts! Our Lord and Master made no compromises. He told us that it would be better to pluck out our right eye and cut off our right hand rather than that they should cause us to offend. Give your heart so fully up to Jesus, my beloved brothers and sisters, that you are altogether separated from this world! Let the world know *where* you are, *what* you are and take care that *you* know where it is and what it is! Be not, I pray you, conformed to this world! And, on the other hand, never hide your religion. Do not ask for a truce with the enemy, for that would be treachery to your Lord. Remember that solemn warning, "Whoever will be a friend of the world is

the enemy of God." That is no saying of mine—it is one of the faithful and true declarations of this inspired book!

I must not stay to say more about this matter, though it is a most suggestive point.

(4). *"Assists the enemy with arms, ammunition, or supplies, or knowingly harbors or protects an enemy not being a prisoner."*

Now, every professor who leads an inconsistent life furnishes Christ's enemies with "arms, ammunition, or supplies," for they say, "Ah, that is one of your Christians!" They fire that as a most deadly shot against us. They point to the ways of inconsistent professors and they turn to us and say, "That is what you Christians are!" If they take one bad sovereign, they never think of saying that all the sovereigns in circulation are counterfeit—yet they might as well say that as declare that because here and there a professor is a hypocrite or inconsistent, therefore, we are all so! That is not true, yet it gives the enemy encouragement and supplies him with ammunition when any of you who profess to be Christ's, walk as you ought not to walk!

And then, dear friends, if we conceal any sin within our bosoms, this is knowingly harboring an enemy. If you who are supposed to be Christian people drink too much in secret—and there are some, not only men, but women, who make a profession of Christianity, who sin in this way. And we must speak very plainly when this evil becomes as common as it is—you are knowingly harboring an enemy! If, in your trade, you follow unrighteous customs—and there are plenty of tradesmen who do that—and if you adopt their schemes though you profess to be a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, you are knowingly harboring His enemy—and you are not worthy to be called a good soldier of Jesus Christ!

The enemy will get in if he can, but we must do all we can and also cry to God to keep him out. You know that on a cold winter's day, a man shuts the door, lights a fire, draws the curtains and insulates the door, yet even then the cold gets in. So is it with sin—you may watch and guard against it as much as you like but, still, the cold will get in—but it is a very different kind of cold from that which would come in if you were to open the windows and doors and let it in. That is what some do concerning sin. They keep no watch, no guard against it. They tempt the devil to tempt them—and those who do this and thus knowingly harbor the enemy are no true soldiers of Jesus Christ.

(5). *"Having been made a prisoner of war, voluntarily serves with or voluntarily aids the enemy."*

Now young men, especially—you who are members of this church or some other church—there are times when you get into a great fix. There are all round you persons who are opposed to true religion—and they begin by inviting you to do this, and that, and the other, and then they try to compel you to do as they wish. They make you, as it were, a prisoner of war, and they say, "You *shall* do such and such and such and such or we will make you do it." Or possibly they suppose that if they use

enough ridicule, or enough taunts and jeers, they will get the mastery over you. Now is your time to play the man! You are taken, as it were, a prisoner of war, but do not forfeit your honor by voluntarily serving with or aiding the enemy! They want a song from you, do they? Well then, sing them one of the songs about Jesus and they will soon want you to stop! But do not yield to their desire by singing the song of the worldling, even if you know one. If you are Christ's true soldier, you will be most faithful in the hour of the greatest trial. But you will need to cry to the strong for strength and ask God to give you sufficient grace for every time of need.

Christian tradesmen are sometimes taken prisoners of war in this sense. They get into financial difficulties and then it is suggested to them by Satan, "You must do such and such—you cannot help doing it. Of course you would rather not do it, but, under the circumstances, you cannot help yourself!" Do not do wrong, my brother, whatever the circumstances may be! Become a bankrupt, lose all that you have and go to the workhouse rather than do the least wrong! It would be better to die in a ditch than to live and be rich with a guilty conscience! As you love your Lord, I beseech you, by that precious blood of His that has redeemed you from all iniquity, do not "crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame," but stand fast! And having done all, still stand. God help any of you who are thus taken prisoners of war to avoid doing anything willingly against your Prince and thus aiding His enemy!

(6). *"Knowingly does, when on active service, any act calculated to imperil the success of Her Majesty's forces or any part thereof."*

That is rather a strong clause because it takes a very wide sweep. But, brothers and sisters in Christ, we must not knowingly do anything calculated to imperil the success of our Master's cause. Will you try to think what a comprehensive clause this is? It may be that what you do will not actually imperil the success of Christ's cause. You may be too insignificant for your act to have any very great result, but still, if it is even calculated to have that effect, it is forbidden by the articles of war of Prince Emmanuel!

I will tell you of some things that I think are calculated to imperil the success of our Master's cause. There are some of you who have never been baptized and who are not members of any Christian church. "Well," someone says, "I believe that I am a Christian and that I can go to heaven without being baptized, or joining a church, or even going to the communion table." Yes, I know that is what you think, but that course of conduct of yours is, in my opinion, calculated to imperil the success of Christ's cause! If it is right for you to act thus, then every other Christian has as much right to act thus as you have—and suppose that everybody were to do as you are doing—that would be an end to the visible church of Christ and to the maintenance of the visible ordinances of Christ—and this would be most perilous to the success of Christ's cause! Just think of that, I pray you, and if you are leaving undone that which you ought to do, or are doing anything which has a tendency to imperil the success of Christ's cause, repent of it and forsake it, lest it should turn out that, af-

ter all, you are not a loyal subject and soldier in the army of King Jesus!—

"Put on the gospel armor,
And watching unto prayer,
Where duty calls, or danger,
Be never wanting there."

(7). *"Misbehaves or induces others to misbehave before the enemy."*

I do not quite know what "misbehavior" of a soldier may mean, but I know that a Christian should never misbehave, because he is always in the presence of the enemy. You must never say, "Oh, now, you know, I may do what I like for there is nobody looking." Is there not? Your great captain is certainly looking—and it is frequently when men think they are least seen that they are the most observed! The world has an eagle's eye for a Christian's faults! It tries to see faults where there are none—and where there are small faults, it is sure to magnify them! For my part, I am very glad it is so, and I say, let the world watch us—it will help us to be the more exact in our conduct! If we are ashamed to be seen anywhere, it must be because we have good reason to be ashamed! Let us endeavor to live so that we need not be ashamed—

"Lord I desire to live as one
Who bears a blood bought name.
As one who fears but grieving You
And knows no other shame.
As one by whom Your walk below
Should never be forgot—
As one who gladly would keep apart
From all You love not."

When I was pastor at Waterbeach there was a young man who joined the church and who seemed to run well for a time. But the village feast came round and there was a good deal of drunkenness and all sorts of low merriment. The young man went into the dance hall, but he had not been there many minutes before someone came to him and said, "Don't you belong to Spurgeon?" He tried to deny it, but there were many others who knew it was true and, before long he was thrown out of a window. The *world* pitched him out as a hypocrite! And shortly afterwards, the *church* also turned him out as a hypocrite, so that he was disowned by both the church and the world. And I think that by the grace of God, this led him to a hearty and true repentance. I was thankful that the worldlings kept such a watch over the members of my church that they would not see them acting wrongly without making them suffer for it! And I hope they will serve you in the same way if any of you try to act as that young man did. You must be one thing or the other—either wholly for Christ or wholly for His enemies! If you are not prepared to be out and out for Jesus Christ, do not pretend to enlist in His army. If you want to "hold with the hare, and run with the hounds," we shall certainly not ask you to join our ranks. There must be nothing of this kind of spirit among good soldiers of Jesus Christ. May God keep us free from it!

(8). *"Leaves his commanding officer to go in search of plunder."*

Oh, dear! Have I not known some who professed to be soldiers in Christ's army who have done this? They thought there was something to be gained elsewhere, so they left Christ in "search of plunder." There was one who did this in Paul's day, of whom the apostle wrote, "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world." "Oh, but," says one, "would you not have me marry when there was money to be had, even though it was to a worldly man?" Or, "an ungodly woman?" You can do so if you want to leave Christ "to go in search of plunder." "Would you not have me take a job where I could get several hundreds of pounds a year even though I had to mix with ungodly men, and to do unrighteous things?" O you mean spirited wretch, how little are you worthy to be numbered among those who are descended from the martyrs for the truth of God! How little are you worthy to be among those who follow the Lamb wherever He goes! The Lord teaches those who are really His people that "godliness with contentment is great gain" and, therefore, for Christ's sake, they can afford to despise and lose all other so called "gain"!

"But," says one, "I don't know where we should be if we were so scrupulous and exact as that." I can tell you where you would be—you would be walking in the light as God is in the light, and you would have fellowship with Him—and you would be no loser by acting thus, but you would be a gainer all round, for Christ has assured you that no one shall leave houses, or lands, or husband, or wife, or children for the kingdom's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time and, in the world to come, life everlasting! If you cannot lose for Christ, you have already lost Christ, for He said, "Whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple." He who loves the world better than Christ loves not Christ at all! God save us from being of that character!

Time would fail me if I mentioned all the offenses specified in this list, so I will pass on to number 15 in the Act—

(15). *"By discharging firearms, drawing swords, beating drums, making signals, using words, or by any means whatever intentionally occasions false alarms in action, on the march, in the field, or elsewhere."*

It is a very great sin on the part of Christian soldiers to make false alarms to discourage and dispirit their fellow soldiers. There are some professors who seem to delight to tell us of a new discovery in science which is supposed to destroy our faith. Science makes a wonderful discovery and straightaway we are expected to doubt what is plainly revealed in the Word of God! Considering that the so called "science" is continually changing and that it seems to be the rule for scientific men to contradict all who have gone before them—and that if you take up a book upon almost any science, you will find that it largely consists of repudiations of all former theories—I think we can afford to wait until the scientific men have made up their minds as to what science really is! In any event, we have no cause to be distressed concerning science, so let no Christian's heart fail him—and let him not raise any alarm in the camp of Christ!

Some raise these alarms by slandering their fellow Christians. I will say very few words about this matter, but they must be very strong ones. That man is grossly guilty who makes up a lie or who reports a lie against one who is his brother or sister in Christ. We are all faulty enough, but let us go with the mantle of charity and cover up the faults of others and never expose them. Those who raise false alarms of this sort deserve to be tried by court martial and to receive some very exemplary punishment for such a grave offense!

(16). *"Treacherously makes known the password to any person not entitled to receive it; or, without good and sufficient cause, gives a password different from what he received."*

It is a great crime to give the wrong password to Christ's army. Our password is, "blood." It is an offensive word to many people, but we know that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. I pray God that every stone of this Tabernacle may tumble to its ruin and every timber be splintered to atoms before there should stand on this platform a man to preach who denies the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ, or who even keeps it in the background, for this is our password! You shall know us among all professors by the emphasis which we lay upon atonement by the blood of Jesus Christ! Of the redeemed in glory we read, "These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." And the saints on earth join in John's Doxology, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." "The precious blood of Jesus" is our password in life, and the password with which we hope to enter through the gates of death into eternal glory and blessedness—

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

Further on in this list, I notice another suggestive crime—

(18). *"Being a sentinel, commits any of the following offenses; that is to say, sleeps or is drunk on his post; or leaves his post before he is regularly relieved."*

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "Let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." And this is one of the duties of every Christian, for all Christ's soldiers are sentinels, watchmen on the walls of Zion! Then again, it is our duty not to leave our post till we are regularly relieved. Do you not think that some teachers leave the Sunday school before they are regularly relieved? I think they do. There are some who get tired of the work and leave it. I do not think you can truthfully say that you are regularly relieved of any work until you find a suitable successor—and I hope that some of us will never be regularly relieved until we close our eyes in death. Our prayer is that we may die in harness—

"Our body with our charge lay down,

And cease at once to work and live."

Who wishes to be regularly relieved from Christ's service except it is by receiving his crown and entering into his rest?—

"The land of triumph lies on high,
There are no fields of battle there!
Lord, I would conquer till I die
And finish all the glorious war.
Let every flying hour confess
I gain Your gospel fresh renown!
And when my life and labors cease,
May I possess the promised crown!"

Still further on, I notice that this is put down—

(23). *"Disobeys any lawful command given by his superior officer in the execution of his office."*

I know of only one superior officer in Christ's army, and that is our blessed Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, the captain of our salvation! He said to His disciples, "One is your Master; even Christ, and all you are brethren." And He also said to them, "A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another." Mind that you do not disobey that command of your superior officer—"Love one another." Be true brethren to one another. You know that when Jesus had washed His disciples' feet, He said to them, "If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you, also, ought to wash one another's feet." Imitate this action of your captain by rendering any service that you can to those who are your brothers and sisters in Christ. Seek their good for edification and be not easily provoked, but abound in that charity which "thinks no evil; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

Keep every command of your Master. I put the question to the conscience of every one of you who profess to be Christ's soldiers. Is there any one of His commands that you know of that you have not kept? I will not mention one even if I could do so, but I ask you whether there is one command of Christ which you know is His command, which you have not kept? You may think that the command is only a little one, but the spirit which thinks it is little is not a little evil, but a great evil! If you get a small stone in your boot, you know how it affects you in walking—and a little thing on the conscience, no matter how little it is, causes great trouble in a Christian's life. Blisters, very painful ones, will be upon the spiritual foot if there is either an omission or a commission that is knowingly indulged in contrary to the command of Christ. We are not saved by our works, but when we are saved, we are saved from sin, saved from disobedience, saved from unholiness, saved from selfishness— saved in order that we may live no longer unto ourselves but unto Him that loved us and gave Himself for us.

(25 & 26). The last two articles in the list are these—*"Deserts or attempts to desert from Her Majesty's Service; persuades, endeavors to persuade, procures, or attempts to procure any person subject to military law to desert from Her Majesty's Service."*

Brothers and sisters, you and I, when we enlisted in Christ's army, entered it for life, did we not? I never believed in any system of salvation which comes to an end. There are some who believe that you may be saved today and lost tomorrow. Well, if they like that sort of salvation, they are welcome to it! I do not want it, nor would I have it as a gift. But the salvation that I received when I believed in Jesus Christ was everlasting salvation—that salvation of which the apostle writes to the Hebrews, "that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." Many of us, like Paul, bear in our body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Does anyone ask, "Where are those marks?" Well, some of us have the watermark which has been buried with Christ by baptism into death. That is the outside mark. And then in our hearts we have another mark which the Spirit put upon us in that day when we passed from death unto life by His regenerating power. If these marks are really on us and in us, we shall never desert from our Lord's service, but shall be faithful even unto death!

Possibly there is someone here who has turned back in the day of battle and become a deserter. Where are you, my friend? I am glad to see you once more, for it is a long while since you were last here. You used to be a member of the church and you made a great profession, but you know where you have been lately—you have been serving Satan. May God help you to desert from the devil's service and may you never go back to it again! If you ever were the servant of God, return, O backslider, and return at once!—

"Return, O wanderer, to your home,
Your Father calls for thee!
No longer now an exile roam
In guilt and misery—
Return, return!"

He that has been a mere professor and has turned back, must be branded, "Deserter." No, not on his flesh, but on his conscience, seared as with a hot iron! Some desert because they have grown rich and can no longer associate with poor Christian people. Some desert because they have become poor and they say they have no clothes fit to come in, as if any sort of clothes were needed beyond such as might cover a man decently! Any clothes, if they are paid for, are fit to wear to this place of worship! But let those who say they are too poor to come, remember that it is in poverty and in sickness that a man most needs the gospel and, therefore, the lower he gets in the world, the more closely he ought to cling to Christ! Yet, alas, there are some who desert because of poverty, and some because of wealth. O you deserters, may the Lord have mercy upon you and grant that you may not be real deserters, but may come back to the colors! Our great captain is ready to receive you and to forgive you, for He says, "Him that come to Me I will in no wise cast out." Yes, even though you are a deserter, if you do but come to Christ, He will receive

you graciously, love you freely and His anger shall be turned away from you. God bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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THE TENDERNESS OF GOD'S COMFORT
NO. 3189

A SERMON
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"As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you; and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem."
Isaiah 66:13.

WE do not intend entering into a discussion of the context and its relationship literally to the Jewish people. We have never hesitated to assert our conviction that there are great blessings in store for God's ancient Israel and that the day shall come when her comfort shall abound, when the glory of the Gentiles shall flow to her like a flowing stream and she shall be comforted by her God as one whom his mother comforts. But we believe that these passages are applicable to *all* the servants of God, that the comfortable passages of Scriptures are theirs, that whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free, barbarian or Greek, we are all one in Christ Jesus—and all the promises are ours in Him—for in Him all the promises are, "yes," and, "amen." I believe, then, that this passage belongs to every child of God.

It is well that there is such a promise as this on record, for believers need comfort. They need comfort because they are men and, "man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." There has been a great necessity for consolation ever since the time when man was expelled from Eden. Men need comfort because they are but men. Although favored by God, elected by His sovereignty and called by His divine grace into a peculiar state of acceptance, they are still in the body and they are made to feel it—being tempted in all points as other men are and in some points peculiarly tried. They are men and but men at the best! They need comfort, too, because they are Christians, for if others escape the rod, Christians must not, yes, *shall not*. The Lord may be pleased to give to the sinner a long prosperity that he may be fattened as a bullock for the slaughter, but His promise to His people whom He calls by His grace is, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." "Whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." We must, therefore, have special consolation, since as men, as only men, and as Christians, we shall have constant occasions for comfort.

When I take a text like this, I know there are very many in the congregation who cannot enter into it. But, my dear friends, if you are Christians, it will not be long before you will! You may have to look back, perhaps, upon the words which I quote in your hearing, and say of them, "God sent them to me as a preparation before the trial came. He gave me food as He did Elijah under the juniper tree, because He determined that I should go 40 days in the strength of that meat." Despise not the conso-

lations of the Lord because you need them not just now. You will require them. The calm will not last forever—a storm is brewing. Say not, "My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved." He has but to hide His face and you will be troubled—and then you will prize that which now you do lightly esteem—you will long to be comforted "as one whom his mother comforts."

But coming at once to the text, I think we may very well talk of it under three points. First, who comforts? Secondly, how He comforts. And thirdly, where He comforts.

I. With regard to the first point, WHO COMFORTS? "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you."

The work of comforting His saints is not too low for God to be engaged in. It is true that He sometimes uses instruments, but all real comfort to a broken heart must come directly from God, Himself. He does not say, "I will send an angel to comfort you," but, "I will comfort you." Nor in the text is it said that the Christian minister shall comfort you. Alas, dear brothers and sisters, often what are we who preach the word but broken cisterns that hold no water? But God says, "I will comfort you." And when He undertakes the work, then we become as conduit pipes that are full, even to bursting, with the drink that you require! Your soul shall be satisfied even out of poor earthen vessels. But it must be God's work. He must do it, for when a soul is truly humbled, heavily laden and broken in pieces by God's hand, there is only one hand—the pierced hand—that can heal the wound!

When we read, in this passage, that God will comfort the soul, we are to understand, I think, that *God does so in the Trinity of His person.* He is called "the God of consolation." The Father comforts us. The very use of that term, "Father," seems to bring good cheer to our spirits. As long as I can call God, my Father, I shall not be without a star in my sky. "My Father"—that sweetens all the sorrow that can come to me! It is a sword, but my Father, it is in Your hand. It is a bitter cup, but, my Father, You have given it to me, so shall I not drink it? That word, "my Father," shall make my heart leap for joy in the midst of my deepest distress! As a Father, God does actively come to the comfort of His children—and when a filial spirit is shed abroad in us, our souls, leaning on all sufficient grace, rejoice even in the midst of deep distress! God the Son also comforts us, for is not His name, "the Consolation of Israel"? When you stand at the foot of the cross, you find comfort, there, for all the ills that wring your heart. Sin loses its weight. Death, itself, is dead. All griefs expire—slain by the griefs of the man of sorrows. Only enter into the Savior's passion and your own passion is over. Get to understand His sorrows and your sorrows find at least a pause, if not an end. And as for the blessed Spirit, He was given for this very purpose, to be our Comforter. He dwells in all the saints to bring to their remembrance the things which Jesus spoke and to lead them into all the truth of God that their joy in Christ may be full!

It is something very delightful to consider that Father, Son and Spirit all cooperate to give us comfort. I can understand their cooperating to make the world. I can understand their cooperation in the salvation of a

soul. But I am astonished at this same united action in so comparatively small a matter as the comfort of believers! Yet the Holy three seem to think it a great matter that believers should be happy, or they would not work together to cheer disconsolate spirits.

We must understand, when God says, "I will comfort you," that He intends that *there are many ways by which He does it*. Sometimes He comforts us in the course of providence. We may be the lowest spoke of the wheel, now, but by the revolution of time we may be the uppermost before long. We may suffer very acute pains, tonight, but by the morning the Master may have relieved all our pain. The pause between sickness and health may not be very long. If the good physician shall put His healing hands upon us, we shall soon be restored. How often, when you thought you were coming to your worst, has there been a sudden brightening of the sky! It is a long lane that has no turning and it is a long trouble that never comes to an end. It is when the sea ebbs as far as it can go that the tide begins to flow—and they say the darkest part of the night is that which is just before the daybreak. When the winter grows very cold and keen, we begin to hope that spring will soon come—and our desperate sorrows, when they reach their worst—are coming to their close. So let us be of good cheer! There will not be always such a rough sea, poor troubled saint. You shall be out of the Atlantic into the Pacific before long—and you shall be out of the sea, altogether, and away on the *terra firma* of eternal joy before many years have rolled over your head!

However, when the Lord is not pleased thus to comfort us in the way of providence, He has a means of doing it by His omnipotent secret working on the human heart. Not to speak doctrinally, but rather to give a particular instance, have you not found that sometimes, when you were much burdened with trouble, a very peculiar calm came over your spirit? You had been vexed, almost distracted. But when you woke one morning, you felt calm and peaceful—you had given up rebellion, left off murmuring, and you could say to your God—

"'Tis sweet to lie passive in Your hands
And know no will but Yours."

And have you not even been conscious, in times of the very severest trouble, of an unusual joy? You did not sing with your voice, but there was something that sang with you softly, silently, but still sweetly. You sometimes look back upon that sick chamber, (I know I do), and almost wish that you were there now. The trial was sharp, indeed, for—

"Sharp are the pangs that nature gives"—

but, oh, the joy that came with them! It was so surpassing that, in retrospect, you forget the pain and only remember the sweetness! How was this? Was it the pain that did it? Nothing of the kind! God is like a watchmaker who knows, because he made the watch, how to touch the wheels and regulate them. He made us and, therefore, He knows how to deal with us so that everything shall go right where before everything went amiss. He can open the floodgates of joy and inundate our souls with bliss even in our darkest days of trouble! "Only hope you in Me, My child," He says, "for you shall praise Me, who is the help of your counte-

nance and your God." Though the fig trees do not blossom and God does not take away the plague from the cattle. Though your substance shall be diminished and fire shall devour your household goods, yet your God can make up for all this and cause your days of leanness to be fat days—and your days of hunger to be days of feasting—and your days of thirst to be days when you shall drink the wine on the lees well-refined!

It would not be well to close this point without remarking that *God has been pleased to make a previous provision for the comfort of all His saints.* When He comforts, He has not to invent a novelty to do it—He has only to bring to us stores which have been laid up, fruits new and old which have been ready for His beloved. It trouble comes, God has provided a strength by which you shall meet it, and provided a way through by which you shall escape from it. There are promises in God's word suitable to every conceivable condition of the saints. Out of millions of God's people living in different countries, under different forms of government and in different ages—all of them of different temperaments and constitutions—their trials must take all kinds of shapes. As in the kaleidoscope, there must be a vast variety in the tribulations of the Lord's people and yet there never has arisen a single case in which there has not been a promise which, word for word, and letter for letter, met the case in hand!

In the great bunch of keys in that good old book, there is a key for every lock! And if it were not so, there are one or two promises like master keys which will fit all. Such a promise is the one in Isaiah 41:10, "Fear you not, for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God." It will suit the youth and the gray head. It will be satisfactory to you if you have to overcome difficulties or if you have to endure sufferings. In the calm or in the storm, lying in the trench or climbing the scaling ladder, that text will still be precious—"Fear you not, for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God." We will fall back, then, upon the consolatory truth that with God are the consolations of His children, that He is Himself responsible for their comfort, having engaged to be their Father! And so we may suck marrow out of our text, "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you."

II. But now the second head is to be HOW GOD COMFORTS. "As one whom his mother comforts."

This is a peculiarly delightful metaphor. A father can comfort, but I think he is not much at home in the work. When God speaks about His pity, He compares Himself to the father. "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." But when He speaks about comfort, He selects the mother. When I have seen the little ones sick, I have felt all the pity in the world for them, but I did not know how to set to work to comfort them—but a mother knows by instinct how to do it! There is placed in the mother's tender heart a power of sympathy and very soon she finds the word or gives the touch that will meet her darling's case and cheer its troubled soul. The father is awkward at it—our rougher, sterner nature hardly shines in the matter of consolation. But the mother can do it to perfection. How, then, does the mother comfort her child?

We answer, first, she does it *very fondly*. There is a way of administering comfort in which you stand apart from the patient and you tell him, "There is the cup of cordial if you'd like to drink it." But the mother's way of doing it is to sip the cup and then to put it to the child's lips, yes, and to do more than that—to take the child right into her bosom while she gives it. She does not talk to him at arm's length, but she talks with him at her heart all the while! And that is probably the secret of her power. And so, when God comforts any poor heavy laden sinner or troubled saint, He does not talk to Him at a distance, but He runs and falls on his neck and kisses him. The infinite, Almighty God falls upon the neck of a repentant sinner and gives him the kiss of His love! And He does just the same to a poor, troubled and afflicted saint. He comforts fondly. May one venture to apply such a word as that to the great God? May we say that He has a fondness for His children? Well, at any rate, we know that if there is a word more sweet, more dear, indicating a closer affinity and a deeper and purer love than another, we may use that word concerning our God. He loves us with a love that has no bottom, no summit and no shore. Even as He loves His own dear Son, so He loves us! We are in His heart! We are engraved on the palms of His hands and, therefore, when He comforts, it is in so fond a manner that we cannot but be cheered! With all the tenderness a mother feels, God feels for us—and so He comforts us as a mother comforts her child.

But there is more than fondness here. A mother comforts her child with much sympathy. She always seems to feel the pain the child is feeling. To soothe that headache, she lays her cool hand upon the hot, throbbing little brow, and is herself pained as she thinks of the pain that must be there. Or she looks at the hand that was made to bleed by a fall, and her eyes seem as if they would bleed for the little one. She feels it all and, therefore, she is sure to comfort well. And this is how Jesus comforts. We have heard of a little child who said to her mother, "Mother, Mrs. so and so, the widow, says she likes me to go in to see her, for I comfort her so. When she sits and cries, I put my head in her lap and I cry, too, and she says that comforts her." Ah, yes, child, there is true philosophy in that! This is just the sort of comfort we need and this is just what God does. Our Lord in human flesh still sorrows with His people—hungers in their hunger—thirsts in their thirsting—and melts in their mourning. Though He reigns on high, He is not so high that He has no "respect unto the lowly."

A mother also comforts her child *very diligently*. She is not satisfied with saying half a dozen words and putting her child down. She takes it up and if it won't be dandled on one knee, she tries the other, and if that form of comfort will not do, she will try another. We have heard of a good mother who wanted to teach her child something but when someone complained that she had to repeat the same thing 20 times, she answered, "Yes, I did that because 19 times would not do." So God perseveres. Sometimes a mother may have to comfort her child when it is very sick and very fretful, and its poor little head and heart are out of order. She has to comfort it again, and again, and again, and again. Soft words

are always on her lips. She can do nothing else but console the little one and she does not tire of it. Oh, those mothers of ours! They never grow tired when we are sick and ill! They seem to be up all night and all day long. And if a nurse comes in for a few hours, they are up, then, too, looking after the nurse, so that I do not know that much ease comes with the helper. Our mothers are so untiringly kind! Well, I say to you—to "you who unto Jesus for refuge have fled"—that our God is kinder than any mother! His book is full of attempts to comfort His children and those attempts—blessed be God—are not without success!

Again, a mother comforts her child *seasonably*. A true mother is not always comforting her child. If she is a silly mother, she brings up her child so delicately that it turns out to be a viper in her bosom. But if she is a wise mother, she saves her comforts till they are needed. When it is sick, then she gives the cordials. Well, God does not always comfort His saints, but when they are in affliction, then they shall have consolation. As our tribulations abound, so our consolations abound by Jesus Christ. There is a balance kept up. If there is an ounce of trouble, there will be an ounce of comfort. If there is a ton of trouble, there will be a ton of consolation. When the child has been doing wrong and the parent has chastised it, if the little lip curls, if the proud foot is stamped, if there is a frown on the brow—the wise mother does not comfort it. But when the child comes and prays to be forgiven, the mother's heart is ready for it directly. "Sin no more," she says, "and the past shall be forgotten and forgiven." Well, this is how God comforts us. While we are proud and stand out against Him, we shall feel His hand. But when we confess our faults and come humbly to Him for pardon, we shall have seasonable comfort, "as one whom his mother comforts."

Again, a mother's comfort has this point about it—she usually comforts *in a most efficient manner*—and the child goes away smiling, though it seemed to say before, "I shall never be happy again." Five minutes of a mother's wise talk and sweet comfort, and the child is as happy as before! "Ah," you say, "that will do for children, but it won't do for men." But God keeps His saints as children before Him. May God grant us grace to be as little children, or we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven! Then, when our God comes to comfort us, I am quite sure He will do it more effectually than the most tender mother can.

But, once more, a mother comforts *all her life*. "A mother is a mother all her life," says an old proverb. There is no change there. "Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" It seems impossible, but the Lord says, "Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you." A mother casts not away her child. Fathers sometimes have done such a thing, but mothers, I should hope, never! But even if they have—

"Yet," says the Lord, "should nature change,
And mothers monsters prove,
Zion still dwells upon the heart
Of everlasting love."

God will not cease to comfort His people! Perhaps there is a brother who is passing through a very severe trial and he thinks he shall never be comforted again. Well, but your mother will not forsake you—and do you

think God will? "But," says one, "you do not know my difficulty. It is a crushing one." My dear friend, I know I do not know it, but your heavenly Father knows it. And do you suppose if an earthly mother sticks fast by her child, that He will leave you? Go to Him! His heart is as near to you, now, as when you were on the mountain rejoicing in the full sunshine of His love. The very shadow of a change is unknown to Him. Go to Him with confidence and humble faith and you shall find the text, true, "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you."

III. Now I have just a little to say upon the third point, that is, WHERE GOD COMFORTS His people. The text says, "in Jerusalem."

Why, for His ancient people, that was *where they had their troubles*. The city had been under siege. O daughter of Salem, how were you made to weep! What sorrow rolled over your head—to see the city dismantled and her palaces become ruins—wild fowls and bitterns inhabiting the place where once the assembled tribes were glad! O Jerusalem, what grief is in your name to your inhabitants as they remember these, your glory, all departed, and your sorrow lasting still! Yes, but God will comfort His people in the very place of their trouble! This will be fulfilled on a large scale in the millennial glory when our world, which has been the scene of the saints' sorrow, will also be the scene of their triumphant reign with Christ Jesus!

Meanwhile, you, His servants, must not suppose that because you have trials, you are in the wrong place. The vine is not in the wrong place because the vinedresser often uses the knife! It may be the best place for that vine where it gets most of the vinedresser's pruning. Beware, especially young friends, beware of self will in seeking to change your troubles! Some of you think when you are single you have peculiar troubles—do not be in a hurry to incur the troubles of married life! And you who are servants who think you are very harshly done by, do not be so wondrously fast to wish to be masters! I sometimes find my cross not just what I like it to be, but I should be very much afraid to attempt to alter it. "It were better in all wisdom to bear the ills we have than fly to others that we know not of." That man whom you envy, you would probably pity if you knew more about him! Be content to stay in Jerusalem.

Remember, the comfort which God gives will be a comfort to suit your present place and position. "In Jerusalem," where you have seen the furnace of God placed, for His fire is in Zion and His furnace in Jerusalem," even there shall you have your comfort! It is a joy to think of Daniel in the lions' den. I believe that Daniel never had a sweeter night's rest than he had when he had some old lion for his pillow, and the younger lions to be his guardians. And in the case of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, the Master did not break down the furnace walls and take them out at once, but He was with them in the fire and cheered them in the midst of the flames! So shall the comfort of God come to you in your time of need.

Take another view of this matter. God will comfort you who are here below. "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove!" says one. Now what would you do if you had them? They would be a very awkward equipment for a man! But suppose you *had* the wings of a dove, what would you do?

Would you fly away? Well, you would hardly dare to do that, for to fly to God without a permit would be taking the matter into your own hands. Why cannot God comfort you where you are? "Ah," says one, "I expect to have my happiness in another world." So do I, but I hope to have some, here, too. "One heaven will be enough for me," says one. But why not have heaven here and heaven hereafter, too?—

"The men of grace have found
Glory begun below.
Celestial fruits on earthly ground
From faith and hope may grow.
The hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets
Before we reach the heavenly fields,
Or walk the golden streets.
Then let our songs abound,
And every tear be dry—
We're marching through Immanuel's ground
To fairer worlds on high!"

It is true that the fairer worlds are on high, but it is equally true that we are on Immanuel's ground even now! "In Jerusalem—the place of your trials—will I comfort you," says the Lord.

And now, to come to another meaning of the passage, "in Jerusalem," that is, *in the church of God.* The richest comforts are reserved for those who, fearing the Lord, often speak, one to another, and are not ashamed to acknowledge His name. And I think, dear friends, the place of comfort is the assembly of God's people. Therefore live, "not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." There are people in the world who never go out to a weeknight service in the evening, and never think of doing such a thing! They get by the fireside after that day's business and there they sit, and say, "We are full of doubts and fears. We cannot rejoice as we used to do—

"What peaceful hours we once enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!'"

And so on. Now, those people expect God to go to their house and comfort them. By what reason should they expect any such thing when they refuse to go to God's house for the comfort? Our Lord will sometimes withhold a sense of His presence from us in order to make us feel our wrongdoing in staying away from the use of the means which He has appointed for our comfort and consolation. I would that all congregations come out as well as you usually do. I must not say anything to you about not coming out on a weeknight, for you do come—and anything I might say about people not coming would be like Dean Swift's sermon about those who go to sleep in church. When he finished it, he thought he had done no good, "for," he said, "only you who were awake have heard it."

I would rather propose to you that whenever you meet a friend who is greatly in lack of comfort and is complaining that he has not got it, you would give as judicious a hint as you can that it may be that they miss the comfort who miss the means of grace! He who will not go to the shop and buy, cannot wonder if he has not any oil for his lamp. He who will not take the trouble to go to the stream must not marvel if he has to suffer thirst. O let us, dear friends, as often as we can, gather together with

the Lord's people for praise and prayer! No doubt, "in Jerusalem" we shall find our comfort! There are those among you to whom it does one good to listen when you speak of your enjoyments in this house. Of course there are some who are not edified by the ministry here, but if that is the case, why do they not go somewhere else? Their seats could be filled by others who would be edified. But there are some who say, "Master, it does us good to come here, and we can bless the Lord that He here makes the place of His feet glorious. We long for Sunday to come round again, for we feel the place to be like an Elim." In your case, God always makes His house to be a fountain of living waters to your souls and streams from Lebanon.

To that end, I pray the Master to help all His servants. Pray for your ministers, but remember that the comfort cannot come from them. It may come *through* them, but it must come from the Master, Himself. With that exhortation, we will come back to the words of the text, and the gracious promise, *"As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you, and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem."*

May God add His blessing and bring troubled sinners to look to Christ, and Christ shall have the glory! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
COLOSSIANS 2.

Verse 1. *For I would that you knew what great conflict I have for you and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.* Paul had not met these Colossian Christians, but he had heard of their faith, hope, and love—and he so desired their good that he had a continual care for them in his heart. He carried that care to God in prayer, yet he still bore them in loving remembrance. They were always on his heart as a sick child is always on the heart of its mother.

2, 3. *That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ. In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.* He wanted them to know God and to rest comforted and happy in what He revealed. He saw in them a tendency to look abroad for something more than that—a desire to tack something else to the gospel, a wish to try and find some fresh light outside the word—and over this he greatly grieved. He himself was more than satisfied with the gospel and he wanted them to be, in that respect, as he was.

4. *And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.* They did not openly contradict the gospel. They *pretended* to have a great affection for it and then they tried to tear the very heart out of it with their enticing words of man's wisdom!

5. *For though I am absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.* He never forgot them and it was his joy, when he found them

standing fast in Christ—but his sorrow and his horror when they went away after anyone else.

6. *As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you in Him.* "Do not turn away from Him, do not dream of going beyond Him. You received Him very simply at first—you trusted in Him entirely—so go on doing so. You were satisfied with Christ when you first came to Him, so be satisfied with Him, still, for you do not need anything more than Christ—and there is nothing more than Christ!"

7. *Rooted and built up in Him.* "Take a living hold of Christ as a tree does of the soil. Also be built up in Him—as a building settles down upon the foundation—so do you settle down upon Christ."

7. *And established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.* When a man is established in the truth of God that he knows, and rejoices in what he has already received, he will not go away from it.

8. *Beware lest any man spoil you, (it might be rendered, "plunder you"), through philosophy and vein deceit.* "Beware of those who pretend that they are going to enrich you, but whose real objective is to plunder you. They say that they will give you advanced thought, deeper ideas, a system more congruous with the age. But it is—

8. *After the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.* "What do you want with their traditions? Christ has revealed His truth to you. What do you want with the world's rudiments? You have gone beyond such elementary, useless knowledge as that, for you have got the truth of God itself!"

9. *For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.* In Christ we enter into the fullness and completeness of life both materially and spiritually!

10, 11. *Who is the head of all principality and power: in whom also you are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.* "The Jew boasts that he is a circumcised man, but you have *spiritually* all that circumcision meant literally! Even though you have not the wound in your flesh, you have more than that, for you have the death of the flesh and your very flesh has been buried with Christ. All that circumcision can possibly mean you have in Christ."

12. *Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with Him through the faith of the working of God, who has raised Him from the dead.* "You have death, burial and resurrection, all in Christ. And you received the outward sign and token of this when you were baptized, so believe firmly that it is so and do not look anywhere else for it. You are neither dead nor buried apart from Christ, nor are you driven apart from Him—all you have is in Him."

13. *And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, has He quickened together with Him, having forgiven all your trespasses.* "You do not need to go to a 'priest' for pardon, for Christ has forgiven you all your trespasses. [See Sermons #2101, Volume 35—LIFE AND PARDON and #2605, Volume 45—DEATH AND ITS SENTENCE ABOLISHED—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] You are so complete in

Christ that confession to man and priestly absolution from man would be of no use to you."

14. *Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His Cross.* "All the Mosaic ceremonies from which you were shut out as Gentiles, are abolished! Christ has driven a nail through them and fastened them up to His cross." As sometimes a banker stamps a check when it is paid, so has Christ cut through the very heart of all Jewish ordinances by what He has done for His people.

15. *And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.* [See Sermon #273, Volume 5—CHRIST TRIUMPHANT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Exhibiting them as His prisoners in a triumphal procession, as the victorious Roman generals did when they returned from war!

16. *Let no one, therefore, judge you in food, or in drink, or regarding a festival, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath.* "Do not put yourselves under rules and regulations which God has not ordained. If you think it is right for you to abstain from certain drinks, do so, but do not act thus simply because others do so. If you abstain from certain foods because they have been offered to idols, and the consciences of others might be offended if you partook of them, do not act thus as though it would save you. Do not make yourself subject to the judgment of other men, for Christ is your lawgiver and Lord."

17. *Which are a shadow of things to come; but the substance is of Christ.* "You can do without the shadow, now that you have the substance, so keep to that." Some men multiply church ordinances—they have this form and that form. Well, let them have them if they find them of service, but do not bring yourself under subjection to anything of the kind! Follow the New Testament and above all things keep close to Christ, for He is everything to you.

18. *Let no man beguile you of your reward in false humility.* We know those who say, "We do not know anything, we are only seekers, trying to find out the truth." They talk very humbly considering how desperately proud they really are, but that humility which makes men doubt is mock humility and is not of God! "Let no man beguile you of your reward." When you have learned the truth of God from the Scriptures, be dogmatic about it! Do not be afraid of the presumption of which some will accuse you, or the bigotry which they will impute to you.

18. *And worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.* Agnostics by their name confess that they do not know, but do not let them take away from you what *you know* and set you to investigate matters which are beyond you with a judgment which they would lead you to think is well near infallible, whereas your judgment is very fallible, indeed. Be not puffed up by your fleshly mind!

19. *And not holding the head.* That is the point—these people get away from the deity of Christ! They get away from the atoning blood. They get away from glorifying Him who alone is the truth!

19. *From which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increased with the increase of God.* Take away the head and there is death—everything is out of order then. If the head is denied—if any doctrine is taught which is contrary to the glory of Christ, you have killed the body however much you may pretend to be increasing and feeding it!

20-22. *Therefore if you are dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are you subject to ordinances? (Touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using), after the commandments and doctrines of men?* You may and you should feel that there are some things which you will not touch, or taste, or handle. You had better leave poisonous drugs alone, but at the same time, if any man seeks to impose upon you any regulation concerning them as a part of the faith, you may resist it and repudiate it—and plead your freedom in Christ.

23. *Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship.* There were some of the Jews who would not eat certain kinds of meat, and others who would fast for long periods. Some thought it was very wicked to eat meat on a certain day—and there were many such notions—and similar superstitions still survive among us, such as not eating meat on Fridays, being afraid of 13 people sitting at table and so on! But you have nothing to do with all that kind of rubbish, so get away from it! If you are a believer in Christ, tread all such nonsense under your feet. "Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship."—

23. *And humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honor.* There is no honor about such things, they are contemptible—"not in any honor"—

23. *To the satisfying of the flesh.* That is all such things would do—make you seem better than other people—so do not be led into these ways, but stand fast in the liberty in which Christ has made His people free!

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CHRIST IN GETHSEMANE
NO. 3190

A SERMON
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"And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane."
Mark 14:32.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon "Christ in Gethsemane," are #493, Volume 9—GETHSEMANE; #693, Volume 12—THE GARDEN OF THE SOUL; #1199, Volume 20—THE AGONY IN GETHSEMANE and #494, Volume 9—THE BETRAYAL—Read/download all the sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

OUR Lord had been sitting at the table of happy fellowship with His disciples, talking to them in a very solemn and impressive manner. He then delivered those choice discourses which are recorded by John and offered that wonderful prayer which deserves to always be called, "The Lord's Prayer." Knowing all that was to befall Him, He and His disciples left the upper room and started to go to His usual place of quiet retreat, "a place which was named Gethsemane." You can easily picture their descent into the street. The moon was at the full on the Paschal night and it was very cold, for we read that the high priest's servants had kindled a fire and warmed themselves, because it was cold. As Jesus walked along the narrow streets of Jerusalem, He doubtless still spoke to His disciples in calm and helpful tones. And before long they came to the Brook Kidron over which David passed when Absalom stole away the hearts of the people from his father. So now, "great David's greater Son" must go the same way to the olive garden where He had often been before with His disciples. It was called Gethsemane, "the olive press." As we think of Christ in Gethsemane, I want you who love Him not only to adore Him, but to learn to imitate Him, so that when you are called to "drink of His cup," and to be baptized with the baptism wherewith He was baptized, you may behave as His true followers should and come forth from your conflict victorious as He came forth from His!

At the very outset, there is one fact that I wish you to observe very particularly. Sudden changes from joy to grief have produced extraordinary results in those who have been affected by them. We have often read or heard of persons whose hair has turned white in a single night—such an extreme convulsion of mind has happened to them that they have seemed to be hurried forward into premature old age—at least in appearance, if not in fact. Many have died through unusual excitements of spirit. Some have dropped down dead through a sudden excess of joy and others have been killed by a sudden excess of grief. Our blessed Master must have experienced a very sudden change of feeling on that memorable night. In that great intercessory prayer of His, there is nothing like distress or tumult of spirit. It is as calm—as a lake unruffled by the zephyr's breath. Yet He is no sooner in Gethsemane than He says to

the three especially favored disciples, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death: tarry you here and watch with Me."

I do not think that this great conflict arose through our dear Master's fear of death, nor through His fear of the physical pain and all the disgrace and shame that He was so soon to endure. But, surely, the agony in Gethsemane was part of the great burden that was already resting upon Him as His people's substitute—it was this that pressed His spirit down even into the dust of death. He was to bear the full weight of it upon the cross, but I am persuaded that the passion *began* in Gethsemane. You know that Peter writes, "Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." But we are not to gather from that passage that His substitutionary sufferings were limited to the tree, for the original might bear this rendering—that He bore our sins in His own body *up to the* tree—that He came up to the tree bearing that awful load and still continued to bear it on the tree! You remember that Peter also writes, in the same verse, "by whose stripes you were healed." These stripes did not fall upon Jesus when He was upon the cross—it was in Pilate's judgment hall that He was so cruelly scourged! I believe that He was bearing our sins all His life, but that the terrible weight of them began to crush Him with sevenfold force when He came to the olive press, and that the entire mass rested upon Him with infinite intensity when He was nailed to the cross—and so forced from Him the agonizing cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

I. In meditating upon this commencement of our Savior's unknown agonies, let us think first of THE CHOICE OF THE SPOT where those agonies were to be endured. Let us try to find out why He went to that particular garden on that dread night of His betrayal.

First, the choice of Gethsemane *showed His serenity of mind and His courage*. He knew that He was to be betrayed, to be dragged before Annas and Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod—to be insulted, scourged and, at last to be led away to be crucified—but (mark the words), "He came out, and went, as He was known to do, to the Mount of Olives." It was His usual custom to go there to pray, so He would not make any change in His habits although He was approaching the supreme crisis of His earthly life. Let this courageous conduct of our Lord teach a lesson to all who profess to be His disciples. Whenever some trouble is about to come upon you, especially if it is a trouble that comes upon you because you are a Christian, do not be perturbed in spirit. Neglect no duty, but do as you have been known to do. The best way of preparing for whatever may be coming is to go on with the next thing in the order of providence. If any child of God knew that he had to die tonight, I would recommend him to do just what he would do on any other Sabbath night, only to do it more earnestly and more devoutly than ever he had done it before! Blessed is that servant who, when his Master comes, shall be found discharging his duty as a servant—waiting upon his Master's household with all due orderliness and care. To go and stand outside the front door and stare up into the sky to see if the Master is coming, as some I know seem to do, is not at all as your Lord would have you act! You know how the angels rebuked the disciples for doing this—"You men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven?" Go and preach the gospel in the power of

the Holy Spirit and then, whether Christ comes sooner or later, you will be in the right posture to welcome Him! And He will commend you for carrying out, as far as you can, His last great commission to His disciples!

Christ's courage is also evident from the fact that "Judas, also, who betrayed Him, knew the place, for Jesus often resorted there with His disciples." Nothing would have been easier than for our blessed Lord to have escaped from Judas if He had desired to do so, but He had no desire to escape, so He went boldly and deliberately to the place with which "the son of perdition" was well acquainted—the very place, indeed, to which the traitor at once conducted the officers who had been ordered to arrest the Master! May the Lord give to us similar courage whenever we are placed in a position in any respect like His was then! There are certain trials which, as a Christian, you cannot escape, and which you should not wish to escape. You do not like to think of them, but I would urge you to do so, not with fear and terror, but with the calm confidence of one who says, "I have a baptism to be baptized with and I am straitened until it is accomplished. I have a cup of which I must drink, I am eager to drink it. I do not court suffering, but if it is for Christ's sake, for the glory of God and the good of His church, I do not wish to escape from it, but I will go to it calmly and deliberately, even as my Lord went to Gethsemane, though Judas knew the place where Jesus often resorted with His disciples."

But, next, in the choice of this spot, our Lord also *manifested His wisdom*. For, first, it was to Him a place of holy memories. Under those old olive trees, so gnarled and twisted, He had spent many a night in prayer. And the silver moonbeams, glancing between the somber foliage had often illumined His blessed person as He knelt there and wrestled and had communion with His Father. He knew how His soul had been refreshed while He had spoken there, face to face with the Eternal—how His face had been made to shine—and He had returned to the battle in Jerusalem's streets strengthened by His contact with the Almighty. So He went to the old trysting place, the familiar spot where holy memories clustered thick as bees about a hive, each one laden with honey. He went there because those holy memories aided His faith. And, brothers and sisters in Christ, when your time of trial comes, you will do well to go to the spot where the Lord has helped you in the past—and where you have enjoyed much hallowed fellowship with Him. There are rooms where if the walls could tell all that has happened within them, a heavenly brightness might be seen because God has so graciously revealed Himself to us there in times of sickness and sorrow! One who had long lain in prison for Christ's sake, used to say, sometimes, after he had been released, "Oh, take me back to my dungeon, for I never had such blessed seasons of communion with my Lord as I had within that cold stone cell!" Well, if you have such a place, dear to you by many hallowed memories, go to it as your Master went to His sacred oratory in the garden of Gethsemane, for there you will be likely to be helped even by the associations of the place.

Our Lord's wisdom, in choosing that spot is also evident from the fact that it was a place of deep solitude and, therefore, most suitable for His prayers and cries on that doleful night. The place which is now called the garden of Gethsemane does not, according to some of the best judges, deserve that name. It is in far too exposed a position. But one always thinks of Gethsemane as a very quiet, lonely spot. And let me say that in my judgment, there is no place so suitable for solitude as an olive garden—especially if it is in terrace above terrace as in the south of France. I have frequently been sitting in an olive garden, and friends whom I would have been glad to see, have been within a few yards of me, yet I have not known that they were there! One beautiful afternoon, as two or three of us sat and read, we could see, a long way down, a black hat moving to and fro, but we could not see the wearer of it. We afterwards discovered that he was a brother minister whom we were glad to invite to join our little company. If you want to be alone, you can be so at any time you like in an olive garden—even if it is near town. What with the breaking up of the ground into terraces, the great abundance of foliage and the strange twisted trunks of the old trees, I know no place in which I would feel so sure of being quite alone as in an olive garden! And I think our Master went to Gethsemane for a similar reason. And burdened as He was, He needed to be in a solitary place. The clamorous crowd in Jerusalem would have been no fit companions for Him when His soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.

It seems to me, also, that there is about an olive garden, either by day or by night, something congruous with sorrow. There are some trees that seem conducive to mirth—the very twinkling of their leaves would make one's heart dance with delight! But about the olive there is always something, not suggestive, perhaps, of absolute melancholy, but a matter of fact soberness as if in extracting oil out of the flinty rock, it had endured so much suffering that it had no inclination to smile, but stood there as the picture of everything that is somber and solemn. Our dear Master knew that there was something congenial to His exceeding sorrow in the gloom of the olive garden and, therefore, He went there on the night of His betrayal. Act with similar wisdom, brothers and sisters in Christ, when your hour of trial is approaching! I have known some people rush into gay society to try to forget their grief, but that was folly. I have known others, in seasons of sorrow, seem to surround themselves with everything that is sad—that was also folly. Some, who have been in great trouble, have tried to hide it in frivolity, but that was still greater folly. It is a good thing, in times of grief, not to let your surroundings be either too somber or too bright, but to seek, in your measure, to be as wise as your Master was in His choice of Gethsemane as the scene of His solitary supplication and subsequent betrayal.

II. Now, secondly, let us consider THE EXERCISE OF THE SAVIOR UPON THAT SPOT. Every item is worthy of attention and imitation.

First, *He took all the precautions for others.* He left 8 of His disciples at the entrance to the garden, saying to them, "Pray that you enter not into temptation." Then He took Peter, James and John a little further into the garden, saying to them, "Tarry you here, and watch with Me." There ought, thus, to have been two watching and praying bands. If they had

all been on the watch, they might have heard the footfalls of the approaching band and they would have seen in the distance the lights of the lanterns and torches of these who were coming to arrest their Lord. Probably our Master took these precautions more for the sake of His disciples than for His own sake. He bade them pray as well as watch, that they might not be taken unawares, nor be overcome with fear when they saw their Master captured and led away as a prisoner. From this action of our Lord, we may learn that we, also, in our own extremity, should not forget to care for others and shield them from harm as much as we can.

Next, *our Savior solicited the sympathy of friends*. As a man, He desired the prayers and sympathies of those who had been most closely associated with Him. Oh, what a prayer meeting they might have held—watching for the coming of the enemy and praying for their dear Lord and Master! They had a noble opportunity of showing their devotion to Him, but they missed it. They could not have kept Judas and the men who came with him away from their Lord, but they might have let their Master know when Judas was coming. It was almost the last service that any of them could have rendered to Him before He died for them—yet they failed to render it and left Him, in that dread hour of darkness—without even the slight consolation that human sympathy might have afforded Him. In our times of trial, we shall not do wrong if we imitate our Lord in this action of His—yet we need not be surprised if, like He, we find all human aid fail us in our hour of greatest need.

Then, leaving all His disciples, and going away alone, *Jesus prayed and wrestled with God* and, in our time of trouble, our resort must be to prayer. Restrain not prayer at any time, even when the sun shines brightly upon you, but be sure that you pray when the midnight darkness surrounds your spirit. Prayer is most needed in such an hour as that, so be not slack in it, but pour out your whole soul in earnest supplication to your God and say to yourself, "Now above all other times I must pray with the utmost intensity." For consider how Jesus prayed in Gethsemane.

He adopted the lowliest posture and manner. He fell on His face and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." What an extraordinary sight! The eternal Son of God had taken upon Himself our nature and there He lay as low as the very dust out of which our nature was originally formed! There He lay as low as the most unrighteous sinner or the most humble beggar can lie before God. Then He began to cry to His Father in plain and simple language, but oh, what force He put into the words He used! Thrice He pleaded with His Father, repeating the same petition—and Luke tells us that, "being in an agony He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." He was not only in an agony of suffering, but in an agony of prayer at the same time!

But while our Lord's prayer in Gethsemane was thus earnest, intense and repeated, it was, at the same time, balanced with a ready acquiescence in His Father's will! "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." So, suffering one, you whose spirit has sunk within you. You who are depressed and well near distracted with grief, may the Holy Spirit help

you to do what Jesus did—to pray, to pray alone, to pray with intensity, to pray with importunity, to pray even unto an agony—for this is the way in which you will prevail with God and be brought through your hour of darkness and grief. Believe not the devil when he tells you that your prayer is in vain! Let not your unbelief say, "The Lord has closed His ears against you." "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, neither His ears heavy, that they cannot hear." Yet mind that you also imitate your Lord's submission and resignation, for that is not acceptable prayer in which a man seeks to make his own will prevail over the will of God! That is presumption and rebellion—not the cry of a true child of God. You may beseech Him to grant your request, "if it is possible," but you may not go beyond that! You must still cry, with your Lord, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will."

I have already reminded you that our Lord sought human sympathy while in Gethsemane, but I want again to refer to that fact so that we may learn the lessons it is intended to teach us. In our little griefs we often go to our fellow creatures, but not to God—that habit is apt to breed dependence upon man. But in our greatest griefs, we frequently go to God and feel as if we could not go to man! Now, although that may look like honoring God, there is a good deal of pride mixed with it. Our Lord Jesus Christ neither depended upon men nor yet renounced the sympathy of men. There were three of His disciples within call and eight more a little further away, but probably still within call. He prayed to His Father, yet He asked of His disciples such sympathy as they might have shown to Him. Still, He did not depend upon their sympathy for, when He did not get it, He went back to His praying to His Father! There are some who say that they will trust in God and use no means—others say that they will use the means, but they fall short in the matter of trusting God. I have read that one of Mohammed's followers came to him and said, "O prophet of God, I shall turn my camel loose, tonight, and trust it to providence." But Mohammed very wisely answered, "Tie your camel up as securely as you can—and then trust it to providence." There was sound common sense in that remark—and the principle underlying it can be applied to far weightier matters. I believe that I am following the example of my Lord when I say, "I trust in God so fully that if no man will sympathize with me, He, alone, will enable me to drink all that is in this cup that He has placed in my hand. Yet I love my fellow creatures so much that I desire to have their sympathy with me in my sorrow, although if they withhold it, I shall still place my sole dependence upon my God."

When our Lord came to His disciples and found them sleeping instead of watching, you know how prompt He was to find an excuse for them—"The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak." His rebuke of Peter was very gentle—"'Simon, do you sleep? Could you not watch one hour?' Are you sleeping, you who so recently boasted that you would go with Me to prison and to death and that though all others should deny Me, you would not? Ah, Simon, you had better watch and pray, for you know not how soon temptation may assail you and cause you to fall most grievously." Yet Peter was included with the rest of the disciples in the excuse which their Lord made for the willing but weak sleepers who ought to have been watchers. What a lesson this is to us! We do not make half the

excuses for one another that Jesus makes for us! Generally, we are so busy making excuses for *ourselves* that we quite forget to make excuses for others. It was not so with our Lord. Even in His own overwhelming trouble, no sharp or unkind word escaped from His lips! When we are very ill, you know how apt we are to be irritable to those about us. And if others do not sympathize with us as we think they should, we wonder what they can be made of to see us in such sorrow and not to express more grief on our account! Yet there was our Master, all stained with His own blood, for His heart's floods had burst their banks and run all over Him in a gory torrent! But when He came to His disciples, they gave Him no kind word, no help, no sympathy, for they were all asleep. He knew that they were sleeping for sorrow, so their sleep was not caused by indifference to His grief, but by their sorrow at His sorrow. Their Master knew this, so He made such excuse for them as He could. And, beloved, when we are suffering our much smaller sorrows, let us be ready to make excuses for others as our Lord did in His great ocean of suffering!

III. Now, thirdly, let us consider THE TRIUMPH UPON THAT SPOT. It was a terrible battle that was waged in Gethsemane—we shall never be able to pronounce that word without thinking of our Lord's grief and agony—but it was a battle that He won, a conflict that ended in complete victory for Him!

The victory consisted, first, *in His perfect resignation*. There was no rebellion in His heart against the will of the Father to whom He had so completely subjected Himself. But unreservedly He cried, "Not as I will, but as You will." No clarion blast, nor firing of cannons, nor waving of flags, nor acclamation of the multitudes ever announced such a victory as our Lord achieved in Gethsemane! He there won the victory over all the griefs that were upon Him and all the griefs that were soon to roll over Him like huge Atlantic billows! He there won the victory over death and even over the wrath of God which He was about to endure to the utmost for His people's sake! There is true courage, there is the highest heroism, there is the declaration of the invincible conqueror in that cry, "Not as I will, but as You will."

With Christ's perfect resignation, there was also *His strong resolve*. He had undertaken the work of His people's redemption and He would go through with it until He could triumphantly say from the Cross, "It is finished!" A man can sometimes dash forward and do a deed of extraordinary daring, but it is the long sustained agony that is the real test of courageous endurance. Christ's agony in Gethsemane was broken up into three periods of most intense wrestling in prayer—with brief intervals which could have given Him no relief as He turned in vain to the sleeping disciples for the sympathy that His true human nature needed in that hour of dreadful darkness! But, as He had before steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem though He well knew all that awaited Him there, He still kept His face set like a flint toward the great purpose for which He had come from heaven to earth. It is the wear and tear of long continued grief that has proved too much for many a truly heroic spirit, yet our Lord endured it to the end! And so He left us an example that we shall do well to follow.

A part of our Savior's victory was that *He obtained angelic help*. Those prayers of His prevailed with His Father, "and there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him." I know not how he did it, but in some mysterious way the angel brought Him succor from on high. We do not know that angel's name and we do not need to know it—but somewhere among the bright spirits before the throne of God there is the angel who strengthened Christ in Gethsemane. What a high honor for him! The disciples missed the opportunity that Christ put within their reach, but the angel gladly availed himself of the opportunity as soon as it was presented to him.

Last of all, the victory of Christ was manifest in *His majestic bearing towards His enemies*. Calmly He rose and faced the hostile band. And when the traitor gave the appointed signal by which Jesus was to be recognized, He simply asked the searching personal question, "Judas, do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" How that inquiry must have cut the betrayer to the heart! When Jesus turned to those who had been sent to arrest Him and said to them, "Whom do you seek," He did not speak like a man whose soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. And when they answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth," He said, "I Am," and at the very sound of that great Jehovah's name, "I Am," "they went backward and fell to the ground." There was a majestic flash of His deity even in the hour of the abasement of His humanity—and they fell prostrate before the God who had thus confessed that the name of Jehovah rightly belonged to Him! Then He went with them quietly and without the slightest resistance after He had shown His care for His disciples by saying—"If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way"—and after He had healed the ear of Malchus, which Peter had so rashly cut off! Then, all the while that Christ was before Annas and Caiaphas, and before Pilate and Herod, and right on to the last dread scene of all upon the cross, He was calm and collected—and never again endured such tossing to and fro as He had passed through in Gethsemane!

Well now, beloved, if the Lord shall bring us into deep waters and cause us to pass through fiery trials—if His Spirit shall enable us to pray as Jesus did, we shall see something like the same result in our own experience! We shall rise up from our knees strengthened for all that lies before us and fitted to bear the cross that our Lord may have ordained for us. In any case, our cup can never be as deep or as bitter as His was—there were in His cup some ingredients that never will be found in ours. The bitterness of sin was there, but He has taken that away for all who believe in Him. His Father's wrath was there, but He drank that all up and left not a single drop for any of His people. One of the martyrs, as he was on his way to the stake, was so supremely happy that a friend said to him, "Your Savior was full of sorrow when He agonized for you in Gethsemane." "Yes," replied the martyr, "and for that very reason I am so happy, for He bore all the sorrow for me." You need not fear to die, if you are a Christian, since Jesus died to put away your sin—and death is but the opening of your cage to let you fly, to build your happy nest on high! Therefore, fear not even the last enemy, which is death. Besides, Christ could not have a Savior with Him to help Him in His agony, but you have His assurance that He will be with you! You shall not have merely an an-

gel to strengthen you, but you shall have that great angel of the covenant to save and bless you even to the end!

The most of this sermon does not belong to some of you, for you do not belong to Christ. O dear friends, do not give sleep to your eyes or slumber to your eyelids till you belong to Him! As surely as you live, you will have sorrows at some time or other, you will have a bitter cup of which you must drink—and then what will you do if you have no divine consolation in the trying hour? What will you do when you come to die if you have no Christ to make your pillow soft for you, no Savior to go with you through that dark valley? Oh, seek Him and He will be found of you, even now! The Lord help you to do so, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 10:1-30.

Verse 1. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.* The positiveness of our Lord's teaching is noteworthy. Whatever may be said about dogmatically teaching, now, it is certain that His teaching is of that character! He does not raise questions, but He solves them. He does not suggest probabilities, but He declares certainties. This might be taken as the keyword to all the Savior's teaching, "Verily, verily." He makes a strong statement. He speaks as one having authority, not as the scribes who only claimed to have authority, but as the sent one of the Father who really has it! "Verily, verily, I say unto you." Whatever comes to us with the imprimatur of the, "Verily, verily," of the Son of God is not to be questioned or doubted by us for a single moment! "He that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." Christ Himself entered by the door. He came according to the ancient types, symbols and prophecies. He came as God said that He would come. He entered by the door. There is no irregularity about Christ's office as the shepherd of His sheep. It is confirmed to Him by the sanction of the Holy Spirit. The witness of the Father is borne to Him—"This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased: hear you Him." We rejoice to think that Jesus our Savior is also Christ the anointed. He is Jesus to us, but He is the anointed of the Father. He comes by right as the appointed shepherd of the sheep entering in by the door!

2, 3. *But he who enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter opens.* To Him John the Baptist, as the porter, opened the door. He pointed to Him and said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." And every God sent minister is a porter to Christ, opening the door to Him! That is our office—to stand and open the door that Christ may come forth among you—and that you may come in to Him and find the spiritual pasture on which your souls can feed. "To him the porter opens"—

3. *And the sheep hear his voice.* Those who are really chosen of God hear and heed the voice of Christ but those who are not Christ's chosen ones will not heed His discourse, but will listen to the many voices which

attract the ears and the hearts of sinful men. The elect of God are known by this mark—that they hear the voice of Christ! Just as you can find out in a heap of ashes, whether there are any pieces of steel there by simply thrusting in a magnet, so can you find out God's chosen people by the mighty magnet of Christ's voice!

3. *And he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out.* [See Sermon #2359, Volume 40—PERSONAL AND EFFECTUAL CALLING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Sometimes He leads them out from the midst of the world's flocks. And sometimes He calls them by name when they are in His fold and leads them out to even higher and better pastures, calls them and leads them out to higher truths of God than they have before received.

4. *And when he puts forth his own sheep, he goes before them.* Christ never *drives* His sheep, He leads them. As the Eastern shepherd always goes before his sheep, so does the Savior go before His flock. "He goes before them"—

4. *And the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.* Christ's sheep are marked in various ways. They are marked on the foot—"the sheep follow Him." And they are marked in the ear, "for they know His voice." They follow the track of their shepherd and they give heed to the voice of their shepherd—and by these tokens they are known to be His sheep.

5. *And a stranger they will not follow.* There are strangers constantly coming into our different churches. We know they are strangers, for they preach strange doctrines and do not keep to the old paths. Those that are *not* Christ's sheep follow them directly. "Here is a very clever man," they say, and off they go after him! But of God's elect it is written, "A stranger they will not follow"—

5. *But will flee from him.* They are frightened at the very sight of him! They cannot tell what deadly pasture he is preparing for them, so they "flee from him"—

5. *For they know not the voice of strangers.* They know the voice of their shepherd, but they know not the voice of strangers, so they flee from them.

6. *This parable spoke Jesus unto them but they did not understand the things He spoke unto them.* They thus proved that they were not His sheep, for they did not understand His words!

7, 8. *Then Jesus said unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. And all who came before Me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.* There were many false christs that rose up before Jesus Christ appeared—and there were many persons who followed those false christs. "But the sheep did not hear them." They still waited with holy Anna, with patient Simeon and the rest of the faithful who waited for the appearing of the true shepherd, and were not misled by the pretenders who were only "thieves and robbers."

9. *I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."* [See Sermon #2752, Volume 47—THE DOOR—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Christ is the door just as truly as He is the shepherd and as He is everything that is necessary and good for His people! If I come to Christ, I must come to Him by Christ. Any of us who will but enter in by Christ, who is the door of His church, shall find salvation and more than that—

we shall find liberty—for we "shall go in and out." Our daily pathway shall be a safe one and we shall have abundant supplies for all our daily needs. We "shall go in and out and find pasture."

10. *The thief comes not but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.* [See Sermon #1150, Volume 20—LIFE MORE ABUNDANT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] I trust that the first purpose of Christ's coming has been fulfilled to many of us, for we "have life" through Him—but ought we not to be encouraged to hope that we may reach a higher standard of that life—and so have it more abundantly? We do not want to have just enough life to enable us to breathe, but we want life enough for usefulness, for joy, for triumph, for likeness to Christ, for communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ!

11-13. *I am the Good Shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees: and the wolf catches them, and scatters the sheep. The hireling flees, because he is an hireling, and cares not for the sheep.* Christ is the Good Shepherd and, therefore, He never fled as the hireling flees. He cared for the sheep, for they were His own. The wolf might come, but the Good Shepherd was ready to meet him. He would not have His sheep scattered, but He would gather them in the cloudy and dark day, and in every time of danger He would be the center around which they might rally.

14, 15. *I am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep.* [See Sermon #1877, Volume 32—OUR OWN DEAR SHEPHERD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Our translators have ruined this passage by putting a full stop where there should not be one, and by breaking it into two verses. It should run thus—"I am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine as the Father knows Me and I know the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep." Christ here sets forth the intimate knowledge that there is between Himself and all His people—as much as there is between the Father and the Son! It is wonderful teaching, full of depth and spiritual power. As the Father knows the Son, and the Son knows the Father, so certainly does Christ know His church—and His church knows Him—or shall do so in the future.

16. *And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold.* [See Sermon #1713, Volume 29—OTHER SHEEP AND ONE FLOCK—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] They are of this flock, but they are not of this fold. The flock is divided, and lies down in different fields for the present—"Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold"—

16-18. *Them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore does My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.* Christ's death was to be the act of His own free will, as well as of the violence of wicked men.

18-21. *I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father. There was a division,*

therefore, again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them said, He has a devil, and is mad, why listen to Him? Others said, These are not the words of one that has a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind? Christ's sayings always cause a division between those who hear them. There must always be two opinions, just as there are some who are His sheep and some who are not. When you go and try to speak for Christ, do not be at all astonished if people ridicule you. What did they say of the Master, Himself? "He has a devil, and is mad." They will not say anything worse than that of you. And when they have said it, what does it matter? Hard words break no bones. So have courage enough to bear opposition and you may, like your Master, yet find some who will defend you—for there may be those who will say—"These are not the words of one that has a devil."

22-26. *And it was at Jerusalem the Feast of Dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus talked in the temple in Solomon's porch. Then came the Jews round about Him and said to Him, How long do You make us to doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you and you didn't believe Me: the works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. But you believe not because you are not of My sheep, as I said unto you.* "You are not My chosen people—there has been no work of divine grace in your hearts and, therefore, you do not believe." What a brave way that was of putting the truth of God! Some would have said, "Because you do not believe, you are not my sheep;" but Jesus puts it the other way, "Because you are not My sheep, therefore you do not believe."

27-30. *My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, who gave them to Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one.* [See Sermon #2120, Volume 35—THE SECURITY OF BELIEVERS—OR, SHEEP WHO WILL NEVER PERISH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This great truth of God angered the Jews so much that they "took up stones again to stone Him." They proved, by thus treating the good shepherd, that they were not His sheep!

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THE TRUE AIM OF PREACHING
NO. 3191

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"Be it known unto you, therefore, brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."
Acts 13:38.

PAUL'S mode of preaching, as illustrated by this chapter, was first of all to appeal to the understanding with a clear exposition of doctrinal truths of God and then to impress those truths upon the emotions of his hearers with earnest and forcible exhortations. This is an excellent model for revivalists. They must not give exhortation without doctrine, for if so, they will be like men who are content with burning powder in their guns, but have omitted the shot! It is the doctrine we preach, the truth we deliver which God will make a power to bless men. However earnest and zealous we may be in speaking, if we have not something weighty and solid to say, we shall appear to be earnest about nothing and shall not be at all likely to create a lasting impression. Paul, if you notice through this chapter, first of all gives the history of redemption, tells the story of the cross, insists upon the resurrection of the Savior and *then* he comes to close and personal dealings with the souls of men and bids them not neglect this great salvation!

At the same time, it was not all doctrine and no exhortation but, whenever Paul wound up his discourse and left the synagogue, he made a strenuous, pointed, personal appeal to those who had listened to him! Let such of our brethren as are passionately fond of mere doctrine—but having little of the marrow of divine mercy or the milk of human kindness in their souls, do not care to have the word pressed upon the consciences of men—let them stand rebuked by the example of the Apostle Paul! He knew well that even the truth of God, itself, would be powerless unless it is applied. Like the wheat in the basket, it can produce no harvest till it is sown broadcast in the furrows. We cannot expect that men will come and make an application of the truth of God to themselves. We must, having our heart glowing and our souls on fire with love to them, seek to bring the truth to bear upon them, to impress it upon their hearts and consciences as in the sight of God and in the place of Christ.

The subject to which Paul drew attention—the target at which he was shooting all his arrows—was *forgiveness of sins through the Man, Christ Jesus*. That is my subject tonight. And when I have spoken upon it briefly, I shall then have a few words to say about *his audience and what became of them.*

I. PAUL'S SUBJECT was superlative—the subject of subjects—the great master doctrine of the Christian ministry—"*Be it known unto you,*

therefore, brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."

"The forgiveness of sins" is a topic which will be more or less interesting to every hearer here in proportion as he feels that he has committed sins, the guilt of which appalls his conscience. To those good people among you who fold your arms and say, "We have done no wrong either to God or man," I have nothing to say. You need no physician, for you are not sick. You, evidently, would not be thankful for the heavenly eye salve, for you are not blind. The wealth that Christ can bring you will not induce you to bow the knee to Him, for already you think yourselves to be rich and increased in goods. But I shall be quite sure of the ears of the man whose sins have been a burden to him. If there is one here who needs to be reconciled to God, who says with the prodigal, "I will arise and go to my Father," I shall not need to study how to fit my words—let them come out as they may, the theme, itself, will be sure to enlist the attention of such an one who says—

"How can I get my sins forgiven?
How can I find my way to heaven?"

While we attempt to tell him that, we shall ensure his attention. This is our aim—and this we will do if God permits.

The Christian minister tells men the ground of pardon, the exclusive method, (for there is a monopoly in this matter)—*the exclusive method by which God will pardon sin. "Through this Man,"* says the text. That is to say, God will pardon, but He will only pardon in *one way*—through His Son Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus has a monopoly on mercy! If you will depend upon the uncovenanted mercy of God—the mercy of God apart from Christ—you shall find that you have depended upon a reed and built your house upon sand! Into the one silver pipe of the atoning sacrifice, God has made to flow the full current of pardoning grace. If you will not go to that—you may be tempted by the mirage, you may think that you can drink there to the fullest, but you shall die disappointed. You must die unless you come for salvation to Christ! What does He say, Himself? "I am the Door: by Me if any man enters in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." He that believes on the Son of God is not condemned! But he that believes not—may he go right, too? No, he is already condemned because he believes not! "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." These are Christ's own words, not mine! He that believes shall be saved, "but he that believes not shall be"—what? Pardoned for his unbelief? No, he—"*shall be damned!"* There is no other alternative. The expression might seem harsh if I were the inventor of it, but as it came from the lips of Christ who was the gentlest, meekest and most tender of men, God forbid that I should make up a charity of which the Lord, Himself, made no profession! "He that believes not shall be damned." God presents mercy to the sons of men, but He has chosen to present it in only *one channel*—through that man who died for sinners, the just for the unjust, that He might bring them to God!

Why is it that forgiveness comes to us only through Jesus Christ? The whole economy of redemption supplies us with an answer. The man Christ Jesus is a divine person. He is the Son of God. You will never

doubt that reconciliation is an effect of infinite wisdom if you once clearly understand the condition that made it requisite. Though His people were objects of God's everlasting love, their sins had kindled His fierce anger as if it were an unquenchable fire. Inasmuch as God is just, He must from the necessity of His nature, punish sin! Yet He willed to have mercy upon the fallen sons of men. Therefore it was that Christ came into this world. Being God, He was made man for our sakes. He suffered from the wrath of God that which we, the offending sinners, ought to have suffered. God exacted from the man, Christ Jesus, that which He would otherwise have exacted from us! Upon Christ's dear devoted head was laid the curse. Upon His bare back fell the scourge that would have tortured our souls throughout eternity! Those hands of His, when nailed to the tree, smarted with our smart. That heart bled with our bleeding. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed; surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." Substitution, then, is the cause of it all! God will forgive sin because the sin which He forgives has been already atoned for by the sufferings of His dear Son!

You know, many of you, the story, in old Roman history, of the young man who had violated discipline and was condemned to die. But his elder brother, a grand old soldier who had often been to the front in the battles of his country, came and exposed his chest, showed his many scars and exhibited his body covered with the orders, insignias and honors of his victories. And then he said, "I cannot ask life for my brother on account of anything that he has ever done for his country. He deserves to die, I know, but I set my scars and my wounds before you as the price for his life. And I ask you whether you will not spare him for his brother's sake." And with acclamation, it was carried that for his brother's sake he should live. Sinner, this is what Christ does for you! He points to His scars. He pleads before the throne of God, "I have suffered the vengeance due to sin. I have honored Your righteous law—for My sake have mercy upon that unworthy brother of Mine!" In this way, and in no other way, is forgiveness of sins preached to you through this Man, Christ Jesus!

It is our business to also preach to you the instrument through which you may obtain this pardon. We read the question in your anxious eyes, "I can understand that Christ, having stood as a substitute, has received from God power to pardon human souls, but how can I obtain the benefit, how can I draw near to Him?" Did you ever read that Moses described the righteousness of faith—and Paul endorsed his description? "Say not in your heart, who shall ascend into heaven, or who shall descend into the deep?" You have no reason to climb so high or dive so low. "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach." You have no need to go home to get at Christ! You have no need to even come here to find Him! He is accessible at all hours and in all places—the ever present Son of God." But how shall I come to Him?" asks one. Oh, you need not torture your body! You need not afflict your soul! You need not bring your gold and silver—you need not even bring your tears! All that you have to do is to come to Him as you are and

trust in Him! Oh, if you will believe that He is the Son of God and is able to save to the uttermost—and if you will cast yourself upon Him with your whole weight—falling upon Him, leaning upon Him, resting upon Him with that whole trust which needs and lacks no other support, you shall be saved! Now cling to the cross, you shipwrecked sinner, and you shall never go down while clinging to that! If you are enabled by the Holy Spirit to put your sole and simple reliance upon Christ, earth's pillars may totter and the lamps of heaven be extinguished, but you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of Christ's hands! Trust Jesus—that is the way of salvation! "What?" asks one, "If I trust Christ tonight, shall I have my sins forgiven?" Yes, forgiven tonight! "What? If I just rest in Christ, and look to Him?" Even so! "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."—

"There is life for a look at the crucified one,
There is life at this moment for thee!
Then look, sinner, look unto Him and be saved—
Unto Him who was nailed to the tree!"

You will be saved, not by repenting and tears! Not by wailing and works! Not by doing and praying, but coming, believing, simply depending upon what Jesus Christ has done! When your soul says by faith what Christ said in fact, "It is finished," you are saved and you may go your way rejoicing!

We have thus preached God's way of pardon and man's way of getting at God's pardon. But we are also enjoined to preach about *the character of this forgiveness of sin*. Never had messengers such happy tidings to deliver! When God pardons a man's sins, He pardons all of them—He makes a clean sweep of the whole! God never pardons half a man's sins and leaves the rest in His book of remembrance. He has pardon for all sins at once! I believe that, virtually, before God, all the sins of the believer were so laid to the account of Christ that no sins ever can be laid to the believer's door. The apostle does not say, "Who *does* lay anything to the charge of God's elect," but, "Who *shall*?" as though nobody ever could! I am inclined to think that Kent's words are literally true—

"Here's pardon for transgressions past—
It matters not how black their cast!
And oh, my soul, with wonder view,
For sins to come, here's pardon too!"

It is a *full pardon*. God takes His pen and writes a receipt. Though the debt may be a hundred talents, He can write it off! Or be it ten thousand, the same hand can receipt it! Luther tells us of the devil appearing to him in a dream and bringing before him the long rolls of his sins. And when he brought them, Luther said, "Now write at the bottom, 'the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin!'" Oh, that blessed word, "all"—"from all sin!" Great sins and little sins! Sins of our youth and sins of our gray hairs! Sins by night and sins by day! Sins of action and sins of thought—they are ALL gone! Blessed Savior! Precious blood! Omnipotent Redeemer! Mighty Red Sea that thus drowns every Egyptian!

It is a full pardon and it is, likewise, a *free pardon*. God never pardons any sinner from any other motive than His own pure grace. It is all gra-

tis! It cost the Savior much, but it costs us nothing! It is a pardon freely given by a God of grace because He delights in mercy.

There is, too, this further blessing about it, that while it is full and free, *it is also irresistible*! Whom God pardons, He never condemns. Let Him once say, "*Absolvo te*," "I absolve you," and none can lay anything to our charge! We have heard of men who have been pardoned for one offense, but who have committed another—and have, therefore, had to die. But when the Lord pardons us, He prevents our going away to our old corruption. He puts His Spirit in us and makes new men of us so that we find we cannot do what we used to do! That mighty grace of God is without repentance! God never repents of having bestowed His grace. Do not believe those who tell you that He loves you, today, and hates you tomorrow! O beloved—once in Christ the devil cannot get you out of Him! Get into the sacred clefts, sinner, of that Rock of Ages which was cleft for you, and out of it the fiends of hell can never drag you! You are safe when once you get into that harbor. Get Christ and you have heaven!

All things are yours when Christ is yours—full pardon, free pardon and everlasting pardon! And let me also tell you, *present pardon*. It is a notion still current that you cannot know you are forgiven till you come to die. O beloved, when people talk thus, it shows what they know, or rather, what they do *not* know about it. There are some here who can bear witness—no, there are millions of God's people who, if they could speak from heaven, would tell you that they knew their pardon long years before they entered into rest.

If you had ever been shut up in prison, as some of us were, and had been set at liberty, you would know what present pardon is. Five long years it was with me a bitter agony of soul when nothing but hell stared me in the face—when neither night nor day had I peace, and oh, what joy it was when I heard that precious truth of God, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." I felt the pardon really fall on me! I was as conscious of pardon as this hand is conscious of being clean after I have washed it—and as conscious of being accepted in Christ, at that moment, as I am now sure that I am able to stand here and say as much with my mouth! A man may have this infallible witness of the Holy Spirit! I know that to some stubborn minds, it will always seem as fanaticism, but what do I care whether it seems as fanaticism to them or not, as long as it is real to my heart? We count ourselves as honest as others and have as much right to be believed—whether they credit our sanity and our sincerity or not does not affect us a straw, as long as we know that we have received the grace! If you reckoned a clear profit of ten thousand pounds upon some speculation and somebody said to you, "It is all foolery"—the proof would be unanswerable if you had received the amount and had the bank notes in your house. Then you would say, "Ah, you may think as you like about it, but I have got the cash." So Christians can say, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God…and not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

When someone tells a Christian that he is not forgiven, he says, "Oh, you may say what you like about it, but I have the witness within that I am born of God. I am not what I used to be—if I were to meet myself in the street, I would hardly know myself, I mean my *spiritual* self—my inner self—for I am so changed, so renewed, so turned upside down that I am not what I was! I am a new man in Christ Jesus." The man who can say this can bear to be laughed at. He knows what he is doing and at the coolest and most sober moment of his life, even when lying on his bed sick and ready to die, he can look right into eternity, soberly judge of Christ, and find Him to be worthy of his confidence and, thinking of the blood washing, find it to be a real fact! There are a thousand things in this world that look well enough till you come to look upon them in the prospect of the grave—but this is a thing that looks better, the nearer we get to eternity and the more solemnly and deliberately we take our account of it in the sight of God!

Oh, yes, there is a present pardon! But what I want to say most emphatically is that *there is a present pardon for you*. "Who is that?" you ask. Oh, I am not going to pick and choose from the midst of you. Whoever among you will come and trust Christ, there is present pardon for you! What? That gray headed man there, 70 years old in sin? Yes, blessed be the name of the Lord, if he this night should rest in Christ, there is instantaneous pardon for him! Is there a harlot here? Is there a drunk here? Is there one here who has cursed God? Is there one here who has been dishonest? Is there one here over whom all these sins have rolled? Why, if you believe, your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you! And though there should be brought before us one so guilty that we might well stay away from him, yet if he can but trust Christ, Christ will not stay away from him, but will receive him! Oh, was not that a wonderful moment when the Savior wrote on the ground as the woman taken in adultery stood before Him—when all her accusers, being convicted by their own consciences, went out, leaving the sinner and the Savior alone together—and when Jesus Christ, who hated all kinds of sin, but who loved all kinds of sinners, lifted Himself up and said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more"? Ah, poor sinner, Jesus Christ does not condemn you! If you condemn yourselves, He will never condemn you. He will only condemn your sin, for that is what He hates, but He does not hate you. If you and your sins part, Christ and you shall never part! If you will but trust Him right now, you shall find Him able to save you even to the very uttermost from all these sins of yours which have become your plague and your burden! God help you, then, to trust Him at once and to find this present pardon—this pardon which will last you forever—and which you may have right now!

Now, as I said before, all this will be good news only to those who want pardon, but not to those who do not require it. I have nothing to say to those who do not want it. Why should I? They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick." God will have something to say to you one of these days. I recollect and I hope you have not forgotten the story of the rich man. It is more than allegory, it is *fact*. You know that while he was in this world, he had fared sumptuously every day. He

was clothed in purple and fine linen and as for God's child Lazarus, he thought he was a poor miserable beggar, only fit to be with the dogs—and he despised him. He looked at him and said, "Oh, I am a gentleman. I am dressed in purple and fine linen. I am none of your beggarly saints lying on the dunghill, though they call themselves saints, and all that. I am rich." Now it so happened that he did not see himself—he had scales over his eyes. But he found out the truth of God one day. You remember Christ's words, "In hell, he lifted up his eyes!" Ah, and he saw, then, what he had never seen before! All that he had ever seen before had been a glamour over his eyes—he had been dazed and benighted. *He* had been the beggar, all the while, if he had but known it! While Lazarus, who had won the beggars garb, was waited on like a prince, and carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. So, the poor beggar, covered with wounds and sores, who thinks he is only fit for the dunghill—he is the man Christ will save! He is the man Christ will take up to heaven at last! As for your self-righteous men who think themselves so good and excellent, they will be like the tinsel and the gilt—and will all be burned up in the fire—the varnish and paint will all come off! God will knock the masks off their faces and let the leprosy that was on their brow be seen by all men. But, sinner, you who are such, and who know it—unto you is preached this night forgiveness of sins through the Man, Christ Jesus!

II. We shall now proceed to remind you of THE CONGREGATION TO WHICH PAUL ADDRESSED HIMSELF, AND WHAT BECAME OF THEM.

The text says, "Unto *you* is preached forgiveness of sins." Never mind the Jews and Gentiles Paul preached to—the verse is quite as applicable here as it was there. "*Unto you* is preached the forgiveness of sins." My dear friend, *it is no small privilege to be where the message of the forgiveness of sins can yet be heard.* Unto *you* is preached the forgiveness of sins, but not to the tens of thousands and millions who have gone the way of all flesh, unpardoned and unsaved! How is it that you are spared? Your brother is dead. Your children have, some of them, died—but you are spared. You have been at sea. You have been in peril. You have had the fever. You have been near death and yet here you are, kept alive, with death so near! Is not this a privilege that unto you is preached the forgiveness of sins? What would they give to hear it once more? What would they give to have another opportunity? But it has been said of them—

"Too late, too late! You cannot enter now."

"Unto you is preached the forgiveness of sins." I said that this was a privilege, but *it is a privilege which some of you have despised*. Those who heard Paul had never heard the gospel before—many of you have heard it from your youth up. Alas, I cannot help saying of some of you that I already to despair of your conversion! You do not improve. All the exhortations in the world are to you as if they were spoken to an iron column or to a brazen wall! Why will you die? What shall be done to you? What shall be said to you? Unto you is preached the forgiveness of sins. When you die, careless, Christless, unsaved—when we throw that handful of dirt upon your coffin, we shall have to think, "Ah, that man is lost, and yet unto him was preached the forgiveness of sins!"

Well, but it is still preached to you! Notwithstanding that you have neglected the privilege, the gospel is still preached to you! Gladly would I point my finger at some of you and say, "Well, now, I really do mean you, *personally*. You people under the gallery whom I cannot see and you upstairs, here, every one of you—unto you is preached the forgiveness of sins! God has not sent us, tonight, to preach to your neighbors, but to you—you Mary, Thomas, George, John, Sarah—you, you *personally*—unto you is preached the forgiveness of sins and it is with you, now, tonight, to consider what reception shall be given to the message of mercy! Shall a hard heart be the only answer? Oh, may the Spirit of God come upon you and give instead thereof a quickened conscience and a tender heart that you may be led to say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Do you ask, "*What became of those to whom the word was preached with such thrilling earnestness?*"

Some of them raved at a very great rate. If you read through the chapter, you will find that the Jews were filled with envy and they spoke against those things that were declared to them by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming, and so on, until Paul shook the dust off his feet against them and went his way. But there was another class. The 48th verse says, "When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord: *and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed*." Ah, that is the comfort! There are some, whenever the gospel is preached, who do not like it. A person was once very angry with me because in preaching on the natural depravity of man, I had charged man with being depraved and I had said that man was proud. The man would not confess it and there he was—proving the truth of the assertion regarding himself that he was proud, because he could not bear to hear the truth told him about it! If he had said he was proud, I would have thought I had made a mistake, but when he bridled up and got into an angry temper, I knew that God had sent me to tell him His truth. Outspoken truths of God makes half the world angry! The light of God blinds their eyes!

When the Jews kicked against Paul's preaching, did Paul feel disappointed? Oh no, or if he did feel depressed for a moment, there was a strong cordial at hand—that very cordial by reason of which Jesus rejoiced in spirit as He saw the goodwill of the Father in revealing unto babes those things that are hidden from the wise and prudent! Here was Paul's comfort—there were some upon whom there had been a blessed work! There were some whose names were written in the book of life! Some concerning whom there had been covenant transactions! Some whom God had chosen from before the foundation of the world! Some whom Christ had bought with His blood and whom the Spirit, therefore, came to claim as God's own property because Christ had bought them upon the bloody tree—and those "some" believed! Naturally they were like others, but grace made the distinction and faith was the sign and evidence of that distinction!

Now, you need not ask tonight whether you are God's elect. I ask another question—Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? If you do, you are His elect—if you do not, the question is not to be decided by us yet. If

you are God's chosen ones, you will know it by your trusting in Jesus. Simple as that trust is, it is the infallible proof of election! God never sets the brand of faith upon a soul whom Christ has not bought with His blood. And if you believe, all eternity is yours! Your name is in God's book, you are a favored one of heaven, the divine decrees all point to you—go your way and rejoice!

But if you believe not, you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. May eternal mercy bring you out of that state, yes, bring you out of it tonight! Oh, that I had the time and power to plead with some here who know that Christ died, who know that He can save, who know the gospel—but who still do not trust in that gospel for their salvation! Oh, may you be led to do it and to do it now, before this day is over! We want and pray for the conversion of many more beside you. If we had these souls given to us, what a token for good would it be, and what a comfort! May the Lord bring you in, and bring you in tonight! Oh, trust Him, soul, trust Him! May God help you to trust Him, and His shall be the praise, world without end!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 24.

Verses 1-11. *Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came to the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulcher. And they entered in and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: and as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said to them, Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.* [See Sermon #1106, Volume 19—"THE LORD IS RISEN, INDEED"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *Remember how He spoke to you when He was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again? And they remembered His words, and returned from the sepulcher, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.* What emptying power unbelief has! No news could ever be fuller of solace than the news of a risen Savior! But to the ears of unbelief, this news, which made all heaven glad, seemed to the apostles but as idle tales! Unbelief tied the hands of Jesus once when he was at Nazareth for, "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." And unbelief seems often to tie our heartstrings, too, so that they can give forth no sweet music! O Lord, help us to overcome our unbelief and enable us to always confidently believe the truth that comes to us supported by such testimony as these good women gave to the apostles!

12-14. *Then arose Peter, and ran to the sepulcher; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering*

in himself at that which was come to pass. And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about three score furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. As was most proper, they that feared the Lord spoke often, one to another. Just as Elijah and Elisha talked with each other as they went towards the Jordan where Elijah was to be translated, so these two disciples were talking together of the great events that had recently happened—and especially talking of the death and the reported resurrection of Christ. This was most natural, for what is uppermost in the heart will soon be uppermost upon the tongue. They had had their minds greatly exercised concerning the departure of their Lord and it was only natural that they should speak of it. If we never talk of Christ, we have great reason to suspect whether He is really in our hearts at all. Christ's declaration to His disciples, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them," was literally fulfilled in the case of these two disciples going to Emmaus!

15. *And it came to pass that while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus, Himself drew near and went with them.* And, beloved, if you would have communion with Christ, have communion with one another! If my Lord will not reveal Himself to me, perhaps He will reveal Himself to others—therefore let me get into the company of His chosen and then, surely, when He appears in the midst of their assembly, I shall have a share of the fellowship that they will enjoy!

16-19. *But their eyes were restrained that they should not know Him.* [See Sermon #1180, Volume 20—JESUS NEAR BUT UNRECOGNIZED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *And He said to them, What kind of conversation is this that you are having with one another as you walk and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said to Him, Are You a stranger in Jerusalem and have not known the things which are come to pass in these days? And He said to them, What things? And they said to Him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.* What little advance these disciples had made in the knowledge of Christ! He had been their teacher. They had seen His miracles and yet, though they had been constantly under His superintendence, they had not learned enough to know that He was divine! The Holy Spirit had not yet been given and, without the Holy Spirit's divine instruction, these disciples could only say that Christ "was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people."

20-25. *And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him. But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and besides all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yes, and certain woman of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulcher; and when they found not His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulcher, and found it even so as the women had said: but they did not see Him. Then He said to them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.* [See Sermon

#1980, Volume 33—FOLLY OF UNBELIEF—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Supposing Him to be a stranger in Jerusalem, yet one who was well acquainted with Jewish prophecy, they had told Him exactly what the prophecies had foretold concerning the Messiah! If they had meant to refer to the various prophecies concerning Christ, they could not have detailed facts which would have more accurately fulfilled them and, therefore, Christ said to them "O fools, how slow of heart you are to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"

26. *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things.* "Are not those just the very things which the prophets said that the Christ, the anointed, must suffer? 'Ought not Christ to have suffered these things'"—

26-28. *And to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the thing concerning Himself. And they drew near unto the village, where they went: and He made as though He would have gone further.* For Christ never forces His company upon anyone. And if we are willing to let Him go, He will go—nor will He return until we are heartily sick of having treated Him coldly. When we can no longer bear the absence of Christ, then He will speedily return to us. There is an instance of this in the life of Christmas Evans which impressed me very much when I read it. Sandemanianism had spread very much through Wales and he had been very busy attacking it. But it seemed as if, in doing so, his sermons had lost all their former power and unction—and his own soul also grew very dry and barren—he had little or no fellowship with Christ. He said that, at last, his soul grew utterly weary of being absent from his Lord and he could not endure it any longer, but felt that he must once again enjoy communion with his Lord and experience the power of the Holy Spirit in his preaching. So he stopped at the foot of Cader Idris and spent some three hours in an intense agony of prayer. And the result was that when he next preached, he did so with all the unction and power which had formerly rested upon him. He had grown weary of the absence of Christ and therefore Christ returned to him! O brothers and sisters, if Christ makes as though He would go further, do not let Him go, but hold Him fast!

29-33. *But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him, and He vanished out of their sight.* [See Sermon #681, Volume 12—EYES OPENED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem.* This shows their zeal and also their courage! This news was too good to be kept to themselves and although it was nearly night, and they had a good distance to go, in a country that was far from safe for travelers, they "returned to Jerusalem"—

33-36. *And found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known*

of them in breaking of bread. And as they spoke, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said unto them, Peace be unto you. [See Sermon #1958, Volume 33—THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE RISEN LORD TO THE ELEVEN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] No more appropriate greeting could have been given to the troubled disciples!

37-53. *But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, why are you troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? 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. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have you here any food? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them. And He said to them, These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures. And He said to them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry you in the city of Jerusalem until you be endued with power from on high. And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven. And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.*

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"For My flesh is food, indeed, and My blood is drink, indeed."
John 6:55.

IT was our Lord Jesus Christ who uttered these words and some of those who heard Him misunderstood His meaning, for they asked, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" This is not altogether surprising, for there are still millions of persons upon the earth who will persist in understanding *literally* what our Lord intended to be understood *spiritually*. To us who know the meaning of Christ's words, it seems monstrous that anyone could have supposed that Jesus meant men to eat His real, literal flesh and to drink His actual blood! I must confess that, to me, it seems an instance both of the utter depravity of human nature and of the absolute insanity to which sin has driven mankind—that there are still so many persons existing in what we call this enlightened age who actually believe that we can eat the flesh of Christ and drink His blood! This is a cannibal notion which only needs to be mentioned to be denounced. Instead of having anything sacred about it, such teaching is utterly detestable—it is inconceivably idiotic and blasphemous! Idiocy and blasphemy seem to be blended together in it in about equal proportions. It is strange that such blessed words from such blessed lips should have been so shamefully misunderstood and misrepresented.

Beloved friends, as many of you as have been taught of God, know the spiritual meaning of these words. You know that the doctrine of the incarnation of Christ is food to your soul and you know that the great truth of the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ which is expressed by His blood, is the most nourishing cordial to your heart. You know that, in this sense, Christ's words are full of deep spiritual teaching—"My flesh is food, indeed, and My blood is drink, indeed." That word, "indeed," seems to contrast this spiritual nourishment with all ordinary food and drink. The best of literal food only feeds the body for a time, for that body ultimately decays. It is not in the power of food to repair the waste that is continually going on, that the physical system shall forever abide firm and strong. This food is food, but it is not "food, indeed." There are also various kinds of drink that refresh and invigorate the body—and by means of these we are enabled to continue from day to day—but where is the water, where is the crystal fountain that can give immortality? Where is the juice expressed from any fruit that grows beneath the sky that can rid the body of all disease and pain and cause it to *live on without end?* You all know, then, among all the many kinds of literal food and drink,

there is not any food that is worthy to be called food, indeed, nor any drink that is worthy to be called drink, indeed.

That word, "indeed," also implies the contrast between this spiritual nourishment and all mere mental food and drink. Our soul needs food—and the proper food for it is truth, wisdom, knowledge. Solomon said, "That the soul is without knowledge, it is not good." No disciple of Christ who has the spirit of his Master, is opposed to the spread of wisdom. The "children of light" wish to have every kind of light disseminated as widely as possible. "Everyone that does evil hates the light," but he that does good loves the light and says, "The more light there is, the better." But there is no mental food save that of which I am about to speak which is food, indeed, and drink, indeed! Paul truly says, "Knowledge puffs up," and so it does if it is not kept under proper control. When a man has fed on the most profound knowledge, the spirit produced by such food has often been a proud and arrogant one which has led him to rebel against the infinite wisdom of God, and set up his own opinion in opposition to the truths of God revealed in the Scriptures. What earthly knowledge is there that can afford suitable food to our entire manhood? Suppose I could compass the whole range of science—if I could thread the spheres as on a string, if I could bore the rocks and read the whole of their ancient history, if there were no secret of science left unrevealed to me—yet, if I had an aching heart, all my knowledge would not satisfy my soul or give me rest. In fact, the very acquisition of knowledge has often led to an increase of care. Solomon said, "Much study is a weariness of the flesh," and many have found it to be so. It certainly is not food, indeed, or drink, indeed. Poets have drunk at the Castilian fountain and their verses have astonished whole nations, yet they have gone to their graves unsatisfied and despairing. Mathematicians, with wondrous minds, have mapped out the heavens, studied the stars, laid down the laws that govern the planets and traced the pathways of comets for thousands of years, yet their verdict has been the same as Solomon's, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

But I have to speak to you concerning knowledge which is satisfying, concerning truth which does content the spirit and, in doing so, I must draw a clear, hard and fast line. No one knows the flavor or effect of food and drink who has not tasted them. It is no use for me to speak to anyone about food which he has never seen, or handled, or tasted. If he is to appreciate my testimony concerning it, he must have partaken of it. Or if my testimony is concerning a certain drink, he must at least have sipped of it. Otherwise, let me speak as earnestly as I may, he will be unable to comprehend what I am saying. Now, my Lord Jesus is food, indeed, but the *soul* must feed upon Him if it is to know how He nourishes it! He is drink, indeed, but unless this drink enters into the soul, it will be a stranger to the spiritual power which Jesus always imparts when He is received into the heart by faith! If you have really received Christ Jesus the Lord; if He is "in you the hope of glory," then He is the food of your soul and you can, from your own experience, confirm His declaration, "My flesh is food, indeed, and my blood is drink, indeed."

I. While I am speaking, let us, each one, try to feed spiritually upon the two great doctrines to which the words, "flesh," and "blood," may be taken to refer, namely, the incarnation of the Son of God and His death as His people's Substitute. And first, let me say that THESE DOCTRINES ARE MOST COMFORTING FOOD TO THE SOUL.

Where will you find any other doctrines so comforting as these? I, a sinner, have broken God's righteous law and so offended Him that I am driven from His presence and am shut off from all true joy and peace. But, *in order to redeem man, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Himself, became Man*. "The Word was made flesh." Why it makes the joy-bells ring in my heart as I tell you again the old familiar story! The angels, when they were sent to tell men that unto them was born a Savior, proclaimed with joyous sounds the glad message that God had come down to earth. What joyful news it is for you, O men and women, that God has taken humanity into union with the Deity, that the infinite became an Infant, that He who made the heavens and the earth was wrapped in swaddling clothes just as you and your own babes have been! Surely, now that God has thus become one with us, there must be peace on earth and good will toward men! He cannot be unwilling to bless those who have that human nature which He has, Himself, assumed! Even as I talk of this great truth of God, I feel in my heart a joy that comforts me—and so Christ's flesh is food, indeed, to my soul! And when I think that, in that flesh, Jesus lived here on earth for over 30 years and knew all the weakness, temptation and suffering to which that flesh is liable—when I think how He proved Himself to be bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh—then I understand how He sympathizes with the weak, tempted and suffering sons of men! And this makes the sad heart glad and so, again, Christ's flesh is food, indeed! Then, beloved, when you think that He at whose belt hang the keys of hell and of death, once toiled and suffered and, at last died, just as you have to toil and suffer and die—and when you remember that from the heights of glory, Jesus looks down both as the Son of God and the Son of Mary, does not this feed you with true soul-comforting food?

Remember, also, that *whatever Jesus did as man, He did as the great representative man*, who has all the while been acting on behalf of His people. Adam was a representative man, but I get no food for my soul from him. He took my bread away, he took my life away, for "in Adam all died." But when Christ came here as the Representative of His people, what did He do? He kept the law of God perfectly and His obedience was reckoned as the obedience of all who were in Him! As Adam's sin was imputed to all who were in him as their federal head, so Christ's obedience was imputed to all who were in Him as their federal Head. The condemnation of our Surety and Substitute was our condemnation, too. And when He was taken away and put to death, we were crucified in Him. And when He was laid in the grave, we were buried with Him and, blessed be God, when He rose from the dead, we rose with Him and we were justified by His resurrection! He could never have come out of the prison of the grave if He had not paid all His people's debts. And when He was set free, they were set free! His resurrection was the guarantee of

their resurrection. Is there not most comforting food for your soul in this great truth? Is not Christ's flesh food, indeed, when you look at it as the representative body of your Substitute and Surety?

Best of all, Christ, has gone back to glory as the representative of His people. He did not take His soul, alone, when He ascended to His Father, leaving His body in the tomb, but that very flesh which was pierced by the nails, that very flesh through which the soldier's spear went to His heart, He carried right up to the throne of God and, in so doing, He carried us who are in Him up there and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Him! What joy it gives us to remember that—

"There sits in our flesh,
Upon a throne of light
One of a human mother born
In perfect Godhead bright!"

II. Changing the direction of our thought, yet still keeping to the same main track, let us turn to the second clause of the text. "My blood is drink, indeed." That is to say, CHRIST'S REDEEMING SACRIFICE IS MOST SOUL-SATISFYING. It is not merely soul-comforting, but soul-satisfying!

We have stated the case hundreds of times in this place, but must state it yet again. Man had sinned and God was willing to forgive. But the inflexible law of the universe is that sin must entail punishment—and it is so good and righteous a law that to alter it would be ruinous! Therefore punishment for sin there must be—but Jesus endured the punishment due to all His people! In order that He might be able to do so, He took upon Him our flesh, and that flesh was made to bleed even unto death in the accomplishment of that purpose. We believe in the real, *literal substitution* of Christ in the place of all whom He had covenanted to save, and as many as believe in Him may know assuredly that their sins were transferred from them and laid upon Him! Then, when their sins were laid upon Christ—

"Jehovah bade His sword awake"—

against the Sin-Bearer and He smote Christ instead of His people—and His flowing blood brings peace and pardon to them as He dies, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring them to God! I cannot help saying that this doctrine fills my soul with an indescribable contentment! I am satisfied to the fullest when this truth enters my heart and so, Christ's blood is drink, indeed, to me!

For see, beloved, God's justice is satisfied. How could it be otherwise when God, Himself, makes the atonement? When Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made Himself liable for His people's guilt, what a complete vindication of the justice of God was there! More than that, the great covenant of grace was ratified by the blood of Christ's atoning sacrifice. No testament is valid as long as the testator lives, but Jesus has died and, therefore, every legacy of His love is made sure to all those to whom He has willed it. The covenant made with Adam fell through because Adam could not keep it. But the covenant made with the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven, stands fast as the everlasting hills, for Christ has kept it in every particular, offering to God complete obedience, both active and passive, in His life of holiness and in His death of agony! O then, my soul, God is

satisfied, your sin is pardoned, covenant blessings are secured to you—so is not Christ's blood drink, indeed, to you? As we think that the Son of God became the Son of Mary in order that He might die for us, that He might take our place, and die in our place, what can we need more to chase away our fears, to fulfill our hopes and to confirm our faith? If any of you need more than that, it is not possible for us to present it to you, or even to imagine it! What the Son of God said was finished has been finished and, therein our souls may rest, and rest forever!

III. But, beloved friends, we not only need spiritual food to comfort and to satisfy our souls, we also need SPIRITUAL FOOD TO STRENGTHEN OUR SOULS. And here, again, Christ's flesh is food, indeed, and His blood is drink, indeed!

How strong are they who live upon the truth of an incarnate God, and of that incarnate God dying in the place of His people! What strength it gives to *faith!* I have seen weak faith and I have seen strong faith, but I have generally found weak faith associated with dependence upon feelings, but I have never known strong faith existing anywhere except in connection with Emmanuel, God With Us, living and dying in our place! I have seen poor humble men and women who knew little more than that they were lost through sin and that Christ had come to save them, yet they have lived and died strong in faith, giving glory to God—for their faith had been nourished upon this food, indeed, and drink, indeed, of the incarnation and substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Mary!

And fervent *love* is produced by the same spiritual food and drink. If Christ is to you merely some historic person who once appeared upon the earth and is now gone forever, your love for Him will be very faint if it exists at all! But if He is your own personal Savior, your ever-present friend, your living brother, bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh, your Surety and Substitute who bore your sins in His own body on the tree, then your love goes out to Him in a vehement flame! I do not wander that Mary Magdalene was among the holy women who were last at the cross and first at the tomb, for Christ had done so much for her that she loved Him much. And in proportion as *you* realize what His incarnation and His death have done for you, your love will feed upon that food, indeed, and drink, indeed, until it shall become stronger even than death itself!

This spiritual food and drink will also make us strong for *service*. There was a man—you will all recognize his portrait by the bare outline—who was at first a great enemy of Christ, but who, after his conversion, lived upon the food of which I have been speaking. And you know what an untiring servant of Christ he became. He went from city to city preaching the Word. He was stoned and left for dead, but he rose to his feet and went on preaching! His very dreams were full of service for his Master, for in a night vision, there stood by him a man of Macedonia who said to him, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." And immediately he obeyed the Spirit's call. The Lord blessed the Word, but His servant was arrested, beaten and thrust into prison—yet he and his companion

made the prison cell ring with their joyful songs of praise unto their God! This man preached the Word throughout a great part of the then known world. We read of him at Damascus, Jerusalem, Ephesus, Athens, Corinth, Rome and it is probable that he even came as far as these islands of the West. And wherever he went, he preached Jesus Christ and Him crucified—and all the while he was sustained by the food, indeed, and drink, indeed, of the incarnation and the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God! If I had the time, I might tell you of other great workers for the Lord Jesus Christ whose lives were crowded with holy service—all of whom derived their strength from this same food, indeed, and drink, indeed, of which I have been speaking.

But, beloved, if you need further proof that the flesh of Christ is food, indeed, and His blood is drink, indeed, let me remind you of the many who have been made strong for suffering through this spiritual nourishment. You are all more or less familiar with the amazing story of the persecution of the early Christians and of their heroic endurance even unto death. What was it that sustained them but this food, indeed, and drink, indeed? Then, all along the ages, and in almost all lands, there have been brave men and women, and even boys and girls, who counted not their lives dear unto them, but gladly gave them up rather than deny their Lord and Savior. *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* has preserved the record of many notable instances that I need not now repeat, but you will do well to keep the stories in mind, and to teach them to your children, that they, also, may learn what suffering can be endured by those who have had such food for their souls as our text describes! No doubt there were many brave utterances like that historic saying of Latimer, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man! We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out." Surely these men had food to eat of which the poor puny professors of these days seem not to have tasted! They were made strong for suffering through partaking of this food, indeed, and drink, indeed, whereof if a man eats and drinks abundantly, he shall be fitted to perform such exploits as were worked by the heroes of faith of whom Paul wrote in his Epistle to the Hebrews.

O sirs, if you want to be strong to live, or work, or suffer for Jesus, you must feed upon Jesus! It is only in the strength of this food and this drink that one can, in these days, live an honest and upright life. It is only in the force derived from this food and this drink that anyone can bear a bold and faithful testimony for Jesus. And, mark you, it is only by feeding upon such food and such drink as this that one will be able to face death with a brave countenance and look forward to the unseen world with eyes undimmed! Yes, I have seen weak women with the hectic flush of consumption on their cheeks, and with the unnatural brightness which that disease imparts to the eyes—and I have heard them talk of dying as calmly as if they were speaking of going out for a day's excursion! I have even heard them singing as though their death day had been their wedding day, so glad were they at the prospect of soon being where the day breaks and the shadows flee away forever! Joan of Arc was never such a heroine as these women have been, for they have vanquished

even death, itself, and waved the banner of the cross all through the valley of death-shade. It was this food, indeed, and this drink, indeed, that helped them thus to die—no, that *prevented them from dying*—for to them death was but a translation from a world of mortals to a world of immortal spirits around the Throne of God on high!

IV. I want now to say something that cannot often be said in a great promiscuous congregation, lest it should be misunderstood. But it is a fact that certain kinds of food and drink produce EXHILARATION in those who partake of them, so that men become joyous and excited after they have been sitting long at a festival. There is often much evil in the excitement which results from these earthly feasts, but there is one kind of food and drink which gives an exhilaration which is not only harmless, but is truly blessed! And that is the food, indeed, and drink, indeed, of which I have been speaking to you. Have you experienced that exhilaration, my brother? Do you know what this holy excitement is, my sister? Have you, beloved friends, ever thought of Christ dying on the cross for you until you felt that you must sing for very joy of heart? Have you ever realized that your sins were washed right away in the Red Sea of your Savior's blood and that there was not even one of them left to oppress you? Then you must have felt that Dr. Watt was not in the least exaggerating when he wrote those lines that we have often sung—

"Yes, we will praise You, dearest Lord,
Our souls are all on flame!
Hosanna round the spacious earth,
To Your adored name.
Angels, assist our mighty joys,
Strike all your harps of gold!
But when you raise your highest notes,
His love can ne'er be told."

Yes, I am quite sure that you have felt so glad that you have wanted all the angels to assist your mighty joys! When you have realized all that Christ's incarnation and death have meant for you. When you have in a measure comprehended the transcendent grace that made Him stoop so low as to become near of kin to you, your heart must surely have danced at the sound of His name! I feel persuaded that there must have been times in this Tabernacle when you were so joyful that you could hardly remain in your seats. When you have almost wished that, like David, you might see the ark of the Lord come along and that you might dance before the Lord even as David did! You know that there is no other joy that is even for a moment worthy to be compared with the joy which comes to us through Jesus Christ! And the man who has once had a sip from that well wants to lie down beside it and drink it dry! He knows he can never do that, but he wishes that his soul could be so enlarged that he could take in all the love of his incarnate God—the wondrous heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of that love which must forever surpass our knowledge! O you who want to find the highest joy that can be found on earth, here it is! Jesus' wounds are the fountains where heavenly bliss is distilled! In Emmanuel, God With Us, born at Bethlehem and dying on Calvary—in His incarnation and His atoning sacrifice—you will

find that food, indeed, and drink, indeed, which shall give the loftiest spiritual exhilaration to all who feed upon them!

V. Now I close my discourse by reminding you that WHOEVER EATS THIS SPIRITUAL FOOD SHALL LIVE FOREVER.

Just before our Lord uttered the words of our text, He had said to the Jews, "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eats of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh which I will give for the life of the world." If you had lived with the children of Israel in the wilderness—and you had eaten manna as they did—you would have died as they did. If you come to the communion table, and merely eat bread, "not discerning the Lord's body," you will die. Or if you go to a so-called "priest" and he gives you a "consecrated" wafer, and you eat it, you will die. But whoever spiritually feeds upon Jesus—whoever feeds his soul upon the great central truth that God in human flesh was made the Substitute for all who believe in Him—he shall never die! His body may pass through the change that we call, death, but his spirit shall live forever and, in due time, his body and soul shall be reunited and his complete manhood shall be "forever with the Lord."

O sinners, unless you feed upon Christ, there is nothing but eternal death before you! But if you receive Him into your soul even as you receive food into your body, you shall never die and the bliss of heaven shall be your everlasting portion! I have preached to you in very simple language, but there is in my theme a mystery that excels all the wisdom of the sages. Let me try to put it before you once more before I close. It is a fact that the Word, who was God, and who made heaven and earth, and without whom was not anything made that was made—it is a fact that this Word was made flesh and dwelt among men! In other words, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, did come into this world, was here born of a virgin, here lived and labored as a Man, and here died for those who believe in Him, "for God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life...he that believes on Him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." After Jesus had died in the place of all who believe in Him, and after He had risen from the grave as the sure sign that His redeeming work had been accomplished, and that His people were forever free, He returned to His Father's right hand in glory. And there He sits as the representative of all His chosen until the appointed time for Him to come again to this earth, "to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." "Be it known unto you, therefore, brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses."

There is the gospel as Paul preached it! May the Spirit of God enable you to receive it by faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the Son of

Mary—and so you will find that His flesh will become to you food, indeed, and His blood drink, indeed. God grant it, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 6:22-59.

Verses 22-24. *The day following, when the people who stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, except that one which His disciples had entered, and that Jesus went not with His disciples into the boat, but that the disciples were gone away alone—however other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they ate bread after the Lord had given thanks—when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither the disciples, they also got into boats and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus.* [See Sermon #947, Volume 16—SEEKING FOR JESUS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Everything looked very favorable, did it not? These people put themselves to considerable trouble in order to get where the Savior was—they were not satisfied to be away from Him—they were "seeking for Jesus."

25, 26. *And when they had found Him on the other side of the sea, they said unto Him, Rabbi, when did You come here? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, You seek Me not because you saw the miracles but because you ate of the loaves, and were filled.* He did not gratify their curiosity by telling them how or when He came there, for that was no concern of theirs. Neither is it the business of Christ's preachers to spin ingenious theories about the gospel, or to tell pretty tales to amuse their hearers. Their business is to deal faithfully with men's hearts and consciences as their Master did when He said to these people, "You seek Me not because you saw the miracles." They said that at first, no doubt. Christ's miracles dazzled them so they sought Him in order to see more miracles worked by Him. This was not the highest motive for seeking the Savior, but they had found a still lower one—they were now following Him because they "ate of the loaves and were filled." Yet the Master did not repel them and thus He teaches us that it is better to follow Him from the lowest motive than not to follow Him at all. Perhaps some of us have been too severe upon certain people. We have said that they come to our place of worship out of mere curiosity. What if they do? It is well that they come at all, so let us not cut even the spider's web that links a man in any sense with Christ—that web may grow into a thread, that thread into a cord, that cord into a cable and there may yet be an unbreakable union between that man and Christ! That which begins in an inferior way may lead to something higher and better. Still, it is wise to let people know that they are not deceiving Christ, even though they deceive themselves as to their motive in seeking Him. So He said to them—

27. *Labor not for the food which perishes, but for that food which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you: for Him has God the Father sealed.* They labored hard in order to get the bread that perishes, so Christ bade them devote their energies to a better

objective. This is a very extraordinary verse if we regard the letter of it and not the spirit. Christ told these people not to labor for that which they could only get by labor—"Labor not for the food which perishes." Yet few men get their daily bread or meat without laboring for it. And then Christ told them to labor for that which nobody ever does get by laboring—"Labor for that food which endures unto everlasting life." This is an instance of how the mere letter of the Word kills. We must take the spirit of it—and then we understand that what the Savior meant was this—"Do not be spending all your energies to get that which will melt away when you get it, but spend your time and strength in seeking after that which will last through all time and be yours to all eternity."

28. *Then said they unto Him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?* They wanted to do the greatest of all works for, by, "the works of God," they evidently meant the most important, the most sublime, and the greatest of all works. "What shall we do in order to work such works as these?"

29. *Jesus answered and said to them, This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent.* This is an amazing statement which is just as true, now, as when Christ uttered it in Capernaum! The greatest and best work that any of you can do is to believe on Jesus Christ! Though, in another sense, this is not a *work* at all—but ceasing from your own works and resting in the finished work of Jesus Christ. But if any man would do that which is most acceptable to the thrice-holy God, let him believe on Jesus Christ whom God has sent!

30. *They said therefore unto Him, what sign will You show us, then, that we may see and believe You? What work will You do?* This was a shameful question to put to Christ when they had so recently been miraculously fed by Him and so had received the best sign of His divine power in the multiplication of the loaves and fishes!

31-34. *Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, he gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said to them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life unto the world. Then they said unto Him, Lord, give us this bread always.* This would have been a good prayer if they had understood the meaning of the Savior's words but, as it was, it was a blind prayer. They did not know what Jesus meant when He spoke of the bread of God which come down from heaven. They were thinking about the bread that perishes—the bread for the body—so they prayed blindly when they said, "Lord, give us this bread always." Do you not think that many a prayer which children are taught in their childhood—and which men and women continue to pray for years—may be as blind a prayer as this one was? They know not what they ask and so the question very naturally arises as to whether it is a prayer at all!

35. *And Jesus said to them, I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger and he who believes on Me shall never thirst."* [See Sermon #1112, Volume 19—SOUL-SATISFYING BREAD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "I will take away his need by removing his hunger. I will take away his pain by removing his thirst."

36. *But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe.* See, then, how little there was of advantage in the mere sight of Christ. Many seem to think that it must have been much easier for people to believe in Christ if they had actually seen Him, but it was not so. There were multitudes that saw Him and saw His miracles—and even ate the bread which came from His wonder-working hands—yet they believed not. Faith does not come in that way, for it does not come by sight, but sight comes by faith! Seeing is not believing, but believing is often seeing—it opens the eyes so that they are able to see what before was hidden from them.

37. *All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.* God's own elect shall surely come to Christ. They shall all believe in Him and be saved by Him.

37. *And him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.* [See Sermons #1762, Volume 30—HIGH DOCTRINE AND BROAD DOCTRINE; #2349, Volume 40—ALL COMERS TO CHRIST WELCOMED; #2954, Volume 51—THE BIG GATES WIDE OPEN and #3000, Volume 52—NO. 3000—OR, COME AND WELCOME—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "Whoever he is that comes, I will never reject him. Whoever he may be that accepts Me and believes in Me, he is Mine and I will never cast him away from Me."

38-44. *For I came down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the Father's will which has sent Me, that of all who He has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. The Jews then murmured at Him, because He said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it, then, that He says, I came down from heaven? Jesus therefore answered and said to them, murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draws him.* [See Sermons #182, Volume 4—HUMAN INABILITY; #2386, Volume 40—THE DRAWINGS OF DIVINE LOVE—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "I did not expect that you would receive Me. I did not imagine that you would believe Me. You have not yet been drawn to Me by the Father, so I knew that you would not come to Me." But he who is drawn by the Father will come to Christ. And Christ tells us what will be his future lot—

44-46. *And I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the* prophets*, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me. Not that any man has seen the Father, except He who is from God, He has seen the Father.* He corrects the notion into which they might have fallen that they could ever see the Father as He had seen Him. Into that vision none of us can ever enter, for there is a peculiar divine relationship between Jesus and the Father which we cannot know.

47. *Verily, verily, I say unto you*—Jesus uttered this great truth of God with very special emphasis. "Verily, verily, I say unto you"—

47. *He that believes on Me has everlasting life.* [See Sermons #1642, Volume 28—"VERILY, VERILY" and #2706, Volume 46—FEEDING ON THE BREAD OF LIFE—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] That text

is worthy to be printed in letters of gold, but even then the letters would be far inferior to the message itself! If it is written on all your hearts by the Holy Spirit, you will not need any other sermon than this divine text—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on Me has everlasting life."

48-51. *I am the Bread of Life. Your Fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is the bread which came down from heaven that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eats of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.* Here we have the doctrine of the great atoning sacrifice by which sin is put away, and that is not merely Christ incarnate, but Christ yielding up His life, dying in the place of guilty sinners. That is the food, whereof, if any man eats he shall live forever.

52. *The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?* These Jews were still stumbling at the letter of Christ's words—still in their blind carnality misunderstanding Christ.

53-56. *Then Jesus said to them, verily, verily, I say unto you, Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood, has eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food, indeed, and My blood is drink, indeed. He that eats My flesh, and drinks My blood dwells in Me, and I in him.* [See Sermon #1288, Volume 12—TRULY EATING THE FLESH OF JESUS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Do not any of you interpret this teaching of Christ as the Jews did, after a carnal fashion, and fancy that we literally eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ when we come to the communion table. The Lord's Supper was not instituted at the time that our Savior spoke these words and He was speaking of quite another matter—the spiritual reception of Christ—the real and true feeding by faith with our spirit upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

57-59. *As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eats Me, even he shall live by Me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eats of this bread shall live forever. These things said He in the synagogue, as He taught it in Capernaum.*

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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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THE MAN WHOSE HAND STUCK TO HIS SWORD
NO. 3193

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"And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David when they defied the Philistines that were there athered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away: he arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand stuck unto his sword: and the LORD wrought a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to spoil."
2 Samuel 23:9, 10.

IN David's muster roll we find the names of many mighties and they are honored by being found there. These men came to David when his fortunes were at the lowest ebb and he, himself, was regarded as a rebel and an outlaw. And they remained faithful to him throughout their lives. Happy are they who can follow a good cause in its worst estate, for theirs is true glory. Weary of the evil government of Saul, they struck out a path for themselves in which they could best serve their country and their God. And though this entailed great risks, they were amply rewarded by the honors which in due time they shared with their leader. When David came to the throne, how glad their hearts must have been! And when he went on conquering and to conquer, how they must have rejoiced, each one of them remembering with intense delight the privations which they had shared with their captain. Brothers, we do not ourselves aspire to be numbered with the warlike. The roll of battle does not contain our names and we do not wish that it should. But there is a roll which is now being made up—a roll of heroes who do and dare for Christ, who go outside the camp and take up His reproach and, with confidence in God, earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints and venture all for Jesus Christ! And there will come a day when it will be infinitely more honorable to find one's name in the lowest place in this list of Christ's faithful disciples than to be numbered with princes and kings! Blessed is he who can this day cast in his lot with the Son of David and share His reproach, for the day shall come when the Master's glory shall be reflected upon all His followers!

I. We will now turn our attention to one particular hero, Eleazar, the son of Dodo, and see what he did for his king and country. Our text records one of his feats. It is very instructive and the first lesson I gather from it is THE POWER OF INDIVIDUAL ENERGY.

The Philistines had set the battle in array. The men of Israel came out to fight them but, for some reason or other, "being armed and carrying bows, they turned back in the day of battle." Ignominious is the record, "the men of Israel were gone away." This man, Eleazar, however, made

up for the failures of his countrymen, for "he arose, and smote the Philistines." He was a man of marked individuality of character, a man who knew himself and knew his God, and did not care to be lost in the common mass, so as to run away merely because they ran. He thought for himself and acted for himself—he did not make the conduct of others the measure of his service, but while Israel fled—"he arose, and smote the Philistines."

The personal obligation of each individual before God is a lesson which all should learn. It is taught us in our baptism, for there each believer makes his own confession of faith and, by his own act and deed, avows himself to be dead with Christ. Pure Christianity knows nothing of proxies, or sureties in baptism! After our profession of faith is made, the believer is responsible for his own religious acts and cannot employ priests or ministers to perform his religion for him. He must himself, pray, search the Scriptures, commune with God and obey the Lord Jesus. True religion is a personal thing. Each man, with one talent or with ten, will, on the great day of judgment, be called to account for his own responsibilities, and not for those of others. And, therefore, he should live as before God, feeling that he is a separate personality and must, in his own individuality, consecrate himself—spirit, soul and body—entirely to the Lord. Eleazar, the son of Dodo, felt that he must play the man, whatever others might do, and, therefore, he bravely drew his sword against the uncircumcised Philistines! I do not find that he wasted time in upbraiding the others for running away, nor in shouting to them to return—he just turned his own face to the enemy and hewed and hacked away with all his might! His brave example was sufficient rebuke and would be far more effectual than ten thousand sarcastic orations!

Never let it be forgotten that *our responsibility, in a certain sense, begins and ends with ourselves*. Suppose you entertain the opinion that the church of God is in a very sad state? You are only responsible for that as far as you, yourself, helped to create that condition. Do you regret that many persons with much wealth do not consecrate their substance? I do not wonder that you feel thus, but, after all, the most practical thing is to use your own substance in your Master's cause! It is very easy to pick holes in other people's work, but it is far more profitable to do better work yourself. Is there a fool in the entire world that cannot criticize? Those who can, themselves, do good service are but as one in a thousand compared with those who can see faults in the labors of others. Therefore, if you are wise, my brothers and sisters, do not quibble as others, but arise and smite the Philistines!

Our responsibility is not diminished by the evil conduct of other men but, on the contrary, it is increased thereby. You say, "How so?" I answer—If every man fights his best, then Eleazar may be well content to fight as well as the rest. But if other men are running away, Eleazar is called upon, by that unhappy circumstance, to rise above himself and retrieve the fortunes of the day. It will never do to allow the enemy to triumph and, therefore, if we have fought well, before, we must now gird up our loins for extraordinary battle. Dear Christian Brother, if you are sol-

emnly impressed that the condition of the churches is not what it should be, you must leave no stone unturned to set it right! Are your fellow Christians worldly? You should become more spiritual and heavenly minded! Are they sleepy? Be you the more awake! Are they lax? Be you the stricter! Are they unkind? Be you the more full of love! Set your watch all the more strictly because you see that others are overcome. And be you doubly diligent where you perceive that others are negligent. Dare, like Eleazar, to stand alone and, from the shortcomings of others, gather motives for a nobler life!

Perhaps Eleazar on that occasion was the better off for not having that cowardly rout at his heels. When we have good work to do for our Lord, we are glad of the company of kindred spirits determined to make the good work succeed. But if we have no such comrades, we must go alone. There is no absolute necessity for numbers. Who knows? The friends we invite might be more hindrance than assistance. When Luther went to a holy man and told him what he had discovered in the Scriptures, the prudent old gentleman replied, "My brother, go back to your cell, keep your thoughts to yourself, serve God and make no disturbance." Dear old soul, he little dreamed what disturbance that Luther was going to make in the camp! I daresay Luther would not have been able to work such a reformation if he had been surrounded by a host of kind, prudent friends! But when, like the hero of our text, he was clear of all the excellent incapables, he made splendid havoc of the Philistines of Rome! When dear, good, motherly Christian men are forever saying, "Do not be too venturesome, be careful never to offend, do not overexert yourself," and all that kind of talk, a man is better without them than with them! A Christian should seek the help of his brothers and sisters, but, at the same time, if he is called to a service for his Lord and they will not aid him, let him not be alarmed, but let him consider that if he has God with him he has all the allies he needs! The mighty God of Jacob is better than all the armies of the saints! And if He shall put out His hand and say, "Go in this, your might," a man may be content to step forth alone—the solitary champion of Jesus and His gospel! Solitary prowess is expected of believers. I hope we may breed in this place a race of men and women who know the truth of God and also know what the Lord claims at their hands—and are resolved, by the help of the Holy Spirit—to war a good warfare for their Lord whether others will stand at their side or not!

II. Secondly, we have, next, in the text, A LESSON OF PERSONAL WEAKNESS.

This brave man, though he arose and smote the Philistines, was only a man, and so he fought on "until his hand was weary," and he could do no more. He reached the limit of his strength and was obliged to pass. This may somewhat console those noble men who have become brain weary in the service of God. Perhaps they chide themselves, but indeed there is no reason for so doing, for of them it may be said as of Eleazar, that they are not weary *of* fighting, though they are weary *in* fighting. If you can draw that distinction in your case, it will be well. We wish we

could serve our Lord day and night, but the flesh is weak and there is no more strength left in us. This is no strange thing and there is no sin in it. Eleazar's weariness was that of bone, muscle, sinew—the weariness of his arm—but sometimes God's people grow weary in the brain, and this is quite as painful and quite as little to be wondered at. The mind cannot always think with equal clearness, or feel with equal emotion, or find utterance with equal clearness—and the child of God must not blame himself for this. To blame himself in such a case would be to blame his Master. If your servant has been in the harvest field from daybreak till the moon has looked down upon him as he binds his sheaves, and if, as he wipes the sweat from his brow, he says, "Master, I am sorely wearied, I must have a few hours' sleep," who but a tyrant would blame him and refuse him the rest? Those *are* to be blamed who never weary themselves, but those who wear themselves out are to be commended, not censured.

Perhaps Eleazar became weary because of the enormous number of his enemies. He cut dozens of them down with his death bearing sword, but on they came, and still on! It seemed like a repetition of the day when Samson slew heaps upon heaps, and smote Philistia hip and thigh with great slaughter. Christian friend, you have been the means of bringing some few to Christ, but the appalling number of the unconverted oppresses you till your mind is weary. You have opened a little room and a few poor people attend, but you say to yourself, "What are these among so many?" When we begin in the Master's service, we think we shall turn the world upside down in six weeks—but we do not do it and when we find that we must plod on and not despise the day of small things—we are apt to become weary. Lifelong service under great discouragement is not as easy as mere dreamers think.

Perhaps Eleazar grew tired because nobody was helping him. It is a great assistance to receive a word of good cheer from a comrade and to feel that, after all, you are not alone, for other true hearts are engaged in the same battle, zealous for the same Lord! But as Eleazar looked around, he saw only the backs of the retreating swords who ought to have been fighting by his side, and he had to mow down the Philistines with his lone sword. Who marvels that at length he grew weary?

The mercy of it all is this—that *he only became weary when he could afford to be so*—that is to say, the Lord did not allow his weariness to overcome him till he had beaten the Philistines and the people had rushed upon the spoil. We are such very feeble creatures that faintness must come over us at times, but what a mercy it is that the Lord makes our strength equal to our day! And only when the day is over does He let us sink into ourselves. Jacob wrestled with the angel and he did not feel the shrinking sinew till he had won the blessing. It was good for him to go limping on his thigh after his victory—to make him know that it was not by his own strength that he had prevailed with God. And so it was a good thing for Eleazar to feel weary, for he would now understand where the strength came from with which he smote the Philistines. Eleazar only failed when there was spoil to be divided—and if you and I only shrink

back when there is praise to be awarded, we need not be troubled, for there are plenty who have never done anything else who will be quite ready to claim the credit of all that is achieved!

Let us ask ourselves whether, weak as we are, we have given up ourselves to the Lord. If so, all is well, He will use our weakness and glorify Himself by it. He will not let our weakness show itself when it could endanger the victory. He gives us strength up to the point where strength is absolutely essential—and if He lets us collapse, as Elijah did after his great conflict was over—we must not be surprised. What a difference there is between Elijah on Carmel triumphant over the priests of Baal, and the same man on the morrow fleeing from Jezebel and crying, "Let me die, for I am no better than my fathers." Of course that was the natural result of the strong excitement through which he had passed, just as the weariness of his hands was the natural result of the mighty battle which Eleazar had fought. And when you become downcast, as I often am after having obtained a great blessing, do not be so very terribly alarmed about it. What does it matter? The work is over! You can afford to be laid low before God. It will be well for you to know how empty and how weak you are, that you may ascribe all glory to the Lord alone. He is almighty, however weak you may be!

III. There is a third lesson in the text, and that concerns THE INTENSITY OF THE HERO'S ZEAL.

A singular circumstance is here recorded—his hand stuck to his sword. Mr. Bunyan seems to have thought that it was the congealed blood which fastened the hand and the sword together, for he represents Mr. Valiant for Truth as being wounded till the blood ran forth and his hand was glued to his sword. But perhaps the better interpretation refers to the fact which has occasionally been observed in battles. I remember reading of a sailor who fought desperately in repelling a boarding attack from an enemy's ship. And when the battle was over, it was found that he could not open his hand to drop his cutlass. He had grasped it with such force that until a surgical operation had been performed, it was quite impossible to separate his hand from his sword!

This was the case with Eleazar—this sticking of his hand to the sword proves *the energy with which he gripped his weapon*. At the first, he laid hold upon it in the right way, so that he could hold it firmly. I wish that some of our converts would get hold of the gospel in a better manner. A missionary said to me, the other day, "There are numbers of revival converts who will never be worth anything till they are converted again." I am afraid it is so. The work is not deep, their understanding of the gospel is not clear and their hold of it is not fast. They have got something which is of great good to them, I hope, but they hardly know what it is! They have need to come again to Him who has abundance of grace and truth to bestow, or they will never be worth much. Many young people do not study the word—they pick up texts here and there as pigeons pick up peas, but they do not see the analogy of faith. But he is the man to fight for God who lays hold of the truth of God by the handle and grips it as

though he knew what he had—and knew that he had got it. He who intelligently and intensely knows the word is likely to hold it fast!

Eleazar, having grasped his sword well, *retained his hold*. Whatever happened to him in battle, he never let go of his weapon for an instant. If he had once opened his hand, there would have been no sticking, but he all the way through kept his hand on his weapon! According to some modern teachers, you are wise if you change your doctrines every week, because some fresh light may be expected to break in upon you. The advice is dangerous! O young man, I trust you will get hold of the grand old gospel and always hold it and never relax your grip! And then what will happen to you? Why this—that at last you will not be able to relax your grip! I have frequently been delighted to observe the perseverance of earnest workers who have loved their work for Christ so heartily that they could not cease from it. They have served the Lord year after year in a particular work, either at the Sunday school or in some other useful labor. And when they have been ill and could no longer be in their places, their hearts and their thoughts have still been there! We have known them when ill with high fever, talking continually about the schools and the children. In their very dreams their good work has been on their minds—their hand has been stuck to the sword!

I delight to hear the old man talk about the work of the Lord even when he can no longer join in it. And the dying man with "the ruling passion strong in death," inquiring about the church and the services—his sword still sticking to his hand. Christmas Evans was known to drive his old pony from town to town in his journeys to preach the gospel. And when he was about to die, he thought he was still riding in the old pony chaise—and his last words were, "Drive on." Napoleon with his dying breath exclaimed, "Head of the army," and so do Christ's soldiers think to the last of the grand army of the saints and of Christ their Head. When a certain good man lay dying, he had forgotten his wife and his children. But, yes, when the name of Jesus was whispered in his ear, he said, "Oh, I know Him! He has been all my joy these fifty years!" See how the sword sticks to the hand!

Years ago, we who have believed grasped the sword of the Lord with such a grip of cheerful earnestness that now there is established an almost involuntary connection between the two which cannot be severed. Every now and then some wise men think to convert us to skepticism, or what is very like it—modern thought—and they approach us with full assurance that we must give up our old fashioned faith. They are fools for their pains, for we are at this time hardly voluntary agents in the matter—the gospel has such hold upon us that we cannot let it go! We now believe because we must. I could sooner die a thousand deaths than renounce the gospel I preach! The sophisticated arguments I have met with in skeptical books are not half as strong as the arguments with which the devil has assailed me! And yet, by His grace, I have beaten him. Having run with them, the footmen cannot make us afraid. How can we give up the gospel? It is our life, our soul, our all! Our daily experience, our communion with God, our sitting with Christ in heavenly places have

made us invincible against all temptations to give up our hope! We hold our sword, it is true, but our sword also sticks to our hand. It is not possible that the most clever lies should deliver the elect, for the Lord has created such communion between the renewed soul and the truth of God, that the truth must hold us, and we must hold the truth till we die. God grant it may be so with all of you!

IV. I must pass on to notice the fourth lesson. That concerns THE DIVINE GLORY.

Does the text say that his hand stuck unto the sword and that he worked a great victory that day? Look at your Bibles and you will see that I have been misquoting! It does not ascribe the victory to *Eleazar*, but it is written, "and the Lord worked a great victory that day." The victory was not won *without* Eleazar and yet it was not won *by* Eleazar, but by the Lord! Had Eleazar belonged to a certain class of professors, he would have said, "We can do nothing, the Lord will fulfill His own eternal purposes," and then he would not only have done nothing, but he would have found fault with others if they had been forward in the fight! If he had belonged to another class of professors, he would have said, "I do not believe in the one man ministry. I will not go alone, but wait till I have gathered a few brothers who can all take a turn at it." Instead of either of these theories, Eleazar went straight to his work and the Lord gave him the necks of his enemies! And then he ascribed the victory, not to himself, but to the Lord! The right thing to do is to work as if all depended upon us and yet look to the Lord, alone, knowing that all depends upon Him. We must have all the humility and all the activity of men who feel that they cannot do anything by themselves, but that God works in them to will and to do according to His own good pleasure. You must be humbly God reliant and personally resolute. Trust in God and keep your powder dry! Have you won a soul to Christ? Then the Lord has won the victory! Have you upheld the truth of God against an antagonist? The Lord must have the glory of your triumph! Have you trampled down sin? Can you cry with the heroine of old, "O my soul, you have trodden down strength"? Then, lay your trophies at the foot of the throne of God! I am glad that my text runs as it does, or else some captious critic would have said that I was exalting man and honoring flesh and blood. No, no! The Lord has worked all our works in us! Not unto us, but unto His name give all the praise!

V. The last lesson is one of ENCOURAGEMENT. It is said in the text that "the people returned after him only to spoil."

Dear brothers and sisters, does it grieve you to think that many professed Christians seem more like unbelievers than believers? Do you feel sad to see them all run away in the day of battle? Be comforted, then, for they can be brought back! And your personal prowess for God may be the means of making them return. The feeble folk, if the Lord makes you strong, will gather courage from your bravery. They may not have been able to look a live Philistine in the face, but they knew how to strip a dead one! You will get them back, by and by, when the spoil is to be di-

vided. It is not a small thing, after all, to encourage the Lord's downcast people. Eleazar was pleased to see them in the field again. I daresay he did not say one rebuking word to them, but perhaps remarked, "Well, you have come back, have you? Share the plunder among yourselves!. I might claim it all myself, but I will not—you are welcome to it." It has sometimes happened that one man, speaking in God's name, has turned a community in the right way. One Christian woman, too, has saved thousands. There are points in the history of England where certain individuals have been the hinge upon which our nation's destiny has turned. If you seek of God to be faithful, and if His grace is in you, then be firm in the day of battle and you will confirm other wavering souls. My young sister, you will yet turn your family around—one by one they will come to seek our Savior! Young brother, you are entering into that large house of business. It is very perilous to yourself, but if the Lord enables you to be strong in the power of His might, you may transform that whole house into a church of God! You may hardly believe it, but you will yet have prayer meetings in that large room! Remember Mr. Sankey's hymn—

"Dare to be a Daniel!
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose firm!
Dare to make it known!"

Dare to be an Eleazar and go forth and smite the Philistines alone! You will soon find that there are others in the house who have concealed their sentiments—but when they see you coming forward—they will be openly on the Lord's side. Many cowards are skulking about—try to shame them. Many are undecided—let them see a brave man and he will be the standard bearer around whom they will rally!

Thus have I thought to say a few practical words which I hope the Lord will bless. I have finished when I have made one observation to a different class of people. It is clear that when a man gets hold of a sword, grips it fast, and holds it for a while, such a thing may happen that he cannot drop it. Has it ever occurred to you—to you especially who have never given your hearts to Christ—that the eager way in which you hold your sin—and the long time that you have held it—may produce a similar result upon you? One of these days you may be unable to get rid of those habits which you are now forming! At first, the net of habit is made of cobwebs. You can soon break through it. By and by it is made of twine. Soon it will be made of rope and, last of all, it will be strong as steel—and then you will be fatally ensnared! Beware in time! Young man, you are hardly yet aware how strong a hold your habits have already taken upon you. I mean your habits of prayerlessness, your practice of secret sin and your intemperance. No, I will not mention all your follies—they are best known to yourself. They are fastening upon you like huge serpents, coil upon coil. You have always intended to go so far and no further, but if you could see a picture of what you will become, you would be horrified!

Did we not read in the papers, a few months ago, the story of a man who was respectable in many ways, and gifted above the average of men, who nevertheless descended by degrees, till he perpetrated a horrible crime which made the world stand aghast? Little did he dream, at one

time, that he would have plunged into such wickedness! But the path to hell is downhill and if you descend one step, at first, you take two steps at once next time, and then you take four, and so by great leaps descend to hell. O man, cast away the weapon of iniquity before it glues itself to your hand! Cast it away at once and forever!

The only way of breaking with sin is to unite with Christ. No man does in heart part with sin till he is one with his Savior—and that comes by trusting Him, simply trusting Him. When you trust Him, He delivers you from sinful habits and no longer allows you to be the slave of evil. "If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed." Seek that freedom! May He bestow it upon every one of us and then may we become heroes for Christ—and He shall have the glory, forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 106.

In this Psalm we have the story of God's ancient covenant people. And as we read it, we may read our own history in it if we also are His people. It is a mirror in which the beholder may see himself.

Verse 1. *Praise you the LORD.* The Psalm begins with hallelujah. The story of the church is a succession of hallelujahs—and the story of every Christian's life concerning the wonderful forbearance of God to him is a series of hallelujahs.

1. *O give thanks unto the LORD; for He is good: for His mercy endures forever.* That is the text and this Psalm is the sermon upon it—an exhibition of the goodness and ever enduring mercy of God!

2, 3. *Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? Who can show forth all His praise? Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that does righteousness at all times.* These are the really blessed people! And we shall see in this Psalm how God's ancient people so often missed that blessing by their sin, as I doubt not that we, also, miss much of the sacred, sweet blessedness which would be ours if we walked more closely with God and were more obedient to Him.

4, 5. *Remember me, O LORD, with the favor that You bear unto Your people: O visit me with Your salvation; that I may see the good of Your chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation, that I may glory with Your inheritance.* This is a suitable prayer for each one of us to pray before we go any further. May God hear the cries of His people as we each one seek the fivefold blessing!

6. *We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.* God has dealt kindly and graciously with us, yet here is an all too true description of what we have done! "We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly."

7. *Our fathers understood not Your wonders in Egypt.* [See Sermon #2204, Volume 37—SIN—ITS SPRINGHEAD, STREAM AND SEA—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Yet they were very plain, easy to

understand, for they were the wonders of power that were worked by God on behalf of His people! But they understood them not.

7. *They remembered not the multitude of Your mercies.* They had bad memories as well as bad understandings. And it is so often with us—we remember not the multitude of God's mercies to us.

7. *But provoked You at the sea, even at the Red Sea.* That was a bad beginning. They were only just out of Egypt and they had not yet crossed the Red Sea, but they provoked the Lord even there. Oh, how soon after our first joy does our evil nature betray itself!

8. *Nevertheless He saved them for His name's sake, that He might make His mighty power to be known.* [See Sermon #115, Volume 3—WHY ARE MEN SAVED?—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] He saved them, not for their own sakes, but for His name's sake, for the manifestation of His own power and glory. This is how God still deals with His children—not on the ground of their merits, but for the manifestation of His own mercy and grace toward them!

9-12. *He rebuked the Red Sea, also, and it was dried up: so He led them through the depths, as through the wilderness.* [See Sermon #72, Volume 2—ISRAEL AT THE RED SEA—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *And He saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left. Then believed they His words; they sang His praise.* I would think they believed God's words when they could see His wonderful works, but it is a poor faith that needs miracles to be worked each hour or else it fails. No wonder they sang God's praise at the Red Sea, but, exultant as the songs of Moses and Miriam were, even better is that praise which rises from a broken and contrite heart which the Lord has delivered out of its trouble!

13-15. *They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel: but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.* So it always is with us when we begin to let our desires outrun the will of God. He will sometimes let us discover our own folly by granting us our desires. The answer to some prayers would be a dire calamity! Some pray for riches, and they get it—but they also get leanness in their soul. Some ask for earthly honors and success, and get them, but with them they also get leanness in their soul. And if a man is lean in his *soul*, it is not much good being fat anywhere else.

16. *They also envied Moses in the camp.* Envy is a gaunt, lean, ghostly thing—and when a soul is lean, it soon gets to be envious of others who are better than itself.

16-20. *And Aaron the saint of the LORD. The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram. And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked. They made a calf in Horeb, and worshiped the molten image. Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eats grass.* What a descent it was to come down from worshiping the spiritual God who had worked such wonders for them, to the adoration of "an ox that eats grass." When we

put our trust in men, instead of in God, we might have the same sort of ironical description applied to us, "They trusted in a man that must die, and in the son of man that is but dust." Whenever we forsake the Lord and put our confidence in anyone else, we are fools, indeed!

21-23. *They forgot God their savior, who had done great things in Egypt; wondrous works in the land of Ham, and awesome things by the Red Sea. Therefore He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses, His chosen, stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath, lest He should destroy them.* You remember the intercession of Moses with the Lord, how he cried, "If You will, forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray You, out of Your book which You have written." And, beloved friends, what would you and I have done if it had not been for the Mediator, far greater than Moses, who has stood in the breach every time when we have provoked the Lord—and who has so stood in the breach that He has borne the wrath of God which otherwise would have destroyed us?

24. *Yes, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not His word.* They said that the land that flowed with milk and honey was a land that ate up the inhabitants thereof, and that was full of giants—and they could not drive them out.

25. *But murmured in their hearts, and listened not unto the voice of the LORD.* Do we ever fall into this sin of murmuring in the family, murmuring in the counting house, murmuring against men and murmuring against God, as they murmured in their tents?

26-28. *Therefore He lifted up His hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness: to overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands. They joined themselves also unto Baalpeor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead.* They turned aside from the pure worship of the living God to hold communion with departed spirits! They fell into all the horrible abominations of the heathen among whom they dwelt.

29, 30. *Thus they provoked Him to anger with their inventions: and the plague broke out upon them. Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment and so the plague was stopped.* God always has somebody to stand up for Him—it is Moses one day, and Phinehas another. He will not permit His people to utterly quit their faith and be destroyed!

31-33. *And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations forevermore. They angered Him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sake: because they provoked his spirit, so that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips.* It is not surprising that Moses should have spoken as he did to people who so worried and wearied him with their rebellions and murmurings! Yet you see that God dealt sternly with His servant because of his sin and He will do the same with those of us who bear the vessels of the Lord. The higher our office, the greater our responsibility. One slip of temper in the meek Moses shuts him out of the Promised Land! So see what sin will do and see how one who sins in a smaller degree than others may be made a scapegoat for them.

34-36. *They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them: but were mingled among the heathen and learned their*

work. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. God warned them that it would be so! He told them that they must drive out those Canaanites and not make a league with them, or else they would be sure to be led astray by them.

37, 38. *They even sacrificed their sons and daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood.* Yet these were God's people whom He brought out of Egypt—whom He tutored in the wilderness, whom He fed with manna, and to whom He gave miraculous streams from the rock—these were the only people in the world whom God had chosen as His own! The rest were sitting in darkness, yet see at what degradation they had fallen!

39. *Thus were they defiled with their own words, and played the harlot by their own inventions.* They were not true to God—they plunged into every kind of uncleanness.

40, 41. *Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against His people, insomuch that He abhorred His own inheritance. And He gave them into the hand of the heathen, and they that hated them ruled over them.* Read the history of God's ancient people and you will see how often this occurred.

42-44. *Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand. Many times did He deliver them; but they provoked Him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheless*—[See Sermon #1886, Volume 32—GOD'S REMEMBRANCE OF HIS COVENANT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Oh, that wonderful, "nevertheless"—

44-48. *He regarded their affliction, when He heard their cry: and for their sake He remembered His covenant, and repented according to the multitude of His mercies. He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives. Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto Your holy name, and to triumph in Your praise. Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting; and let all the people say, Amen. Praise the LORD.* And well we may!

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A LOOK AND ITS LESSONS
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A SERMON
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"Hearken to Me, you that follow after righteousness, you that seek the LORD: look unto the rock where you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit where you were dug."
Isaiah 51:1.

[*Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text, is #1050, Volume 18— A BRIGHT LIGHT IN DEEP SHADES — Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]*

THESE words were addressed to those who were already the people of God. No others could be thus exhorted to look unto the rock where they were hewn, since they have never been hewn from it. Nor to the hole of the pit where they were dug, for they still are in the hole of the pit. They are lost and ruined and they still remain in that condition. But the people of God have been broken off that rock by a blow from the divine hammer. They have been brought up from the horrible pit by the might of the divine arm and their feet are now firmly fixed upon the Rock of Ages!

The people of God are here described as those "that follow after righteousness." That is the direction in which their life generally flows. They are not perfect, but they want to be. They do not love that which is unrighteous, but they desire to be right in all things both before God and before men. They are also said to be those "that seek the Lord," that is to say, they are those who could not live without seeking the Lord in prayer, or in public or private worship. Their great objective in life is to glorify God, to make Him famous among the sons of men—and they desire to devote all their time, talents and powers of every kind to His service and honor!

It is to such privileged people as these that the message of our text is addressed! And surely they will give good heed to it. Yet the form in which the message is put implies that there is need for a special call to attention. Lest those who are addressed should fail to attend as earnestly as they ought, the command, "Hearken to me," puts the message before them in urgent and impressive tones. Come then, beloved, and listen to it and let your inmost souls hear what the text has to say to you—"Look unto the rock where you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit where you were dug."

So, first, *let us look where we are told to look.* And secondly, *let us learn the lessons which that look is intended to teach us.*

I. First, then, LET US LOOK WHERE WE ARE TOLD TO LOOK—"unto the rock where you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit where you were dug."

Look back then, first of all, to your *nature's origin in the Garden of Eden*. Look at that man and woman perfect in beauty, without blemish from head to foot, and altogether spotless in mind and heart as they came fresh from their Creator's hands! They are placed in a garden which is as perfect as they are. All that is fragrant to the smell, gratifying to the taste and lovely to the eyes, they have in the greatest profusion. The man's easy task was to dress and keep the garden which would have spontaneously yielded all he and his required. And the tenure upon which he might have held that fair estate for himself and his heirs forever was very simple and clear—"Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die." To eat of that tree would show that man had revolted from his allegiance to his sovereign, that he had ceased to depend upon the God who had created him and set up on his own account. And it would be, in fact, a declaration of war by finite man against the infinite Jehovah! Alas for us that our first parents were not immune from temptation! Mother Eve, deceived by the serpent, took of the forbidden fruit and ate of it and gave some to her husband, and he also ate of it—and then their eyes were opened and they perceived that they were naked to their shame before God—and they hid themselves when they heard His voice in the garden in the cool of the day.

Poor Adam, he was our covenant head and there could not have been a covenant that would have been more easy to keep—only leave the fruit of that one tree alone—and you and all your descendants shall enjoy perpetual happiness! Only be obedient to the God who made you, and you shall bring upon yourself and all your posterity continual holiness and joy! It is foolish for anyone to complain because Adam was made our representative, for had we all been present to choose the man who would stand as our federal head, we would certainly have selected Adam, for there has never been another man so well qualified as he was for such a responsible position. Yet, perfect man as he was, he fell—and terrible was the result of that fall both for himself and for all his posterity! Out of the garden he must go for he was no longer fit to remain in such a paradise as Eden was—and he must go where he would learn, by painful experience, the effects of his sin—where the earth would bring forth thorns and thistles and its scanty harvests (compared with the abundance of Eden) would only be gained by long and toilsome labor. This was a necessary discipline of love which was enforced by the very mercy of God, since Adam's nature was no longer what it had been before. He began by doubting the truth of God's word and then he went further and imagined that he might do as he pleased, and be his own god—that he might disobey God and yet be a gainer, for he believed the lie of the serpent—"You shall not surely die, for God knows that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

Our earthly father had set himself up as a rival to our Father in heaven! And because he was our representative, we were all doomed to be born into this world rebellious in our very nature, prone to evil even from our birth. You, child of God, stand tonight at the foot of the cross, "accepted in the Beloved," but look back to the place where you once stood in the person of your representative, the first Adam. You then stood outside the garden of Eden, and sorrowfully gazed upon the "flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." You do not fear that sword, now, for it has been sheathed in your Savior's heart, and its flames have been quenched in His blood. And therefore you can now stand at the foot of the cross and, by and by, you shall stand at the gates of pearl—no, more—you shall pass through that gate and stand before the throne of the eternal, a soul reclaimed, restored, perfected and made meet to dwell forever with the thrice holy one! But while you think of your present privileges and of the bliss that is in store for you, do not forget to look back "unto the rock where you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit where you were dug." Let us now look back and see our original in another light.

Let us look at *human nature as it is now* and see how it became tainted by our first parents. But when I say, "Let us look at human nature as it is now," I remember that this is a sight which I am unable to reveal to you in all its horrors, for man, by nature, is exceedingly sinful and "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually." Our heart, by nature, is a very forge of the devil—and when man speaks blasphemy, it is but the sparks flying out of the forge! And when he works iniquities, these are but the glowing coals which Satan has fanned into a flame. "The prince of the power of the air…now works in the children of disobedience, among whom we, also, all had our conversation in times past," whatever change divine grace may have worked in us. Remember, believer in Jesus, that your heart was, by nature, as black as the heart of Judas! Whatever sin there may have been in any other man, the germ of that sin was in your nature—there was no superiority about you, by nature, to any other member of the human race. However excellent your parents may have been—and God forbid that I should disparage them—it is still true, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." It must be so. From defilement—and that is in the parents—there can only come defilement. There cannot be a crystal stream from an impure fountain!

Your nature, then, whatever God may have made it now, was that of a fallen being, a revolted being, one who had gone astray from God. The heart is, naturally, a cage of unclean birds, a den of evil beasts. And he who has been taught to see all its abominations is the most horrified at them! We read of the fountains of the great deep that were broken up in the days of Noah, but there are deeps of iniquity and transgression in every human heart, which, if they were not restrained by education, by the laws of the land and by the voice of conscience, would pour forth in a terrible flood that would ruin the sinner and ruin society at the same time! "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" We never do know it until the Spirit of God convinces

us of sin, of righteousness and of judgment—and it is well for Christians, who have been thus taught of the Spirit, oftentimes to look back to the rock where they were hewn, and to the hole of the pit where they were dug.

Now let us look back upon *human nature as it has been seen in the history of mankind*. What a strange creature man is! How near akin to deity when divine grace changes his whole nature—how near akin to devilry when he is left to himself! What crimes are there that men have not committed? The true story of the human race is a disgrace to us all. You cannot read the history of mankind without discovering the fact that for cruelty to men, no beast has ever equaled man and that for dishonesty, treachery, and deceit, no serpent with its cunning, its fascination and its deadly venom can be compared with man! What fierce lion, ranging across the plains of Africa, has ever been equal in destructive force to a conqueror at the head of a victorious army? And what cobra, lurking by the wayside, ready to slay its victim, has ever been so full of venom as certain men have shown in the pursuit of their ambitions, utterly careless of the lives and happiness of their fellow men? There have been men who have let loose the cruel dogs of war and waded through rivers of human blood that they might sit upon a throne! The great ones of the earth have perpetrated horrible infamies and the lowest of the low have not been a whit better when the power has been in their hands. Sin has reigned equally among princes and peasants and every man, unless renewed by grace, is capable of committing any crime that other men have committed! Some of you doubt that assertion and feel inclined to say what Hazael said to Elisha when the prophet foretold what he would do when he had the power, "What? Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" He did not believe that it was possible that he should do such deeds, yet he did them when he had the opportunity—and none of us know what we might have done if we had been placed in the positions that others have occupied and had been exposed to the temptations that assailed them. If the grace of God has saved us, let us be the last people in the world to begin boasting! But, looking back upon the crimes of which others have been guilty, let us contemplate what we might have done if we had not been divinely restrained—and so let us again look back unto the rock where we were hewn, and unto the hole of the pit where we were dug.

I must come still more closely home as I earnestly invite all here who love the Lord to look back upon *what we were and what we did in our unregenerate condition*. Some of us may well hide our faces and hold our tongues as we think of what we did before we were converted, "whereof we are now ashamed." Some here can remember the time when "the seat of the scornful" was loved by them and they had not learned to love the place they now occupy in God's house and among His people. Lips that are now consecrated to the praise of God were then defiled with oaths and blasphemies. Blessed be God for saving the gross open offenders, "and such were some of you: but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of

our God." As you look back to that horrible pit, bless the name of the Lord that He brought you up out of it!

Others of us who were graciously restrained by God from falling into the grosser vices, can never look back without tears to our unregenerate days. We did evil as far as we could and if we did not go further into it, it was because there were blessed checks that held us in and even those bonds and restraints we hated and would have broken them had we dared to do so! How grieved we are now that we should ever have resisted as we did the appeals of divine mercy, the strivings of the Spirit, the admonitions of our godly parents and the warnings of Christian friends! However painful the process may be, I ask every brother and sister here to look back unto the rock where they were hewn, and to the hole of the pit where they were dug. It is very easy for you to get conceited and proud, but it would help to preserve you from such folly and sin if you would only remember what you used to be before the grace of God made such a change in you. Then you would not want to sing to your own praise and glory, but you would walk humbly before the Lord and give all the honor to Him for what divine has worked in you. This will make it a most profitable exercise for us to look back to see what we were before our conversion.

There is only one more look that I ask you to give, and that is the saddest and most terrible of all—*look, as far as you can, at the state of the lost*. There is a land of darkness and of the shadow of death where the very light is as darkness, and where despair reigns supreme. There are no sights to be seen in that land but such as cause the eyes to weep. And no sounds to be heard but such as grate upon the ears, for He who knows all about it has told us that there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth in that dead world of the lost! Stand at a distance from that place where the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever—and if you can bear it, try to think what must be the condition of spirits that are at this moment, while you are sitting here, banished from the presence of God and condemned to reap the results of the deeds done in the body! Think, also, that but for divine grace, we would have been there too. There are some here, who but for a special interposition of providence might have been there now! Had that fever proved fatal, you would have been there, my friend! Had that vessel veered just a little from her course in that dense fog, you, being unregenerate, would have been there to weep and wail forever! There is one who, before his conversation, was at death's door and at hell's gate scores of times. I want you, my brother, to think of that, and then you will say, "Had it not been for divine grace, I would have been this night among those lost spirits instead of being here among my brothers and sisters in Christ, rejoicing in what the Lord has done for me and praising and magnifying His holy name!" Great as is the distance between the heights of heaven and the depths of hell, as great is the Lord's mercy toward you whom He has redeemed. So, looking away even to the abode of the lost, and trying to realize from how terrible a doom the Lord has delivered you, remember the

rock where you have been hewn and the hole of the pit where you have been dug.

II. Now, in the second place, LET US LEARN THE LESSONS WHICH THIS LOOK IS INTENDED TO TEACH US.

I have already hinted at one result of looking back in the way I have described, but may again remind you that it ought to humble us. How apt we are to be proud! If there is one man here who says, "I am not proud, I am very humble," I say to him, "My dear brother, you must excuse me, but I would not be surprised if you are the proudest man here, for he who imagines he is humble proves by that every fact how very proud he is." We are all proud. Pride can hide under a beggar's rags as well as under an alderman's robes. Pride is a weed that will grow on a dunghill as well as in a palace garden, but it ought never to be allowed to grow in the heart of a Christian! Yet I think—yes, I *know* that I have seen it in some who profess to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ! Some professors are proud because they have got on in the world, and have raked together a big heap of money. But, of all kinds of pride, that is one of the most contemptible, for a man is no more of a man because there is more gold and silver in his house than in other people. The man must be judged apart from his money. There is many a millionaire who is miserably poor, and many a truly rich man who scarcely ever has a shilling to spare. It is paltry pride that is proud of riches and, on the other hand, I have known others who had no money to make them proud, who were not a whit more humble than the purse proud people, for pride can come in at the back door as easily as at the front!

It is a sad thing when a Christian gets proud of his graces and says, "I am a very different man from what I used to be, and very different, also, from most other Christians. I live nearer to God. I pray more, I think I walk more circumspectly than others do." Perhaps he adds, "I glorify God for this." Mind that you do, my dear brother, for it is very easy to descend from glorifying God to glorifying yourself! You may even be bowing down before the detestable idol of self-righteousness at the very time that you imagine you are glorifying God. The great cure for this evil is to pray to God to keep you humble and it will tend toward that end if you often look unto the rock where you were hewn and to the hole of the pit where you were dug. I have often told you what an old plowman said to me long ago, "Depend upon it, sir, if you and I get an inch above the ground, we get just that inch too high." And I am persuaded that he was right. Lying in the dust before God is the safest and best posture for us! If we think we have anything of which we have reason to be proud, we are only deceiving ourselves. Yet there are professing Christians who seem to have quite forgotten what they used to be—forgotten that they were purged from their old sins by a miracle of mercy—and that they were made Christians by the almighty grace of God. If they remembered these things, they would walk humbly before the Lord as they used to do. When they first joined the church, they loved all their fellow members, and thought that each one of them was better than themselves. But now they are constantly picking holes in this or that brother's character and finding fault with one sister or another. When they first made a profession of religion,

they were half afraid to unite with God's people lest they should be an injury to the church and weaken it through their shortcomings—but now they look down with contempt upon those who are far better than they are ever likely to be! Such high looks and such proud spirits will have to be brought down if they are really the children of God! And though the process may be a very painful one, the result of it will be highly beneficial to them. They think themselves wonderfully fine fellows, but they forget that they would have been in hell if it had not been for the infinite mercy and loving kindness of the Lord. It is a good thing when these who have been so proudly crowing over others get their combs cut by being made to feel that, after all, they are sinners just as others are and that if they are saved sinners, their salvation is not to be ascribed to themselves, but to the grace of God through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ their Lord and Savior!

This backward look to what we used to be will not only help to humble us, *it will also tend to encourage us*. "To encourage us?" someone asks. Yes, for if when we were dead in trespasses and sins, the Lord quickened us by His Spirit, how is it possible for Him to cast us away, now that we are adopted into His family? If He has reclaimed us from the dominion of sin and Satan, will He not do for us what is, after all, a less work by keeping us from going back to the old state of bondage? Would He have saved us if He had intended us to be lost at the last? Oh, no, He who has brought us up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and has set our feet upon a Rock and put a new song in our mouth, even praise unto our God, will never let us go back to that state from which He delivered us! If we wander from Him, as we are so prone to do, He will heal our backslidings and cause us again to rejoice in the God of our salvation!

Then, dear friends, this backward look tends to make us tender towards others and to encourage us to hope for *their salvation*. True Christians should never feel, "I am too good to associate with such sinful people as I see all around me." If he would look back to the rock where he was hewn, and to the hole of the pit where he was dug, he would never allow such a thought as that to linger in his mind for even a minute! I hear now and then of a minister who is said to have "a very select congregation." It seems to be the rule, whenever there is a very small number of people attending a place of worship, to say that the preacher is of such a high intellectual order that his ministry is not attractive to the masses, but that the few who go to hear him make up in quality what they lack in quantity. Well, I have occasionally had the opportunity of testing that statement, and I have come to the conclusion that such congregations are neither intellectually nor spiritually better than others—nor half as good as some with which I am acquainted.

If I were to feel that I was too good to mix with the worst of men in the hope of being of service to them, or that I was too pure to have anything to do with my fellow sinners, I would be imitating the Pharisee who says, "Stand by, for I am holier than you," and I would have forgotten the rock where I was hewn, and the hole of the pit where I was dug. O beloved, if

you recall your own condition as sinners, you will love those who are still "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," and your great desire will be to bring them to Jesus even as you, yourself, were brought to Him! Sometimes, when I have been preaching, I have had this thought in my mind, "I will not tell my hearers that God can save the greatest sinners because He saved John Bunyan and John Newton, but I will tell them that He can save all other sinners because He saved me." When I have had that thought uppermost in my mind, I have found that I could preach with great tenderness to those who were out of the way. It was this feeling that led Charles Wesley to write—

"He breaks the power of canceled sin,
He set the prisoners free!
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me."

This ought also to be the thought and feeling of every Christian, "What He has done for me, He can do for others. There is no one living who is too far gone for His sovereign mercy. As He was able to save me, I will go to others with the hope and belief that He is able to save them. And I will try to encourage them to see whether there is not salvation for them, even for them."

Now, lastly, I think that this backward look will *tend to make us faithful to the Savior* and fill us with a burning zeal for His glory. I do not know anything better that I could suggest to you as the subject of your meditations, when you are at home alone and quiet for a little while, than to look back to the days of your stubbornness and unbelief. I know that you will not ascribe your salvation to your own merits or your own good works, but that you will ascribe it to the grace of God from first to last! And then the natural instinct of your renewed nature will make you fall down upon your knees and adore the infinite mercy of God in saving you. He might have left you to perish as He has left so many others, but in His sovereignty, He looked with pity and love upon you and saved you. What did you do to help the Lord to save you? *Help Him to save you*? Why, you did all you could to hinder Him until, at last, His omnipotent love overcame the natural unwillingness of your heart and made you willing in the day of His power! Oh, you ought to praise God! Gratitude and adoration should constantly rise from your heart unto Him who has done such great things for you!

I close by reminding every sinner here that God is able to save him, into whatever depths he may have fallen, for God has saved other sinners who were just like him. If you, my hearer, have been guilty of every crime in the book, you may still be cleansed by the precious blood of Jesus which cleanses from all sin! There is power in His blood to blot out the blackest sin—and that power shall be realized by you if you give heed to this message—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." To believe is to trust, to rely upon, to depend upon. And if you do rely upon Jesus, all your iniquities shall not be reckoned unto you, but they shall be reckoned among those that were put away by Him when He bore our sins in His own body on the tree! Then all His merits shall be reckoned unto you—there shall be a clear exchange made—Christ taking your sin and you taking His righteousness! Oh, that you would believe

on Him this very moment! May God give you grace to do so! Then shall you be able, with us who also have believed in Jesus, to look back to the rock where you were hewn and to the hole of the pit where you were dug—and to adore and magnify the name of the Lord forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GALATIANS 3.

Verse 1. *O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?* Paul writes as if they had come under some kind of witchcraft and been deluded by it. This seemed to astonish the apostle, so he cries out to them "Who has bewitched you?"

1. *That you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth, crucified among you?* They had heard the plainest possible preaching from Paul and his companions. Jesus Christ had been so clearly set forth before them that they might, as it were, see Him as He hung upon the cross of Calvary. Yet, under some unhallowed spell, they turned aside from the faith of Christ!

2. *This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?* [See Sermon #1705, Volume 29—THE HEARING OF FAITH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "You profess to have received the Spirit—did the Spirit come to you by the works of the law, or through hearing and believing the gospel?"

3. *Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?* "Did you begin right, and are you going to finish in some other way? Is the foundation laid in the truth of God, and will you build lies upon it? Is the foundation Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone, and is the superstructure to be wood, hay and stubble?"

4. *Have you suffered so many things in vain—if it is, indeed, in vain.* "Have you been made to suffer through conviction of sin? Have you even been persecuted for the truth's sake? And are you going to give it up after all that?

5. *He therefore who ministers to you the Spirit, and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith*? "Have those miracles been worked in your midst by the power of faith or by the works of the law?"

6. *Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.* That is the Scriptural doctrine—faith is counted or imputed for righteousness.

7. *Know you therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.* Those who are justified by faith in Jesus. Those whose faith is counted for righteousness—they are the children of believing Abraham—not those who are under the law of Moses.

8. *And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In you shall all nations be blessed.* Just as Abraham was blessed, so are the nations to be blessed, that is, by faith. By faith they become his spiritual

seed. By faith they enter into his covenant. By faith, they receive the blessings of grace.

9. *So then they which are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.* Just as the believing Abraham was accounted righteous, so believing men who are the spiritual seed of Abraham, are also accounted righteous.

10. *For as many as are of the words of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* Can any man perfectly keep the whole law of God? Has any man ever continued in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them? No and, therefore, all that the law does is to bring the curse upon those who are under its dominion—none of them can obtain salvation by the works of the law!

11. *But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident: for the just shall live by faith.* [See Sermons #814, Volume 14—LIFE BY FAITH and #2809, Volume 48—FAITH—LIFE—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This passage is again and again repeated in the Scriptures—"The just shall live by faith." There are no other just men living! There cannot be any other just men living, but those that live by faith!

12. *And the law is not of faith: but, the man that does them shall live in them.* The law demands *doing.* The gospel enjoins *believing.* The believing man comes in as an heir of the blessing, but the man who trusts to his own doing is an heir of the curse.

13. *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.* [See Sermons #873, Volume 15—CHRIST MADE A CURSE FOR US and #2093, Volume 35—THE CURSE AND THE CURSE FOR US—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] What a wonderful doctrine this is! We should have hesitated to use such language as this had not the Holy Spirit, Himself, moved Paul to write that Christ was "made a curse for us." He who is most blessed, forever. He who is the fountain of blessing and the channel of blessing to all who ever are blessed was, "made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree"—

14. *That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.* Dear friends, are you living by faith upon the Son of God? Are you trusting in God? Are you believing His promises? Some think that this is a very little thing, but God does not think so. Faith is a better index of character than anything else. The man who trusts his God and believes His promises is honoring God far more than is the man who supposes that by any of his own doings he can merit divine approval and favor.

15. *Brethren, I speak after the matter of men. Though it is but a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no man annuls, or adds thereto.* If a covenant is once made, signed, sealed and ratified, no honorable man would think of drawing back from it. Whatever happens afterwards, the covenant having been once made, is regarded as an established fact and it must remain.

16, 17. *Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He says not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to your Seed,*

which is Christ. And this I say, that the law which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. This is sound reasoning. God made a covenant with Abraham and said that in him and in his Seed all nations would be blessed. All believers are in Christ, who is here called Abraham's Seed and, therefore, they must be blessed! Whatever the law may say or may not say, it was not given until 430 years after the covenant was made with Abraham and, therefore, cannot affect it in any way.

18. *For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no more of promise.* God gave it to Abraham by promise. It was a free gift—He did not bestow it upon the condition of merit on Abraham's part. Isaac was born, not according to the power of the flesh, but according to promise—and the whole covenant is according to free grace and divine promise.

18, 19. *But God gave it to Abraham by promise. What purpose, therefore, does the law serve?* [See Sermon #128, Volume 3—THE USES OF THE LAW—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] What was the use of it?

19. *It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made.* The law makes us know what transgression is. It reveals its true nature. Under the hand of the Holy Spirit, it makes us see the evil of sin. We might not have perceived sin to be sin if it had not been for the command of God not to commit it—but when the commandment comes, then we recognize sin and the evil of it.

19-21. *And it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law, then, against the promises of God? God forbid! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.* There could not have been a better law! Some talk about the law of God being too severe, too strict, too stringent, but it is not. If the design had been that men should live by the law, there could not have been a better law for that purpose and, therefore, it is proved that by the principle of law nobody ever can be justified, because even with the best of laws, all men are sinful and need that justification which comes only by grace through faith!

22. *But the Scripture has concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.* [See Sermon #1145, Volume 19—THE GREAT JAIL AND HOW TO GET OUT OF IT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] All of us, by nature, are shut up like criminals in a prison that is so securely bolted and barred that there is no hope of escape for any who are within it. But why are all the doors shut and fastened? Why in order that Christ may come and open the one only eternal door of salvation—"that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe."

23. *But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.* [See Sermon #2402, Volume 41—UNDER ARREST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Well do I remember when I was "shut up" in this fashion. I struggled and strove with might and main to get out, but I

found no way of escape. I was "shut up" until faith came and opened the door and brought me out into "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

24. *Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.* [See Sermon #1196, Volume 20—THE STERN TEACHER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The tutor was a slave who led the children to school and sometimes whipped them to school. That is what the law did with us—it took us under its management, whipped us and drove us to Christ.

25. *But after faith is come, we are no longer under a tutor.* Now we go to Christ willingly, cheerfully, joyfully, trusting in Him with all our hearts. The tutor's work is done so far as we are concerned.

26. *For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.* We hear a great deal about the universal fatherhood of God, but it is all nonsense! There is no Scripture for it whatever. Those only are the children of God who are "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

27. *For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.* "He is everything to you. He covers you, He surrounds you. You do not stand before God in your own filthy rags, but you have put on Christ."

28. *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* What a mercy it is to be in Christ, so that *you* are not seen any more, but only Christ, and you accepted in Him!

29. *And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* "According to the promise"—not according to your works, or your gifts, but "heirs according to the promise."

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CHRIST LOOSENS FROM INFIRMITIES

NO. 3195

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

"And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over, and could in no way lift herself up. And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said unto her, Woman, you are loosened from your infirmity. And He laid His hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God." Luke 13:11-13.

[See Sermons #1426, Volume 24—THE LIFTING UP OF THE BOWED DOWN and #2891, Volume 50—A SABBATH MIRACLE— for sermons on the same miracle—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

OUR text commences with a "behold"—"behold, there was a woman." And as it was often remarked by the Puritan writers, whenever we see the word, "behold," in Scripture, we are to regard it as a *nota bene*, as a mark in the margin calling our particular attention to what follows. Where Christ worked wonders, we should have attentive eyes and ears. When Jesus is dispensing blessings, whether to ourselves or to others, we should never be in a state of indifference!

I shall use this miracle as a type, as it were, for doubtless the miracles of Christ were so intended. Our Lord was declared to be "a prophet mighty in deed and word." He was to be a prophet like unto Moses and He is the only one who was like unto Moses in these two respects. Many prophets followed Moses who were mighty in "word"—such as Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Isaiah, but then they were not "mighty in deed." Many, on the other hand, were "mighty in deed"—like Elijah and Elisha, but they were not "mighty in word." Our Lord was mighty in both respects and a prophet in both respects—"a prophet mighty in deed and word." I take it, therefore, that His miraculous deeds are parts of His prophecies. They are the illustrations of His great life sermon. The words which fell from His lips are as the text, and the letter of the book, but the miracles are the pictures from which our childlike minds may often learn more than from the words, themselves. We shall so use the picture before us now—may the Holy Spirit give us instruction!

I. In the first place, THIS WOMAN, BOWED DOWN WITH A SPIRIT OF INFIRMITY, TYPIFIES TO US THE CASE OF VERY MANY—very many whom we have seen and some of whom are listening to these words. Oh, that the same miracle might be worked in them as in her! She typifies persons who are depressed in spirit, who cannot look up to heaven and

rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ; persons who have a hope, a good hope, too, but not a strong one—a hope which enables them to hold on as the men did in Paul's shipwreck when, on boards and broken pieces of the ship they came safe to land, but not a hope which gives them an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. They are saved, like this woman, who was a true daughter of Abraham, notwithstanding all her infirmities. She was truly of the promised seed, notwithstanding that she could not lift herself up, so these are genuine Christians, truly saved, and yet constantly subject to infirmity.

In some, it takes this shape. They believe in Christ and rest on the precious blood, yet they *are sometimes afraid that they have sinned the unpardonable sin*. Though their better and more reasonable selves will do battle against the delusion, still they hug it to their hearts. Seeing that the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is a sin which is unto death—and that when a man has committed it, his spirit dies—and repentance, the desire to be saved and all good emotions cease to be when that dreadful spiritual death is ours, I say that they can thus reason with themselves in their better moments and see that their fear is a delusion, but they soon fall back again into that dreadful slough. They see no signs of grace, but they think they see signs of rejection.

Many have I met with—I may say that I meet with such people every week—*who are afraid that they are hypocrites*. When I encounter persons troubled with this fear, I cannot help smiling at them, for if they really were hypocrites, they would not be afraid of it and their fear of presumption argues very strongly that they are not living in it!

Then this infirmity will take another shape. If you drive them from the other errors, they say *they are afraid that they are self-deluded*. This is a very proper fear when it leads to self-examination and comes to an end. But it becomes a very improper fear when it perpetually destroys our joy, prevents our saying, "Abba, Father," with an unfaltering tongue and keeps us at a distance from the precious Savior who would have us come very near to Him and be most familiar with His brotherly heart.

Supposing this difficulty should be met, still there are tens of thousands who *are very much in doubt concerning their election*. What if they should not be elect, they say? This, of course results from ignorance, for if they read God's word, they would soon discover that all those who believe in Christ may be certain of their election—faith being the public mark of God's privately chosen people! If you make your calling sure, you have made your election sure! If you know yourself now to be a lover of God, resting upon the great propitiation which He has set forth for sin, then you may know that this is a work of grace in your soul! God never worked a work of grace where He had not make an *election* of grace. That fear, therefore, may be easily driven away and yet thousands are in bondage to it!

Others are afflicted *with the daily fear that they shall not persevere*. They say, "After all our professions and prayers, we fear we shall yet be castaways." The Apostle Paul was not afflicted with this fear. He strove

lest this fear should ever come near him. He so lived with holy diligence, that he might always be in a state of blessed assurance, lest, after having preached to others, he, himself, should be a castaway. But he could say, "I know that my Redeemer lives," even as Job could. And he could also 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." Still, tens of thousands are perpetually subject to that form of bondage! They cannot reach, in fact, the full assurance of faith. They have scarcely even the glimmering of assurance. They trust—they trust as the publican did, "standing afar off," but they have never yet come with John to lean their heads upon the bosom of the Savior! They are His disciples and His servants, but they can scarcely understand how He can call them His friends and permit them to enjoy close communion with Himself.

Now, beloved, this woman thus bowed down was very like these persons for the following reasons—

Her infirmity much marred her beauty. The beauty and dignity of the human form is to walk erect, to look the sun in the face and gaze upon the heavens. This woman could do nothing of the kind. She was, no doubt, very conscious of this and shrank from the public gaze. So unbelief, distrust, mistrust, suspicion—these direful infirmities to which some are subject, spoil their spiritual beauty. They have the divine grace of humility. In this respect, they very often excel others, but the other graces, the noble graces of faith and holy confidence and courage—these they cannot display. The beauty of their character is marred.

Moreover, *this woman had her enjoyment spoiled*. It must have been a sad thing for her to go about the world bent double. She could not gaze on the beauties of nature as others could and all her motions must have been, if not painful, yet certainly exceedingly inconvenient. Such is the case with the doubting, distrustful soul under infirmity. He can do but little. Prayer is a painful groaning out of his soul. When he sings, it is usually in a deep bass. His harp hangs upon the willows. He feels that he is in Babylon and cannot sing the songs of Zion.

This woman, too, *must have been very unfit for active service*. Little of household duty could she perform, and that with pain. And as to public acts of mercy, she could take but small part in them, being subject to this constant infirmity. And so is it with you who are "Much Afraids" or, "Fearings," you who have troubled spirits. You cannot lead the van in the day of battle. You can scarcely tell others of the Savior's preciousness. You cannot expect to be great reapers in the Master's harvest. You have to stay by the stuff while others go forth to fight. There is a special law which David made of old concerning those who tarried there, so you do get a blessing, but you miss the higher blessing of noble activity and Christian service.

I might thus enlarge and show the likeness more clearly, but I think you can draw the picture for yourselves. You see the woman come into the synagogue and your pity is at once excited. But if you love the souls

of men and God has made you to be tender as a nursing mother to others, you will pity, yet more, many of the true seed of Abraham who are bowed down with infirmity.

It appears, from our Savior's words, that *this woman's infirmity was coupled with Satanic influence*. "Whom Satan has bound," He said, "lo, these eighteen years." We do not know how much Satan has to do with us. I do know that we often lay a great deal on his back which he does not deserve—and that we do a thousand evil things ourselves and then ascribe them to him. Still, there are gracious souls who do walk in the paths of holiness, who do hate sin, who, for all that, sometimes cannot enjoy peace. We cannot blame them. We must believe that the Satanic spirit is at work, marring their joy and spoiling their comfort. Dr. Watts says—

"He worries whom he cannot devour
With a malicious joy"—

and doubtless that is true. He knows he cannot destroy you because you are in Christ and, therefore, if the dog cannot bite, he will at least bark. Like mercy, in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, you will often be alarmed by the evil ones and all the more so because these evil ones know that in a little while you will be out of gunshot of all the powers of hell, and beyond the hearing of all the bellowing of the fiends of the pit! Satan had much to do with this poor woman's infirmity.

It appears, very clearly, too, from reading the passage that *the woman's weakness was beyond all human art*. "She could in no wise lift herself up," which implies, I think, that she had tried all ways within her reach and knowledge. "She could in no wise." Neither by those mechanical operations which have sometimes been found effective in such diseases, nor by those medicines which were much boasted in that age, could she receive the slightest relief. She had done her best and physicians had done their worst—and yet notwithstanding all, she could by no means lift herself up—and, truly, there are many in this condition spiritually. Have you ever been, as a Christian pastor, utterly baffled in dealing with some cases of spiritual distress? Have you ever been driven to pray, feeling the blessedness of prayer all the more because you have proved the futility of your own efforts to comfort a sin distressed, Satan tossed spirit? Often has that been my case. There has been the promise to meet the case, but the poor soul could not lay hold of it! There has been the cheering Word of God which has been efficient enough at other times, but it seemed to be a dead letter to this poor spirit in bondage. There has been the case in point, and the experience of somebody else just like the case in hand, which we tried to tell with sympathy. We tried to work ourselves, as it were, into the position of the sufferer with whom we were dealing. But still, for all that, we seemed to be speaking to the winds and trying to comfort one who was so conditioned to sorrow that he felt that for him to cast off the somber weeds would be a sin, and to cease to mourn would be presumption. Many a time has such a case come before us and we have thought of this woman—and could only pray

that the Master would put His hand upon the person, for our hand and our voice were utterly powerless!

Poor soul, she had been a long time in this case! Eighteen years! Eighteen years! Well, that is not very long if you are in health, strength and prosperity. How the years trip along as with wings on their heels! They are scarcely here before they are fled! But 18 years of infirmity, pain and constantly increasing weakness! Eighteen years she dragged her chain until the iron entered into her soul. Eighteen years! Two long apprenticeships to sorrow till she had become the acquaintance of grief. Yes, and some such persons, though prisoners of hope, are kept in bondage as long as that. Their disease is like an intermittent fever which comes on, sometimes, and then is relieved. They have times when they are at their worst—the ebb tide—and then they have their floods again. Now and then they have a glimpse of summer, but soon the cold chilly winter comes on them again. Sometimes they half think they have escaped and leap like the emancipated slave when his fetters are broken, but they very soon have to go back again to the jails and the manacles, having no permanent relief, still being prisoners year after year. I know I am describing a case which is known to some of you. Perhaps I am photographing you!

Yet for all this, *this woman was a daughter of Abraham*. The Lord Jesus knew her pedigree and assured the ruler of the synagogue of it. She was one of the true seed of Israel notwithstanding all her failings. "Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, to be loosened even on the Sabbath?" demanded the Master. Yes, and you, poor anxious spirit, though your faith is but as a grain of mustard seed, yet, if you have a simple faith in Christ, you are safe! You, troubled and tossed one, though your boat seems ready to be swallowed up by the waves, if you have taken Jesus into the vessel, you shall come safely to the land! Poor heart, you may be brought very low, but you shall never be brought low enough to perish, for underneath there are the everlasting arms. Like Jonah, you may go to the bottoms of the mountains and think that the earth with her bars is about you forever, but you shall yet be brought up and you shall sing Jonah's song, "Salvation is of the Lord!" God does not cast off His people because of their dark frames and feelings. He does not love them because of their high enjoyments—neither will He reject them because of their deep depressions. Christian is dear. Father Honest is dear. Valiant for Truth, too, is dear to the King of the pilgrims! And Ready to Halt, upon his crutches, is equally dear, and Mr. Fearing and Miss Much Afraid, though they may lie in Doubting Castle till they are almost starved, shall surely be brought out, for they are true pilgrims and shall at length safely reach the Celestial City!

II. But we must pass on to our second point, namely that THE EXAMPLE OF THIS WOMAN IS INSTRUCTIVE TO ALL IN HER CASE.

Observe that *she did not tamely yield to her infirmity without effort*. The expression, "She could *in no wise* lift herself up"—an old Saxon form of

saying, "She could in no ways lift herself up"—shows, as I have said before, that she had tried her best. I believe some of you might stand upright if you liked. I am quite certain that in some cases, people get into the way of surrendering to depression until at last they become powerless against it. Some stimulant is given them in the form of a sick husband, or a dying child and they grow quite cheerful. Under some real trouble, they become patient, but when this real trouble is taken away, they begin manufacturing troubles of their own. They are never happy, I might almost say, except when they are miserable—and never cheerful except when they have something to cast them down! If they have a real trouble, they get strength to bear it, but at other times, they are morbidly troubled in spirit. Now, let us imitate this woman and shake off our doubts and our unbelief as much as possible. Let us strike up the hymn—

"Begone, unbelief, my Savior is near!
And for my relief will surely appear.
By prayer let me wrestle, and He will perform,
With Christ in the vessel, I smile at the storm!"

Let us say, with David, "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him." Do not so soon yield to the shafts of unbelief. Hold up the shield of faith and say to your soul, "No, as the Lord lives, who is the Rock of my salvation, my castle and my high tower, my weapon of defense and my glory, I will not yield to unbelief. Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. And though all things go against me, yet will I stay myself upon the mighty God of Jacob, and I will not fear." The woman, then, had done her best.

Note next, that although bent double and, therefore, having an excellent excuse for staying at home, *yet she was found at the synagogue*. I believe she was always found there from the fact that the length of time during which she had been sick was well known—not merely known to Christ because of His Godhead, but known as a matter of common talk and common knowledge in the synagogue, probably, during the whole of the 18 years she had been an attendant there. "Ah," she thought, "if I miss the blessing of health, yet I will not be absent from the place where God's people meet together for worship. I have had sweet enjoyments in the singing of the Psalms and in listening to the Word of God—and I will not be away when such divine grace is being dispensed."

O mourners, never let Satan prevail upon you to "forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." If you cannot get comfort, still go to the sanctuary. It is the most likely place for you to get it. One of the sweet traits of character in mourners is that they love to go to the assemblies of God's people. I knew one aged woman who had year after year been in this mournful state, and after trying long to comfort her, but in vain, I said to her, "Well, what do you go to the house of prayer for? Why don't you stay at home?" "Why, that is my only comfort!" she said. "I thought you told me you were a hypocrite," I answered, "and that you had no right to the promises or any of the good things?" "Ah, but I

could not stay away from the place where my best friends, my kindred, dwell," she replied. "And do you read your Bible?" I asked her. "I suppose you have burned that." "Burned my Bible!" she said in horror. "I'd sooner be burned myself!" "But do you read it? You say there is nothing there for you—if you were to lay hold upon the promises, it would be presumption—you are afraid to grasp any one of the good things of the covenant!" "Ah, but I could not do without reading my Bible. That is my daily bread. It is my constant food," she responded. "But do you pray?" "Pray! Oh yes, I shall die praying!" "But you told me that you had no faith at all, that you were not one of God's people, that you were a deceiver and I know not what besides!" "Yes, I am afraid, sometimes, that I am. I am afraid now that I am, but as long as I live I'll pray." All the marks of the child of God were in her private character—and could be seen in her walk and conversation—and yet she was always bowed down and could by no means lift herself up!

I remember a brother minister who was the means, in God's hands, of comforting a woman when she lay dying in this plight. He said to her, "Well, Sarah, you tell me you do not love Christ at all. Are you sure you do not?" "Yes, sir. I am sure I do not." He went up to the window and wrote on a piece of paper, "*I do not love the Lord Jesus Christ.*" "Now, Sarah," he said "just put your name at the bottom of that." "What is it, sir? I do not know what it is." When she read it, she said, "No, I'd rather be torn in pieces than I'd put my name to such a thing as that!" "Well," he said, "but if it is true, you may as well write it as say it." And this was the means of convincing and persuading her that there really was love to Christ in her soul, after all! But in many cases you cannot comfort these poor souls at all. They will still say that they are not the Lord's people, yet they cling to the means of grace and, by and by, we trust they will get deliverance.

Observe another thing, that though we are not told it in so many words in the narrative, we may be sure it is true, *when the Lord Jesus called her, she came at once*. She was called and there was no hesitation in her answer. Such speed as she could make in her poor, pitiable plight, she made. She did not say, as another said, "Lord, if You will, you can." She did not doubt His will. Nor did she imitate another and say, "If You can do anything." She doubted not His power. She said nothing, but we know what she felt. There is not a trace of unbelief! There is every sign of obedience. Now, soul, when Christ does call you, by His grace, make haste to run to Him! When, under the preaching of the Lord, you feel as though the iceberg is beginning to melt, do not get away from the sunlight and go back to the old winter gloom! "Make hay while the sun shines," says the old proverb—take care that you do the same. When God gives you a little light, prize it. Thank Him for it and ask for more. If you have got starlight, ask for moonlight. When you have got moonlight, do not sit down and weep because it is only moonlight, but ask Him for more, and He will give you sunlight, and when you have got that, be

grateful, and He will give you yet more! He will make your day to be as the light of seven days, and the days of your mourning shall be ended. Think much of little mercies since you deserve none. Do not throw away these pearls because they are not the greatest that were ever found, but keep them, thank God for them, and then soon He will send you the best treasures from the treasury of His grace.

As soon as this woman was healed, she was, in another respect, an example to us, namely, that *she glorified God*. Her face did it. With what luster was it lit up! Her whole gait did it. How erect she stood! And then I am sure her tongue did it. The woman might well be pardoned for speaking this once in the midst of the assembly. Restored as she was, all of a sudden, she could not help telling out the joy she felt within! The bells of her heart were ringing merry peals! She must give glory to God who had worked the cure. Some of you profess to have been cured, but have you given glory to God? Some of you profess to be Christians, and yet you have never come forward to avow it! You have been afraid to unite yourselves with the Christian church! Your Master bids you confess Him. The mode of confession which He prescribes is that you be baptized in His name—and yet, though He has saved you, you stand back and are disobedient. Take care! "That servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes."

I was, this week, by the bedside of a dying man, an heir of heaven, washed in the precious blood of Jesus, I believe, and rejoicing in that fact, too, but yet he could not help saying, "I ought, years ago, to have taken my stand with God's people. You have often given me many hard blows in the Tabernacle, but never too hard. Tell the people, when you speak to them again, when they know anything is a duty, never to postpone it, for that Word of God is true, 'That servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.' I am not condemned, I am not cast away, for I am in Christ. I am resting on His precious blood and I am saved. But, though saved, I am being chastened." And he was sorely chastened with many doubts, fears and troubles of soul. If you are God's child, any duty neglected will bring upon your soul some chastisement. If you are not God's child, you may do very much as you like and your *punishment* will, perhaps, not come upon you until the next world. But if you are one of the King's favorites, you must walk very tenderly and very attentively, or else, as surely as you are dear to the heart of God, you shall feel the rod upon you to chasten you and to bring you back into the path of obedience!

This woman glorified God. Brothers and sisters, can we not do something more to glorify God than we have yet done? If we have done that which seemed to be our duty on certain occasions, may there not be yet more for us to do? There is very much land yet to be possessed for King Jesus! This wicked city is given over to sin and we are doing so little! Ah, some of you do what you can, but we who do what we can, might do

more if we had more strength with which to do it—and more strength is to be had for the asking! Oh, that we could enlarge our desires for the glory of King Jesus! Oh, to set Him upon a glorious high throne and to crown Him with many crowns, to prostrate ourselves at His feet and to bring others, too, to lie prostrate at His feet, that He might be King in Jeshurun, King of kings and Lord of lords, reigning in our souls forever and ever! Imitate this woman. If you have been bowed down and yet restored to comfort! See that, like she did, you instantly fall to glorifying God.

III. And this brings us to the last point—THE WOMAN'S CURE IS EXCEEDINGLY INSTRUCTIVE TO PERSONS IN A LIKE CASE.

She went to the synagogue, but she did not get her cure alone by going there. Means and ordinances are nothing in themselves! They are to be used, but they are only dry skin bottles, without water, unless there is something more than these. This woman *met with Christ in the synagogue*—and *then* came the healing! May we, too, meet with Jesus! That great encounter is possible here, or anywhere, for—

"Wherever we seek Him, He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground."

The great matter is to meet with Him! And if we meet with Him, we meet with all we need!

Now, observe the woman's cure. In the first place, *it was a complete cure.* No part of the infirmity remained. She was not left a little crooked, but still much restored. No, "she was made straight." When Jesus heals, He heals not by halves. His works of grace may have it said of each one of them, "It is finished." Salvation is a finished work throughout.

In the next place, *the woman's cure was a perpetual and permanent one*. She did not return, by and by, by a terrible relapse, to her former posture. Once made to walk upright, she remained so. When Jesus sheds abroad life, love and joy in the soul, it is ours for a perpetual inheritance and we may hold it till we die, nor lose it even then!

Notice, too, that *the woman was healed immediately*. That is a point which Luke takes care to mention. The cure did not take days, or weeks, or months, or years, as physicians cures do—but she was cured immediately! Here is encouragement for you who have been depressed for years. There is yet a possibility that you may be perfectly and speedily restored. Yet may the dust be taken from your eyes! Yet may your face be anointed with fresh oil! Yet may you glow and glisten in the light of Jesus' countenance while you reflect the light that shines upon you from Him! It may happen tonight—at this moment! Gates may be taken from off their hinges, for the mighty Samson, whom we serve, can tear up Gaza's gates, posts and bars and all if He wills to set His captives free! If you are bound by all the fetters that self can forge, yet at one emancipating word from Christ, you shall be entirely free! Doubting Castle may be very strong, but He who comes to fight with Giant Despair is stronger, still. He who has kept you beneath his power is mighty, but the All Mighty is

He who conquered at Bozrah and who will conquer everywhere else when He comes forth for the deliverance of His people! Take down your harps from the willows! Be encouraged! Jesus Christ loosens the prisoners! He is the Lord, the liberator. He comes to set the captives free and to glorify Himself in them!

I remind you of the thought with which we commenced this third point, namely, *that the woman's restoration was effected by Jesus Christ, by His laying His hands upon her*. Many of His cures were worked in this way, by bringing His own personality into contact with human infirmity. "He laid His hands upon her." O soul, Christ came in human flesh and that contact with humanity is the source of all salvation! If you believe in Christ, He comes a second time into contact with you! Oh, that your soul might get a touch of Him tonight! He is a man like you, though He is also "very God of very God."

In order to save us, He suffered unutterable pangs. The whole weight of our sin was laid upon Him, till He was bruised as beneath the wheels of the car of vengeance. Beneath the upper and the nether millstones of divine vengeance, the Savior was ground like fine flour! God knows, and God alone knows, what agonies He bore. All this was substitutionary for sinners. Let not your sins, then, depress you. Had you no sin, you would not need a Savior. Come with your sin and trust in Him! Let not your weakness distress you. Had you no weakness, you would not need a mighty Savior. Come and take hold upon His strength, for all His strength is meant for the weak, the hopeless and the helpless. Sitting on the dunghill of your sin, yet trust in Jesus and you shall be lifted up to dwell among the princes of the blood royal! There must be power to save in God when He becomes Man to bleed and die. Nothing can be impossible to Him who built the world and who bears the pillars thereof upon His shoulders—and yet gives His hands to the nails and His heart to the spear! Nothing can be impossible to Immanuel, God With Us, when He smarts, and groans, and submits to the bloody sweat, and then empties out His heart's blood that He might redeem men from their iniquities—

"O come all you in whom are fixed
The deadly stains of sin!"

Draw near to the crucified! Let your souls contemplate Christ. Let your faith look to Him. Let your love embrace Him. Cast away all other confidences as mere vanities that will delude you. Away with them! Trust in nothing but the Lord Jesus Christ—His person, His work, His life, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His glorious pleading before the throne of God for sinners such as we are! Ah, when you come to die, you who are strong and you who are depressed, will be very much alike in this matter—that you will have to come back where Wesley was when he said—

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Your bosom flee!
Other refuge have I none—
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee."

Look to the wounds of Christ, they will heal your wounds! Look to the death of Christ, it will be the death of your doubts! Look to the life of Christ, it shall be the life of your hopes! Look to the glory of Christ, it shall be the glory of your souls here, and the glory of your souls forever and ever!

May God add His blessing and bring many of His bondaged ones out of prison! This shall be to His eternal praise! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 13:1-13.

Verse 1. *There were present at that season some that told Him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.* This was a matter of common town talk, so of course they brought the news to Jesus. Notice how wisely He used this shameful incident. You and I too often hear the news of what is happening, but we learn nothing from it—our Savior's gracious mind turned everything to good account—He was like the bee that gathers honey from every flower.

2. *And Jesus answering said to them, Do you suppose that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?* "Do you imagine that there was some extraordinary guilt which brought this judgment upon them, and that those who were spared may be supposed to have been more innocent than they were?"

3. *I tell you, No, but except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.* There would come upon them, also, because of their sin, a sudden and overwhelming calamity. When we read of the most dreadful things happening to men, we may conclude that something similar will happen to us if we are impenitent—if not in this world, yet in that which is to come!

4, 5. *Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them, do you think that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, No, but, except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.* [See Sermon #408, Volume 7—ACCIDENTS, NOT PUNISHMENTS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This was a foreshadowing of the overthrow of Jerusalem and the razing of its walls and towers to the ground which happened not long after. And even that overthrow of Jerusalem was but a rehearsal of the tremendous doom that shall come upon all who remain impenitent.

6. *He spoke also this parable: A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.* He had a right to seek fruit upon the tree, for it was planted where fruit bearing trees were growing and where it shared in the general culture that was bestowed upon all the trees in the vineyard.

7. *Then he said to the dresser of the vineyard, Behold, these three years I have been seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why let it cumber the ground?* This was sound reasoning. "It yields nothing, though it draws the goodness out of the ground and so injures those

trees that are producing fruit—'cut it down; why let it cumber the ground?'"

8-9. *And he answering said unto him, sir, let it alone this year, also, till I shall dig about it, and fertilize it: and if it bears fruit, well: and if not, then after that you shall cut it down.* [See Sermons #650, Volume 11—JUDGMENT THREATENING BUT MERCY SPARING and #1451-A, Volume 25—"THIS YEAR ALSO"—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] He asks for a respite, but only a limited one. "After that, you shall cut it down." If, after the trial of another year, it shall still be fruitless, then even the pleader will not ask for any further respite.

10, 11. *And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over, and could in no way straighten herself.* If she was there when Christ was speaking about the fruitless fig tree, I feel pretty certain that she said "That must mean me. I am the fruitless fig tree." But the Master did not mean her—He had other words and more cheering tidings for her!

12. *And when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him, and said unto her, Woman, you are loosened from your infirmity.* Oh, what glad news this must have been to her! How it must have thrilled her whole body! As she learned that she was to be restored to an upright position, what delight must have filled her heart!

13. *And He laid His hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.* What expressions of fervent gratitude! What notes of glad exultation came from that woman's joyful lips! Surely even cherubim and seraphim could not more heartily and earnestly praise God than she did when "she was made straight and glorified God."

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NOAH'S EMINENCE
NO. 3196

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 5, 1910.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 19, 1873.

"And the LORD said unto Noah, Come you and all your house into the ark, for you have I seen righteous before Me in this generation."
Genesis 7:1.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon, upon verses 1 and 7, is #1336 in, Volume 23—
A FAMILY SERMON—
Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

GOD keeps His eyes upon the sons of men and He searches among them for certain individuals upon whom He delights to fix His gaze. These are not the kings and princes. These are not the men of talent or of fashion. These are not the men who are regarded by their fellows as famous. When God speaks of having seen Noah, He speaks of having seen one of the kind of men for whom He was looking, namely, a righteous man. There is not a righteous man upon the earth whom God does not see. He may be in a very obscure position, his circumstances may be those of poverty, he may be anything but famous. But as long as he is righteous, God delights to look upon him. He looks upon him so as to take care of him so that if destruction is to come upon the face of the earth, an ark is to be prepared for the preservation of righteous Noah and his family. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry." Whoever else He does *not* see, He is sure to see the righteous! But "the face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth."

Now, what God delights to look upon, we should delight to look upon, so we will fix our mind's eye upon the righteous man mentioned in our text and notice, first, *the eminence of Noah's character.* Secondly, try to find out *wherein that eminence consisted.* And, thirdly, consider *the gracious reward given to him because of that eminence.*

I. So, first, we are to notice THE EMINENCE OF NOAH'S CHARACTER. He was a righteous man in the sight of the Lord. The Lord said unto Noah…"you have I seen righteous before Me in this generation."

Noah was a gracious man, one to whom the Lord had shown great favor for He had put divine grace in his heart and had given him faith, for it was by faith that Noah "prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." The grace of God was within him and became the

source and wellspring from which flowed the righteousness for which he was so remarkable. Divine grace is the root of every righteous character, so let grace have the honor and glory of it!

In the chapter preceding our text, we are told that "*Noah was a just man*." It is especially noticeable that in an age of violence and oppression, Noah was a just man. He was no oppressor. He dealt justly and fairly with his fellow men. Noah was also "perfect in his generations." The marginal reading is that he was "upright." He was not one who leaned this way for advantage, or who leaned that way for gain. He stood upright in conscious integrity before his fellows. Acting in accordance with the grace of God which was in his heart, he had learned to do that which was just towards others. He was also a devout man, for we read that "Noah walked with God." Like his ancestor, Enoch, he lived in communion with God, in prayerfulness and pious meditation—and his life before his fellow men was in consistency with that walk before God.

It is especially mentioned that *Noah was righteous in that generation*, and this is the more remarkable as that generation was so unrighteous and ungodly! The darker the night, the more brightly shine the stars—and good men are never more precious than in evil times! There are plenty to go the way the stream is running. When godliness is in the ascendant, and the Puritans rule the realm, they are Puritans, too, but when ungodliness comes to the front and the cavalier holds the scepter, they scoff at everything that is good! Like dead fish, they must go with the stream—they have not the power of the living fish to swim against the current. They go the way their neighbors go. But Noah was a righteous man in an unrighteous generation. It may be that you, dear friend, are seeking to serve the Lord among most ungodly men. Well, if it is so, be all the firmer for the right because of all the wrong that is around you! Remember how much honor it brings to the grace of God when it produces a righteous Noah in the midst of an evil generation. You, working man, are the only one on your street who comes to the house of God—well, mind that you come boldly—be not ashamed of being different! And when, in your workshop, you hear the cursing and reviling of the wicked, let them know whose colors you wear and who is your King. But be careful that your life is so consistent that they cannot pick holes in it—and then you need not mind being a speckled bird among them, as Noah was in his generation!

What makes the character of Noah all the more remarkable is the fact that *he was almost alone as a righteous man*. The Lord said to him, "You have I seen righteous before Me in this generation," as though he was the only righteous one in that generation! When the flood came, his ancestors had all passed away and the members of his own family were not all that they ought to have been. He practically had to stand alone and standing alone is not easy work. You know how we are all helped by the company of godly people, how good it is for us to be where God's word is preached with power, or where we can listen to the gracious talk of Christians who are more advanced in divine things than we are. But to

stand quite alone—to be the one white man amid a nation of aborigines, to be the one traveler in a land which all the inhabitants are your foes, to be in a community where there is no one to help you—it is only the grace of God that can make a man of this sort and enable him to say, "If the world, itself, is to be destroyed, one honest man shall be found upon its surface. The grace of God has so settled me in the fear of the Most High that whatever others may do, as for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

But the special point about Noah's character is that we are not only told that he was righteous, but that *he was righteous before God*. The Lord said to him, "You have I seen righteous before Me in this generation." As I have turned that expression over in my mind, I have thought of the various tribunals before which we all have to stand. And as I try to take you, in imagination, before them, one after another, I wonder how many of you will be able to pass them all and to endure the supreme test so that, like Noah, you may be righteous before God?

First of all, there is the common tribunal of ordinary society and public repute. I hope that without any conceit, the most of us can say that we believe we are reckoned as righteous by our fellow men. They trust us in business matters, they do not suspect us of dishonesty. We hope we have not given them occasion to do so. Yet, in so large an assembly as this, there may be some who dare not say that even in the opinion of their fellow men, they are righteous. And if it is so, my dear hearers—if you are justly condemned by your fellow creatures—how can you expect to stand before the tribunal of God? If you cannot dispute the justice of man's verdict, you may well tremble at the thought of appearing before the bar of God! You are evidently unrighteous but oh, thank God that there is a Savior for the unrighteous, "for when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." That last word describes you—you know that you could not stand without a degree of shame before those who are acquainted with your character. Well then, fall down upon your knees before God—tell Him that you are sinners, but also quote Paul's faithful saying that, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Do not be afraid to do so! Christ did not come to save sham sinners, but real sinners such as you are! Go to God in all your sinfulness, without first attempting to make yourselves better, and cast yourselves upon His infinite mercy in Christ Jesus!

There is another tribunal a little further on. A man may have a pretty good character among his fellow men who do not know him intimately, but how does he stand in the opinion of his more immediate friends? Those who know us well, those with whom we constantly trade, those whom we meet in our daily work—our employers, our servants, our fellow workers—what do they think of us? If any of them think badly of you because you try to do what you believe to be right, you need not mind that, but rather rejoice that you are counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake! But, on the other hand, if friends who judge you as favorably as

they can are obliged to regard you as far from upright, how will you stand before the all-seeing eyes of God? Let the painful fact that you do not stand well before those who know you drive you to humble yourself before the Lord and to seek pardon and peace through Jesus Christ, the sinner's Savior!

Suppose we have been able to pass these two barriers of public repute and our more immediate acquaintance? How do we stand in the inner circle at home? Occasionally, when I have spoken well of some young man or woman, I have been grieved to hear the parent stay, "I wish, sir, your judgment had been correct. My son (or daughter) may behave very well before strangers, but it is very different at home." Sometimes I have thought a good deal of certain men whom I have met here but I have afterwards discovered that they had brokenhearted wives whom they had not treated with the love and kindness they ought to have shown towards them. And I have also known professing Christian women who have not studied the comfort of their husbands and have not made their home the little paradise it ought to be. If we have a good character in the church, and a reputation for sanctity there, what is the verdict of those who know more about our private life? What is the verdict of the servant concerning his master? What is the judgment of the wife concerning her husband? What does the parent or the brother or sister say? I solemnly fear that there are many professors of religion who cannot pass this test—and I am deeply sorry when this is the case—for if there is any place where Christianity should be best seen, it is in the home circle! Rowland Hill used to say that he would not give a penny for the religion of the man whose cat and dog were not the better for it. And there is much good sense in that homely remark. I do not know anyone here whom this cap will fit, but if there is such a person, I hope he will put it on and wear it. This is the sum and substance of the matter—if our character cannot endure the scrutiny of those who are around us in our home, how can we hope to stand at the bar of God when all that we have done shall be published before the assembled universe?

Supposing that we can satisfactorily pass that ordeal, how do we stand before our enemies? "Before our enemies?" asks someone. Yes, for you remember what was said by the jealous presidents and princes of Babylon concerning Daniel, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." He was such a godly man that they could not find a flaw in his character however closely they examined him. There he stood fully clad in the armor of righteousness and before they could lay hold of him, they had to get their king to make a new law ordaining that any man who would pray should be cast into the den of lions. Look, too, at our Lord Jesus Christ when He was accused by His enemies—they brought various charges against Him, but they could not substantiate them. And even when they bribed two witnesses to give evidence against Him, even *they* did not agree with one another as to what He had said! His life had been so perfect that there was nothing that could be truthfully laid to His charge.

"Ah," says one, "that *is* a test, to live so that even our enemies cannot truthfully find any fault in us." It is no dishonor to a man to be wrongfully accused—it is rather a mark of honor to have bad men plotting against him—but it is a subject for gratitude to God when one can run the gauntlet of our enemies and remain unabashed before their cruel, wolfish eyes! They are always on the watch for anything wrong or inconsistent with a Christian profession. "Well," says one, "that is a test that I could not pass." If so, dear friend, remember this—there is no enemy whose eyes are as clear and as keen as those of God! Even the great archenemy could not detect a thousandth part of the imperfections and infirmities that lie open before the Most High! How important it must be, then, to be found righteous before God!

Then, further, I wonder whether all of us who profess to be Christians could pass the test of being adjudged righteous before our own conscience. I do not mean that we should be self-righteous—God forbid that we should ever be that! But I mean that we should have so lived that our own conscience would declare that we had not been hypocrites, nor liars, nor deceivers, but that, through the Lord's upholding and restraining grace, we had been true to our profession and had done that which we sincerely believed to be right. You remember how the Apostle John, taught of the Spirit, writes concerning this matter—"If our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart condemns us not, then have we confidence toward God." [See Sermons #1855, Volume 31—WHAT IS THE VERDICT? and #3152, Volume 55—THE LOWER COURTS—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Can we, all of us, pass this test? Happy and blessed are we if we can! But even then, we must remind ourselves and one another that there is a still sterner test which Noah was able to pass, for he was righteous before the Lord.

II. This brings us to the second part of our subject, in which we are to try to find out WHEREIN THE EMINENCE OF NOAH'S CHARACTER CONSISTED. He was distinguished for his righteousness before God, for the Lord expressly said to him, "You have I seen righteous before Me in this generation."

So the eminence of Noah's character consisted in this—*his righteousness must have answered to the divine standard*. God would not have called Noah righteous if he had not been righteous—and we cannot suppose that God's standard is anything short of perfection. Then did Noah live a perfect life? No, speaking popularly, and as the Scripture often speaks, we may say that Noah's character was a righteous one. There must have been flaws in it and, certainly, after this time, there was one great sad flaw of which it is not now necessary to speak more particularly—still, God regarded him as righteous—and that must settle the question as far as we are concerned.

Noah had the righteousness which is of faith, and that faith of his enabled him to look forward to Christ's atonement. Do you ask how I know

this? Well, when he came out of the ark, he "built an altar unto the Lord, and took of every clean beast, and of every clear fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar." Those sacrifices were acceptable unto the Lord, for He "smelled a sweet savor"—"a savor of rest"—in them, and they were among the many types of the one great sacrifice that was afterwards to be offered upon Calvary's cross. It was in this way that Noah's faith enabled him to look forward to Christ as the sin atoning Lamb of God. And his faith, like that of Abraham, "was counted unto him for righteousness." God looked upon him, in Christ, as a perfectly righteous man—and his righteous life was the experiment and outflow of the inward righteousness which God had imputed to him in answer to his faith. He was righteous before God, and no man was ever that in his own naked character! Job's friend, Bildad, said concerning God, "The stars are not pure in His sight. How much less man, that is a worm? And the son of man, which is a worm?"

I have set forth the character of Noah before you and commended it to the utmost. Yet I know that in the sight of God, the patriarch's character was not, in itself, perfect. There must have been innumerable imperfections, infirmities, and faults which God's omniscient eyes could see in it. How, then, could he be said to be righteous before God? Why, God looked at him in Christ! He became heir of the righteousness which is by faith, or, as Paul puts it, he was "accepted in the Beloved." Then, in consequence of that acceptance, he was "righteous" in the modified sense in which all the Lord's people are righteous when the grace of God has taught them to walk uprightly and so made them, at least in a measure, like their righteous Father who is in heaven!

But let me add to this, in order to clear the gospel of anything like legal defilement, that the eminence of Noah's character appears in the fact that *he was righteous before God*, that is to say, his righteousness had respect to God. When he dealt with his neighbors, he did not say to himself, "Now I must deal righteously with these men, or I shall lose my reputation as an honest, upright man." Oh, no! He dealt righteously with men because he desired to be righteous before God. He did not ask himself, "What will my neighbors think or say concerning the building of the ark?" His great concern was to be obedient to the commands that the Lord had given him and, therefore, we read again and again, "according to all that God commanded him, so did he." He fashioned his life by the will of God, not by the will of his fellow men, nor by his own will and, beloved, this is the way for us to be righteous before God, when He brings us, by His grace, to desire to live according to His will and to His praise and glory! I fear that many professors go blundering on, not stopping to pray, "Lord, show us what You will have us do." Noah did not act thus—he was righteous before God, righteous with respect to God, righteous in God's sight!

I would like to have, in this Tabernacle, a band of men and women who will be just and fear not. Who will do the right even though all others are opposed to them, or though no one else shall know anything

about it. Are any of you seeking to please men by your religion? If so, such religion is of little or no worth. Be not the servants of men, but the servants of God! Take your orders from Him and from Him alone. Do not shape your course and character according to the fashion of society. If you are truly born of God, you belong to a noble race which should never stoop to such degradation as that, so be righteous before the Lord! You have already had the righteousness of Christ imputed to you, so may the Spirit of God impart that righteousness to you that you may live unto God, and before God, fearless and careless of what men may say against you so long as you are right in the sight of the Most High! May the Lord graciously give us such a righteousness as this! And, beloved, we must have it, we must have it, for without holiness shall no man see the Lord! Our own righteousness can never save us—we must have the righteousness of Christ!

But remember that we must be purified in heart, character and conduct, or else, where God is we cannot go. How searching will be that test which we shall have to endure at the last! When we are judged by our fellow man, they may be deceived—but when we shall be judged by God, He will never be deceived. Men may accept fair words as signs and tokens of divine grace, but God will not so much regard our words as read our hearts! If men hear us pray, they say, "What good men they must be." Yet God knows what hypocrisy may be lurking behind those pretty sentences! Men judge us by our actions, but God can read the motives that prompted us to those actions. You know how righteous men have appeared to be in the eyes of their fellow men, yet they have proved to be false after all. God grant that none of us may ever be like that, but may we have a character that will bear holding up to the light of God, a character concerning which, when the eyes of God examine it, He will say, "Here is truth in the inward parts. My Spirit has worked truth and integrity within this heart and life—this man is weighed in the balances, and is not found wanting." I am speaking these solemn words to myself, to the deacons and elders around me, and to you who have long professed to be Christians—not to you outsiders, but to the very best people here. None of us are any better than we ought to be and I cannot help fearing that some of us are not what we seem to be. Do not let us imagine that what we seem to be in the sight of our fellow creatures will have any weight in the judgment of God! We may be reckoned righteous by our neighbors and friends, but if we are not washed in the precious blood of Jesus, if we are not robed in the righteousness of Christ, if our lives have not within them the evidences of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, our friends' favorable judgment will avail us nothing when the all-seeing eyes of God beholds us as we really are! I pray with all my heart that we may, each one of us, be righteous before God even as Noah was in his generation.

III. I have no time left for dealing with the third part of my subject which was to have been THE GRACIOUS REWARD GIVEN TO NOAH BECAUSE OF THE EMINENCE OF HIS CHARACTER.

You all know that the Lord will bless the righteous forever and ever, but the great question that we all have to answer is, *are we righteous*? Oh, what searching sermons, what tremendous blows hypocrites will endure without showing a sign of feeling anything! I usually notice that if I preach a sermon that is more than ordinarily searching, there are sure to be some tenderhearted souls crying out at the close that they are hypocrites. Dear creatures, I wish I had no hearers more hypocritical than they are! Those who take such discourses most to heart are often those who have the least reason for doing so, while the real hypocrite is no more moved by it than is the marble in our baptistery! I might almost point him out with my finger, for he would not stir—he would be as bold and brazen as Judas was when he sat with the rest of the apostles just before going out to betray his Lord. Oh, the dreadful presumption, the terrible hardness of heart to which men may come! Lest this should be the case with any of us, let us, each one, now pray David's prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Let each one also pray, "Lord, let me know the truth about my case! Let me neither be self-deceived nor a deceiver of others! Let me know the worst of my case! Open my eyes even though the sight of my petition before you should be horrible to the last degree! Do not let me go down to hell dreaming that I am going to heaven! Let me know what I really am—and if my heart has never been broken, break it now! If I have never been washed in the precious blood of Jesus, wash me in it now! Jesus, the sinner's Savior, I come to You this moment. I cast my arms around Your cross, O frown me not away! Look in mercy and love upon me and tell me that my sins, which are many, are all forgiven."

Let the most trembling soul in this whole congregation cling to the cross, crying to Him who hung upon it—

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Your cross I cling.
Naked, come to You for dress.
Helpless, look to You for grace.
Foul, I to the fountain fly—
Wash me, Savior, or I die!"

If we cannot cling to Christ's cross as the sailor clings to the mast, let us cling as the limpet clings to the rock—and the more the devil tries to detach us from it, the more closely let us cling to it. Let us come either as saints or sinners, whichever we may be, to the foot of the cross and look up at that dear head crowned with thorns and those blessed hands and feet and side so rudely pierced and, as by faith, we see the precious sin atoning blood flowing from the Savior's cruel wounds, let us each one sing as we have often done before—

"There is a fountain filled with blood,

Drawn from Emmanuel's veins
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains!
The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day,
Oh may I there, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away!"

Then, though you have not, up to now, been righteous before God as Noah was, you shall be so for the future! The blood of Christ and the righteousness of Christ shall make you so! And then a new heart and a right spirit shall be given to you—God's own Spirit shall be put within you and God shall be glorified in you even as He was in righteous Noah! May it be so, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GENESIS 7.

Verse 1. *And the LORD said unto Noah, Come you and all your house into the ark.* Notice that the Lord did not say to Noah, "Go into the ark," but, "Come," plainly implying that God was, Himself, in the ark, waiting to receive Noah and his family into the big ship that was to be their place of refuge while all the other people on the face of the earth were drowned. The distinctive word of the gospel is a drawing word—"Come." Jesus says, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And He will say to His people at the last, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "Depart" is the word of justice and judgment, but, "Come," is the word of mercy and grace! "The Lord said unto Noah, Come you and all your house into the ark"—

1. *For I have seen you are righteous before Me in this generation.* Therefore God drew a distinction between him and the unrighteous, for He always has a special regard for godly people.

2, 3. *Of every clean beast you shall take to you by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female. Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth.* Of the clean creatures which might be offered in sacrifice to God you see that there was a larger proportion than there was of the unclean, that there might be a sufficient amount for sacrifice without the destruction of any species. The unclean beasts were mostly killers and devourers of others and, therefore, their number was to be less than that of the clean species. Oh, that the day might soon come when there would be more of clean men and women than of unclean, when there would be fewer sinners than godly people in the world, though even then there would be the ungodly "by two" like the unclean beasts.

4. *For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I*

destroy from off the face of the earth. It is the prerogative of the king to have the power of life and death, and it is the sole prerogative of the King of kings that—

"He can create and He destroys."

But what destructive power is brought into operation because of human sin! Sin must be a very heinous thing, since God, who despises not the work of His own hands, will sooner break up the human race and destroy everything that lives rather than that sin should continue to defile the earth! He has destroyed the earth once by water because of sin and He will the second time destroy it by fire for the same reason. Wherever sin is, God will hunt it. With barbed arrows will He shoot at it. He will cut it in pieces with His sharp two edged sword, for He cannot endure sin. Oh, how foolish are they who harbor it in their bosoms, for it will bring destruction to them if they keep it there!

5. *And Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him.* Here was positive *proof* of his righteousness, in that he was obedient to the word of the Lord! A man who does not obey God's commands may talk about righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith, but it is clear that he does not possess it, for faith works by love—and the righteousness which is by faith is proved by obedience to God. "Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him," and so proved that he was righteous before God.

6. *And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth.* He was nearly 500 years old when he began to preach about the flood—a good old age to take up such a subject! For a 120 years he pursued his theme—three times as long as most men are ever able to preach! And now, at last, God's time of long suffering is over and He proves the truthfulness of the testimony of His servant by sending the flood that Noah had foretold.

7, 8. *And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood. Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of everything that creeps upon the earth.* This largest and most complete collection that was ever gathered together was not collected by human skill—divine power, alone, could have accomplished such a task as that.

9. *There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and female, as God had commanded Noah.* They "went in." Noah had not to hunt or search for them, but they came according to God's plan and purpose, even as, concerning the salvation which is by Christ Jesus, His people shall be willing to come to Him in the day of His power—with joyfulness shall they come into the ark of their salvation!

10, 11. *And it came to pass after seven days that the waters of the flood were upon the earth. In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up and the windows of heaven were opened.* Perhaps the world was in its prime, when the trees were in bloom, and the birds were singing in their branches, and the flowers

were blooming on the earth, "the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up and the windows of heaven were opened."

12-13. *And the rain was upon the earth forty day and forty nights. In the same day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark.* These eight persons are very carefully mentioned. "The Lord knows them that are His." "And they shall be Mine, says the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up"—or, shut up—"my jewels," as He was about to do in this case. In similar fashion, God makes a very careful enumeration of all those who believe in Him—precious are they in His sight—and they shall be preserved when all others are destroyed!

14. *They and every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort.* "Every bird of every sort," that is, every kind of bird! They are all mentioned again. God makes much of salvation, oh, that we also did! We may recount and rehearse the story of our rescue from universal destruction—and we need not be afraid or ashamed of repeating it. As the Holy Spirit repeats the words we have here, you and I may often proclaim the story of our salvation and dwell upon the minute particulars of it, for every item of it is full of instruction!

15, 16. *And they went to Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life. And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in.* [See Sermons #3042, Volume 53—THE PARABLE OF THE ARK and #1613, Volume 27—SHUT IN OR SHUT OUT—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Now the jewels are all in and, therefore, the casket is closed!

17. *And the flood was forty days upon the earth.* Just as it had been foretold, for God's providence always tallies with His promises or with His threats. "Has He said, and shall He not do it?"

17. *And the waters increased, and lifted up the ark, and it was lifted up above the earth.* You can see it begin to move until it is afloat. The same effect is often produced on us—when the flood of affliction is deep, then we begin to rise. Oh, how often have we been lifted up above the earth by the very force that threatened to drench and drown us! David said, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted," and many another saint can say that he never was lifted up until the floods were out, but then he left the worldliness with which he had been satisfied before and he began to rise to a higher level than he had previously attained.

18-19. *And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the water. And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills that were under the whole heaven, were covered.* If Moses had meant to describe a partial deluge upon only a small part of the earth, he used very misleading language! But if he meant to teach that the deluge was universal, he used

the very words which we might have expected that he would use. I should think that no person, merely by reading this chapter, would arrive at the conclusion that has been reached by some of our very learned men—too learned to hold the simple truth of God! It looks as if the deluge must have been universal when we read that not only did the waters prevail exceedingly upon the earth, but that "all the high hills that were under the whole heaven"—that is, all beneath the canopy of the sky, "were covered." What could be more plain and clear than that?

20-23. *Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth, and every man: all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land died. And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah, only, remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.* This is the counterpart of what will follow the preaching of the gospel—those who are in Christ shall live, shall rise, and reign with Him forever—but none of those who are outside of Christ shall live. "Noah, only, remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark."

24. *And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days.*

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THE SWEETNESS OF GOD'S WORD
NO. 3197

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 12, 1910.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT UPTON CHAPEL, LAMBETH,
ON TUESDAY AFTERNOON, MARCH 12, 1867.

"How sweet are Your words to my taste!
Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"
Psalm 119:103.

IT is delightful to find how exactly the experience of David, under the Jewish dispensation, tallies with the experience of the saints of God in these gospel times. David lived in an age of miracles and many manifestations. He could have recourse to the Urim and the Thummim, and the priesthood. He could go up to Zion and listen to the holy songs of the great assembly. He could converse with the priesthood but still, the food of his soul was supplied to him from the written Word of God, just as it is with us. Now that we have no open visions and the Urim, and the Thummim and the priesthood are altogether departed, we still feed upon the Word of God! As that is the food of our souls, so it was the food of David's soul. Martin Luther says, "I have covenanted with the Lord that I would neither ask Him for visions, nor for angels, nor for miracles, but I would be satisfied with His own word, and if I might but lay hold upon Scripture by faith, that shall be enough for me." Now it seems to be so with David here. The honey that gratifies his taste is not found in angels' visits, or miraculous signs, or officiating priesthoods, or special revelations, but in the words of God's mouth and in the testimonies of Holy Writ. Let us, dear brothers and sisters, prize this book of God! Be not ambitious, as some are, of seeking new revelations, or inquire for the whispers of disembodied spirits, but be satisfied with this good household bread which God has prepared for His people! And while others may loathe and dislike it, let us be thankful for it and acknowledge with gratitude the bread which came down from heaven, testifying to us, as it does, of the Lord Jesus, the word of life that lives and abides forever!

I. Notice, first, THE WORD APPRECIATED. This exclamation of David is a clear proof that he set the highest possible value upon the Word of God. The evidence is more valuable because the Scripture that David had was but a slender book compared with this volume which is now before us. I suppose he had little more than the five books of Moses, and yet as he opened that Pentateuch, which was to him complete in itself, he said, "How sweet are Your words to my taste!" If that first morsel so satisfied

the Psalmist, surely this fuller and richer feast of heavenly dainties ought to be yet more gratifying to us! If, when God had but given him the first dish of the course, and that by no means the best, his soul was ravished with it—how should you and I rejoice with unspeakable joy, now that the King has brought on royal dainties and given us the revelation of His dear Son! Think a minute. The Pentateuch is what we would call, nowadays, the historical part of Scripture—and haven't you frequently heard persons say, "Oh, the sermon was historical, and the minister read a passage out of the historical part of the word"? I have, with great pain, heard persons speak in a very depreciating manner of the histories of Holy Writ. Now, understand this—the part of the word which David loved so much *is* mainly historical—and if the mere history of the word was so sweet, what ought those holy evangels and sacred epistles to be which declare the mystery of that narrative—which are the honey whereof the Old Testament is but the comb—which are the treasures of which the Old Testament is but the casket? Surely we are to be condemned, indeed, who do not prize the word now that we have it all!

That Word of God which David so much prized was mainly typical, shadowy, symbolical. I do not know that he understand it all. I *do* know that he understood *some* of it, for some of his Psalms are so evangelical that he must have perceived the great sacrifice of God foreshadowed in the sacrifices described in the books of Numbers and Leviticus, or it would not have been possible that he would, in so marvelous a style, express his faith in the great offering of our Lord Jesus! I put it to some professors here, do you often read the types at all? If, now, your Bible was so circumscribed that all was taken from you but the Pentateuch, would you be able, to say, "Your word is sweet to my taste?" Are not many of us so little educated in God's word that if we were confined to the reading of that part of it, we would be obliged to confess it was unprofitable to us? We could not give a good answer to Philip's question, "Do you understand what you are reading?" Oh, shame on us that with so many more books, and with the Holy Spirit so plentifully given to guide us into all the truth of God, we should seem to value at least half of the Word of God even less than David did!

A great portion of the Pentateuch is taken up with precepts, and I may say of some of them that they are grievous. Those commandments which are binding upon us are not grievous. Some of the commands of Leviticus and Deuteronomy are so complex and so entrenched upon the whole domestic life of a man that they were a yoke of bondage, according to Peter, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear. Yet, that wondrous 20th chapter of Exodus with its Ten Commandments, and all the long list of the precepts of the ceremonial law which you may, perhaps, account wearisome to read, David says were sweet to his taste, sweeter than honey to his mouth! What? Did he so love to hear His heavenly Father speak that it did not much matter to him what He said as long as He did but speak, for the music of His voice was gladdening in its every tone

to him? Now that you and I know that all the bondage of the ceremonial law is gone, that nothing remains of it but blessing to our souls—and now that we are not under the law, but under grace—and have become inheritors of rich and precious and unspeakably great promises, how is it that we fall so far short and do not, I fear, love the Word of God to anything like the degree that David loved it?

David here speaks of all God's words, without making any distinction concerning some one of them. So long as it was God's word, it was sweet to him, whatever form it might take. Alas, this is not true of all professors. With an unwise partiality, they pronounce some of God's words very sweet, but other portions of God's truth are rather sour and unsavory to their palates. There are persons of a certain class who delight in the doctrines of grace. Therein they are to be commended, for which of us do not delight in them if we know our interest in them? The covenant and the great truths of God which grow out of the covenant—these are unspeakably precious things and are rightly enough the subjects of joy to all believers who understand them! Yet certain of these persons will be as angry as though you had touched them with a hot iron if you should bring a precept anywhere near them—and if you insist upon anything being the duty of a believer, the very words seem to sting them like a whip—they cannot endure it! If you speak of the "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord," and speak of it as a holiness which is worked in us by God the Holy Spirit and as a holiness of mind and thought and action—a personal holiness which is to be seen in the daily life—they are offended. They can say, "How sweet are Your doctrinal words to my taste, but not Your precepts, Lord! Those I do not love. Those I call legal. If your servants minister them, I say they are engineering bondage and I go away from them, and leave them to Arminians, or duty faith men or something of that kind—for I love half Your word and only half of it." Alas, there are not a few of that class to be found here and there. And there are some who go on the other side! They love God's word in the precepts of it, or the promises, but not the doctrines. If a doctrine is preached, they say it is dangerous—too high—it will elevate some of God's servants to presumption! It will tempt them to think lightly of moral distinctions! It will lead them to walk carelessly because they know they are safe in Christ! Thus they, too, only love half of the truth of God, and not the whole of it. But, my dear brothers and sisters, I hope you are of the same mind as David. If God shall give you a promise, you will taste it, like a wafer of honey, and feed on it. And if He shall give you a precept, you will not stop to look at it, and say, "Lord, I don't like this as well as the promise," but you will receive *that* and feed upon *that* also! And when the Lord shall be pleased afterwards to give you some revelation with regard to your inward experience, or to your fellowship with His dear Son, you welcome it with joy because you love any truth and every truth as long as you know it to be the truth of God's own word!

It is a blessed sign of grace in the heart when God's words are sweet to us as a whole—when we love the truth of God, not cast into a system or a shape, but as we find it in God's word. I believe that no man who has yet lived has ever proposed a system of theology which comprises all the truth of God's word. If such a system had been possible, the discovery of it would have been made for us by God, Himself—certainly it would if it had been desirable and useful for our profit and holiness. But it has not pleased God to give us a body of divinity—let us receive it as He has given it, each truth in its own proportion—each doctrine in harmony with its fellow—each precept carefully carried out into practice and each promise to be believed and, by and by, received. Let the truth of God, and the whole truth of God, be sweet to our taste! "How sweet are *Your* words!" There seems to be an emphasis on the pronoun, "How sweet are *Your* words!" O my God, if the words are Yours, they are sweet to me! Had they come to me from the prophet and I had perceived them to be merely the words of man, I might then have estimated them at their own weight, without reference to their authority. But when my Father speaks—when the Spirit lives and breathes in the truth to which I listen—when Jesus Christ, Himself, draws near to me in the preaching of the gospel—then it is that the word becomes sweet to my taste! Beloved, let us not be satisfied with the truth unless we can also feel it to be God's truth! Let us ask the Lord to enable us, when we open this book, to feel that we are not reading it as we read a common book—truths put there by some means, unimportant to us how—but let us recollect that we are reading the truth of God put there by an inspired pen! That we have there God's truth such as He would have us receive—such as He thought it worth His while to write and to preserve to all ages for our instruction.

The Psalmist is not content to say, "God's word is sweet, and sweeter than honey," but, "How sweet are Your words to *my* taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to *my* mouth!" After all, the blessedness of the word is a matter to be ascertained by personal experience. Let others choose this philosophy and that form of thought. Let then gad abroad after the beauties of poetry, or dote upon the charms of oratory—my palate shall be satisfied with Your word, O God, and my soul shall find an excess of sweetness in the things which come from Your mouth into my mouth!

The Word of God, then, while in itself certainly most sweet, and all the sweeter when we recognize it as coming from God, will only be sweet to us in proportion as we are able to receive it and to feed upon it. Every man must in this case feed for himself. There can be no proxy here. I wonder not at those who think lightly of God's Word, notwithstanding the rapturous admiration they have heard expressed by others, for unless they have tasted it, and felt and handled it, they still must be strangers to its unspeakable sweetness!

II. Now we shall notice, in the second place, THIS TASTE GRATIFIED.

If we can join in the words of David here, how grateful we ought to be, for there was a time when we had no such taste for God's Word! A few

years ago, God's word was so far from being sweet to us that we thought it the driest book that was ever written. It is not so now. We were then dead in trespasses and sins—and what is honey in a dead man's mouth? But we are alive unto God now by Jesus Christ, being quickened by the Spirit. Remember, my brothers and sisters, how divine grace has made you to differ from the most of men. Many who see the dainties of God's word pass them by. Like those poor hungry children that we have seen standing outside a shop where the savory meat is just within the window—they can see it and smell it—but they cannot eat it. Many of our hearers have sense enough to perceive that there is something in the Bible that is very satisfying and nourishing. They see it with their eyes, but, like the unbelieving lord in the city of Samaria, they taste not of it themselves. Yes, and there are some who are so far gone—and we were like that once—that they have no wish to taste, for their palate has become so depraved that they feed upon ashes, a deceived heart turning them aside! Like the raven which has no longing for the clean feeding of the dove, they are content with the carrion of the world. Like the swine, they are satisfied with the husks and they pine not to be fed with the children's bread. Such were some of us—utterly disregarding the word, or seeing it to be a good thing, but not able to gain it, or else accounting it to be a mere deception, turning from it to the joys of earth as if *they* could satisfy the soul! Oh, blessed change, divine renewal, which has passed upon us, that now the word should be sweet!

I remember well the time when I had spiritual life and yet God's word was not sweet to me. When God first gives us a spiritual taste, He does not make His word sweet, but rather, if I may so say, salt or bitter. The first taste of the true Word of God I ever got was like Jeremiah's draught of wormwood. It seemed to break my teeth as with gravel stones. It was none other than this, "The soul that sins, it shall die." Did you ever have that in your mouth and have to turn it over and over again as a bitter morsel that you could not swallow? And when at last it did seem to be swallowed, it was like wormwood in your soul and bitterness filled every part and portion of your being, for you felt yourself a sinner, all undone, lost and ruined! Oh, it was a blessed thing when standing at the foot of the cross, and calling upon the name of the Lord, you could wash your mouth clear of those bitter aloes of repentance and conviction of sin with the cup of consolation—the cup of salvation! After that first bitter draught which purged the mouth so divinely and made it ready to receive the sweetness of the word, then it was that on one happy day, looking up and seeing the flowing of the precious blood, you perceived your mouth to be filled with honey, instead of vinegar, for you saw the vinegar transferred to Christ and the gall and the wormwood given to Him, while you drank of the "wines on the lees," yes, "the wines on the lees, well refined."

Since that day, our taste has been satisfied more and more, for it has been a growing taste. It has been educated. We can now discern between

things that differ. On our conversion, almost everything was sweet. There was a good deal of false doctrine put into the cup, yet we swallowed it all, for to a hungry man, even a bitter thing is sweet! But now our palate has been disciplined to discern between things that differ. But all the education, if it is worth anything, comes to this—that God's word daily becomes more sweet and man's word daily becomes more bitter to us. Our soul is taught more and more of divine things and we see more and more of the preciousness of the truth of God as it is in Jesus. Every Christian who has a spiritual taste will tell you that his taste is gratified with every Word of God because he sees something in the word which glorifies God. My dear brothers and sisters, whenever you hear a sermon in which our God is spoken well of and His glory is set before you, are you not happy? Do you not go from the place of worship and say, "Thank God I was there! God was in the midst of the temple. The Word of God was preached and my heart is satisfied"? And, on the other hand, whenever you hear a sermon in which man is magnified and the nobility of human nature is held up and God is put anywhere or nowhere, how do you feel about that? I am certain that you say, "That word which only glorifies such a poor fallen creature as man, my soul abhors."

God's word honors His dear Son! I am sure I shall touch one string in your hearts when I say if the preacher shall discourse of Christ—if he shall ring the silver bell of the Savior's precious name and lift up His cross, and tell you all the power of His blood, the love of His heart, the shame of His death, the glory of His resurrection, the prevalence of His plea before the throne and the certainty of His ultimate victory over all His foes—your lips will seem as though you had some dainty on your palate and you will go home, and say—

"The King Himself came near
To feast His saints today!"

How often, before you have left the place, have you been willing to sing with Watts—

"My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this!"

But suppose you listen to a sermon in which Jesus Christ is *not* glorified—doubts thrown upon His deity—insinuations made about the power of His blood—the substitutionary sacrifice twisted into a misty problem—whether an atonement or not an atonement, you could not tell—how do you feel then? Why, anything which touches Christ touches the apple of your eye! You say to the preacher, "Your oratory may be ever so fine, but I cannot eat at your table. You may lay silver knives and forks, and spread many a precious thing before me, but your meat is poison! I cannot feed if you do not glorify Christ." O Lord, this is the reason why Your word is so sweet to the palate of Your children—it glorifies Your dear Son and they delight to see Him honored among the sons of men!

God's word is sweet, too, when it proves the presence and discovers the influence of the Holy Spirit. If you hear a sermon in which the Spirit

is worshiped and glory is given to Him as one person in the blessed Trinity, the word is then sweet to your taste! It is a mark of the child of God that he reverences and esteems that Spirit by whom he is sanctified. If the preaching is never about the Spirit of God—if He is systematically ignored till we can almost say, "We knew not even whether there was a Holy Spirit"—I do not wonder that barrenness and leanness should come into the souls of those who frequent such a ministry! The Word of God is communicated by the Holy Spirit and by the same Spirit it must be ministered to us. Even after His resurrection, it was through the Holy Spirit that Christ gave commandments unto His apostles. As it was given, so it must be received, not in words, only, but in power and demonstration of the Spirit—and so shall it be sweet to your taste!

Moreover, God's word is always pure and holy. It is shocking if there is anything in the preaching that tends to make light of sin. Whenever I read a theological treatise, I can tell it is unsound if it trifles with the guilt of sin, the claims of justice, or the supremacy of the divine law. Under the pretense of magnifying grace, some will dare to say that such and such a sin is not what it is thought to be, or not so heinous in God's people as it would be in others! They speak of sin in God's people as if it were only a spot, instead of a mortal disease. Oh, we have known some use expressions in the pulpit not only flippant and vulgar, but verging on the impure! That is enough to make the child of God feel like a sensitive plant when it is touched—he shrivels up. You never find anything like that in God's word! There are some things in our common version which do not suit the common ear, and should not be there, because they are not necessary to a faithful rendering of the original—but there is nothing that will ever touch the delicacy of the child of God. The pure in heart can say, "How sweet is Your Word to my taste, because there is nothing there that can shock my sanctified judgment or lead me to find fault with it because of its dealing triflingly with sin."

The Word of God will always be sweet to the Christian because it so completely quickens him to every good thing when it comes in contact with him. I am sure, brothers and sisters, when you hear the Word of God faithfully preached, or read it with devout appreciation, you rise up like giants refreshed with new wine! What would we do if it were not for the quickening which this book sometimes gives us? I must confess that I sometimes seem to spring up as from a bed of sloth, quickened and filled with more energy than I ever had before when I have been touched with a single promise, or the power of a single precept! I have heard of the dead member of an animal—perhaps the dead foot of a frog—being touched with the galvanic wire of the battery, and as soon as the galvanism flows into it, the limb has been animated by the energy. Now, we do not receive a galvanic energy from the Word of God, but we get *real life from it* by which we, whose souls seem to be dead, suddenly start up with a divine power! To be lethargic in heavenly things must always be un-

pleasant to the Christian. That which makes a man serve God with the fullest liberty and the greatest excellence is being quickened with the Word of God—therefore the Word of God must be always sweet to his taste!

III. And now, thirdly, see here THE SWEETNESS EXTOLLED.

David does not tell us how sweet God's words are. He gives us a note of exclamation, the word, "*How*!" and there he leaves it, as though he had tried to fathom the depth in vain and could only say, like the apostle, "O, the depth!" "How sweet are Your Words to my taste!" He tried, however, to give us some gauge when he gave us a comparison—"Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth." And that shall be the keynote which I will try to strike. Why is this Word of God to us sweeter than honey?

Honey is reputed to be the sweetest of all earthly things, yet you will discover that the Word of God is sweeter than that. Let me speak experimentally. It is a happy thing to be successful in the work of God and to win souls. I think that is the sweetest of all earthly enjoyments. I have sometimes seen 20 or 30 persons in a day, most of whom have found peace under my own ministry. Well, that is sweet, isn't it? But I am distinctly aware that the Word of God is sweeter, for when I have felt happy over my success, I have felt happier by far over some precious promise or some delightful doctrine of inspiration. I have thought I heard the Master say to me, when I had brought souls to Him, what He said to the disciples when they worked miracles, "Rejoice not in this; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." The thought of my election, or of my redemption, or of the glory of Christ, or of the faithfulness of God has been distinctly sweeter than the former sweetness which I had. There are things in the world that are very white. Some good housewives have made the linen look so delicately white that they have supposed that nothing could be whiter! And then there has come a fall of snow and, in contrast, the fairest and whitest damask has seemed dark! So, the joy of winning souls, the joy of domestic love, the joy of having served God has been like the damask of the housewife—but get a promise of God's word, and in comparison that will be like the snow which is whiter still! All the sweetness you can get from earthly joy will be exceeded by the sweetness of an applied promise from the Word of God. It is "sweeter than honey."

The word is sweeter than honey because it will sweeten every kind of bitter, and there are many sorts of bitter which honey will not take out of your mouth. You may feel the honey striving with the bitter, and the effect will be a singular combination of flavor more horrible than the bitter itself. It is never so with God's word. Let a man have his mouth full of bitter poverty, or the more bitter draught of scandal and contempt—ah, let his mouth be full of the last bitter draught of death—and if he gets the words of God sent home to his soul, death, itself, shall be swallowed up in victory! In the pleasure he shall lose the smart! In the divine words of God to his spirit he shall scarcely know that there is such a thing as

pain or grief, or even death, for all these things shall be gain to him when his faith gets full hold upon the oath and covenant of the ever living God!

It is sweeter than honey, because God's truth never wearies. You cannot eat much honey. If you want to like it, only eat a little of it, for if you eat much, you will soon come to think, 'What a weariness it is!" It saturates the palate. Not so God's word! You may suck as you will, but you shall never have too much out of the breast of Scriptures. Here you can come and drop your bucket every morning and night, but you shall never draw too much from this well, whose cool depths supply an ever crystal stream! Oh, come to the banquet, you hungry ones, and never think to rise from that table, but sit there till your souls shall be taken away to a table yet more richly furnished! Feast on with appetites whose edges are always keen. It fell to this lot of one of our missionaries, in translating the Word of God into a very difficult language, to have to read one passage over a hundred times—a very laborious process, if anything would exhaust the sweetness of the word—but he said that after the hundredth time, he began to understand it. He felt, then, as if he was just beginning to read it! This is a pasture where the grass grows the faster the more the sheep eat of it. This is a mine where the gold increases the deeper your researches become. You may keep on eating of the word year after year, but still you will never get tired of it! I suppose the most of us would not like to have the same thing for dinner every day. And if we are confined to one form of diet, we get weary of it. There are some of you who knew the Lord when you were 11 or twelve, and some at 15 or twenty, and I perceive that years have passed over your heads till you have got to be 50 or sixty—but do you want a new gospel now? Would you like to have another form of doctrine, another system of theology, another cross to trust to, or something in lieu of the atonement by the precious blood? "Oh, no," I think I hear you say, "the longer we live, the more we are fastened to the old faith! The deeper we study, the heavier our trials, the faster we cleave to Christ—

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

And, verily, the Word of God puts the mouth in taste. Some things are sweet in the mouth if the mouth is sweet, but if the palate is out of taste, you cannot get the flavor of them. But the Word of God cleans the mouth for you and though a man of God may find himself as much out of sorts as he can be, if he needs to get his mouth in proper order for feasting on the Word of God, he need not go anywhere else but to the word, itself! The idea of preparing ourselves for Christ is not a gospel idea. The idea of preparing our minds for the gospel by thinking about something else always seems to me unnatural. If your minds are inactive, go and read a good stirring part of God's word and that will prepare you for another

part—for the word will act first as a tonic to give an appetite and will afterwards be a food upon which that appetite can be satisfied!

Yet honey, with all its sweetness, may be forgotten. But the Word of God, if we once know its sweetness, will abide with us forever. Let your child eat honey to its heart's content, yet the flavor of it will not be in his mouth in a week's time. So, too, have some of us retained the flavor of the honey we got 15 years ago. "Ah," says David, "I will remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." I do not know how many years that was, but some of us can remember times of communion and refreshing from the presence of the Lord ten, fifteen, or, perhaps, 40 years ago! When Christ spread His flavor upon your soul, no sweetness was so sweet and you have the sense of it now! You like to talk of those seasons of delight, and you think—

"Did Jesus once upon me shine?
Then Jesus is forever mine!"

Thus you get back the sweetness of the honey and the recollection of what you once knew of it.

I gather, from what I know of God's word, that all we know of it is very little. When we get to heaven, I imagine it will be among our surprises to find what fools we are. When young men go to college, they think they know a great deal. And after the first year, they think they don't know as much as they did. I recollect hearing my grandfather say that in the second year he was at college, he thought he was a fool. And in the third year he knew he was, and then the tutor thought he might get out. That is one of the things that we shall find out in heaven—"Oh, what a fool I was! I thought I knew everything." Those of us who preach to others will be of the same mind as Rutherford, who says that the poorest child who has once passed the veil and come into the immortal state, knows more of heavenly things than the most learned divine who has lived for 60 years to teach others the way of salvation. What we get in the wilderness is only just one bunch from Eshcol—we have not come into the valley where all the clusters grow. They have got us a little balm, and a little oil, and a few almonds from the land, but the land itself flows with milk and honey. "Since we have tasted of the grapes," we sometimes long to go—

"Where our dear Lord, the vineyard keeps,
And all the clusters grow."

But it is amazing how little we know about it—how little sweetness we ever enjoy! And yet, little as it is, it is so sweet that it makes us hold up our hands and say with amazement, "How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

Hereby our growth in grace may be ascertained. Is God's word very sweet to me this day? Is it like honey to my mouth? Very many of God's children cannot say this. They can say it as a general rule, but not, perhaps, at the very moment of their present experience. It is a pretty sure sign of growth in spiritual life if God's word is sweeter to us than it used to be. The sweetness of some parts of God's word we can only know by

being placed in circumstances where we shall understand the application of such and such a promise to our case. The man who never has any sickness, who has no losses in business—whose course is always one even stream—cannot, I am sure, understand some of the promises that are especially meant for the tried people of God. You cannot see the stars in the daytime, but I am told that if you went down a well, even in the daytime, you could see them from there. God often takes His people down the well of affliction and then they can see the stars of the promises. Some of the promises are written in invisible ink—and if you hold the parchment up to the fire of affliction, they will become visible—but till then, the page will be as if they were never written there at all. Now, take this promise, "When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you." Why, you who never went through fires and flames can never know the meaning of that promise! "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," has often brought comfort to the tried and the persecuted. And the man that has been brought low in pecuniary matters, how often has he fed upon this promise, "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure: his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks." If you were never slandered, you never drank wine out of this bottle, "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn." I am sure, if you feel the sweetness of God's word, the secret of it is that you have experienced something or other of trial, outside or within, which has distinctly brought to your soul the sweetness which otherwise you could not have known.

That experience which does not make you prize God's word is good for nothing. A great deal of the experience of a Christian is not Christian experience. He experiences it as a sinner and an offender against God. But that which is Christian experience always has this for its result—that it leads to a deeper prizing of the Word of God and a higher estimate of the preciousness of it. If you now have a very keen sense of the sweetness of God's word, you have grown in confidence. Were anybody to say to me, "Honey is not sweet," I could not be very clear about it. Perhaps I could not argue upon the subject. But supposing there were a dish of honey here, and I just took a spoonful of it, I would say, "You tell me that honey is not sweet? Why, my dear man, I have got some in my mouth." I should scorn to argue upon it because I had the honey still in my mouth as internal evidence, and therefore, argument would be too poor to be used in the case. I should laugh in his face when I had once got the sweetness of it on my palate. So it is with you. No infidel or skeptical remark can have any power over your mind if you are at the present moment in the conscious enjoyment of the comfort and sweetness of God's word! If you feel that it cheers you in the dark, what a fool he must be who says that it does not give you light! Why, the man can have no toleration from you if he says it does not strengthen when you feel the strength of it!

It is a sign that you have grown in spiritual health when the Word of God is sweet to you. I remember my father saying to us children at home, when we did not like our food, that he had been to the Union House and the boys and girls always liked their breakfast there because they were hungry, and, he said, "If you had to go without, it would do you good." Sometimes, children of God get worldly and then they have no appetite for God's word. They say, "We do not profit under Mr. so and so." The truth is, we do not profit under the Bible, itself, and should not profit under the Apostle Paul or under the Lord Jesus Christ, for we have spoiled our appetites! But when our appetite is healthy, we can come to the Scripture and not care much how it is carved. We would rather the preacher would carve it well, but some people must have it served up always in such dainty style—it must have little bits of poetry, like parsley to garnish the dish, and so on, and if a rough hand should bring them meat, they say, "No, we cannot feed in this style." But if you have been in the field at work for God and have got an appetite, and the blood is circulating in your veins, then you can feast upon it till your soul rises up and says, "I thank You, Lord, for this, my food, and that You have made it sweet to my taste. I will tell my fellow Christians the delights that I have received in searching Your word, that they may come and feed at the same table where I have been so daintily fed."

May God the Holy Spirit make this the experience of every day to each one of us, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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WHAT CHRISTIANS WERE AND ARE
NO. 3198

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"And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."
Ephesians 2:3.

"The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."
Romans 8:16, 17.

[See Sermon #339, Volume 6—THE SONS OF GOD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THESE two texts will furnish me with two familiar but most important themes—*what Christians were* and *what they are*. There are great and vital differences between what they once were and what they now are—and these are implied or indicated by the two expressions, "the children of wrath" and, "the children of God." There is so much instruction in each of our texts that we will proceed at once to consider them without any further introduction.

I. So, first, let us consider WHAT CHRISTIANS WERE.

The apostle tells us that we "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." "*By nature*," mark you, not merely by practice, but, "by nature *the children of wrath*." The expression is a Hebraism. When a person was doomed to die, he would be called by the Jews, "the child of death." One who was very poor would be called by them, "the child of poverty." So because we were, by nature, under the wrath of God, we are called "the children of wrath."

When the apostle says that we "were by nature the children of wrath," he means that *we were born so*. David expressed what is true of us all when he said, "Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Our first parent, Adam, sinned and fell as the representative of the whole human race. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men." If any object to this principle of representation, that does not affect its truth of it—and I would also remind them that by this very principle of representation, a way was left open for our restoration! The angels did not sin representatively—they sinned personally and individually—and, therefore, there is no hope of their restoration, but they are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." But men sinned *representatively*, and this is a happy circumstance for us, "for as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." As we fell through one

representative, it was consistent with the principles upon which God was governing mankind that He should allow us to rise by another representative! At first, we fell not by our own fault, so now, by grace, we rise not by our own merit. Death by sin came to us through Adam when we were born, so did life come to us through Christ Jesus. Thus our first text sets before us this terrible fact—as true as it is terrible, and as terrible as it is true—that we were by nature under the wrath of God from the very first. The whole race of mankind was regarded by God as descended from a disgraced traitor! We were all born children of wrath.

This expression also implies that *there was within us a nature which God could not look upon except with wrath*. The way in which some cry up the excellence of human nature is all idle talk. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Our Lord Jesus Christ has told us that "out of the heart proceeds evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Everything that is evil lurks within the heart of everyone that is born of a woman! Education may restrain it, imitation of a good example may have some power in holding the monster down, but the very best of us, apart from the grace of God, placed under certain circumstances which would cause the evil within us to be developed rather than restrained, would soon prove to a demonstration that our nature was evil, and only evil, and that continually! You may take a bag of gunpowder and play with it if you care to do so, for it is quite harmless as long as you keep the fire from it, but put just one spark of fire to it and then you will discover the force for evil that was latent in that innocent looking powder! You may tame a tiger if you begin training it early enough. And you may treat it as if it was only a big cat—but let it once learn the taste of blood and you will soon see the true tiger nature flashing from its eyes and seeking to destroy all that come within reach of its cruel claws! In a similar fashion to that, sin was originally latent within every one of us and whatever better qualities God may, by His grace, have planted there, it is still true that we were, by nature, "the children of wrath, even as others."

I need not say any more about the original sin of Adam, or about the sinfulness of our nature, for those of us who have been saved know that *our practice was according to our nature*. Who can deny that the fountain was defiled when he is compelled to confess that polluted streams flowed from it? Can you look back with complacency upon the days of your unregeneracy? I feel sure that you cannot think of the sins that you committed, then, without weeping over them, and especially sorrowing over that sin which so many forget—the sin of not believing on the Son of God; the sin of so long rejecting the Savior; the sin of not yielding to the gentle calls of His grace; the sin of bolting and barring the door of your heart while He stood outside and cried, "Open to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled: for My head is filled with dew and My locks with the drops of the night." But we would not rise and let Him in! What a horrible sin it was not to see the loveliness of Christ and not to admire the infinitude of His love! Had we not been sinful by nature and by practice, too, our opposition or our indifference would have been melted con-

cerning the coming of Jesus—and we would have at once opened our hearts to receive Him.

Not only were we "children of wrath" by descent, by nature and by practice, but had not God, in His long suffering patience, spared us until we were converted, *we would have had to endure the wrath of God forever* in that dark realm where not a single ray of hope or one cooling drop of consolation will mitigate the miseries of any child of wrath who hears the dread sentence, "Depart from Me; I never knew you." We cannot bear even to think of the doom of those who have died impenitent! I confess that my flesh creeps when I read those terrible words of the Lord Jesus concerning the worm that never dies and the fire that never shall be quenched. And yet, instead of sitting in these seats at this moment, rejoicing in the good hope through grace, we might have been there! Yes, and without any very great change in the order of God's providence before our conversion, we might have been there! We were sick with the fever and if only the disease had taken an unfavorable turn, we would have been there! We were shipwrecked—and if only the waves had washed us out to sea instead of washing us up upon a rock—we would have been there! Possibly some of us have been in battle and as, "every bullet has its billet," if one had found its billet in our brain or heart, we would have been there! Some of us have been in many accidents—if one of them had been fatal before we knew the Lord, we would have been there! All of us are in jeopardy every day and every hour—we are constantly being reminded of the frailty of human life, yet God spared us, by His grace, and did not cut us off, as so many others were, while we were unrepentant and unregenerated. Had He done so, we would, indeed, have been "the children of wrath" in the most terrible of all senses, for we would even now have been enduring the wrath of God on account of our sin! Children of God, as you realize the truth of what I have been saying to you, I trust that you will feel intensely grateful to the Lord who has so graciously interposed on your behalf and delivered you from going down into the pit!

Notice also that Paul says that we "were by nature *the children of wrath, even as others*." God's grace has made a great difference between His children and others, but there was no such difference *originally*—they were "the children of wrath, even as others," that is, in the same sense as others were children of wrath. I know that God's children have been from eternity the objects of His distinguishing love, for there never was a period when He did not love those whom He had chosen as His own. But regarding us as sinners, unforgiven sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, we, "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

We were also "the children of wrath, even as others" who remain unconverted. You have, perhaps, a daughter for whose conversion you have long prayed. You have brought her to hear the gospel since she was a child, but up to the present moment, it has not touched her heart. Do not forget that you, also, were a child of wrath, even as she is. You have a friend who ridicules the gospel, even though he comes with you to lis-

ten to it. Yet you were an heir of wrath, even as he is—and if it had not been for the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, you, also, would have been only a hearer and not a doer of the word. You would have been like so many others in this congregation and you might have said, with Cowper—

"I hear, but seem to hear in vain.
Insensible as steel."

But you are not "insensible as steel" now! You feel the power of God's word. It makes you tremble, but it also makes you rejoice, for you know that it is the word of your Father in heaven who has loved you with an everlasting love and who, therefore, with loving kindness has drawn you to Himself. While you remember all this with devout gratitude to Him who has made you to differ from others and also to differ from what you, yourself, used to be, never forget that you were once a child of wrath, even as others still are!

Yes, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, you "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" who still revel in sin. As you pass along the street you see such sights and hear such language that you are shocked and horrified that men and women can so grievously sin against the God who made them, and who still permits them to live! Yet do not look down upon them with an affectation of superior holiness and say, "What shameful sinners those people are in comparison with us!" But rather say, "We, too, were by nature the children of wrath, even as others still are."

Yes, and to emphasize what I have previously said, "we were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" who pass away impenitent and in due time must stand before the judgment bar of God! They will stand shivering before that great white throne whose spotless luster will reveal to them, as in a wondrous mirror, the blackness of their lives and the guiltiness of their impenitence! And when the King sits down upon His throne, even though it will be the Lamb, Himself, who died for sinners, who will sit as their judge—they will cry to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" There is nothing so terrible to look upon as injured love. Fiercer than a lion leaping upon its prey is love when once it is incensed. Oil flows smoothly, but it burns furiously—and when the love of Jesus has been finally rejected—then the sight of Him whose head was once crowned with thorns will be more terrifying than anything else to the eyes of those who have rejected Him. They will wish they had never been born and, indeed, it would have been better for them if they had never had an existence! Had it not been for the grace of God, their portion would also have been our portion, for by nature we were the children of wrath even as they were—and amidst that shivering, trembling crowd we would have taken our station. But, believing in Jesus, our place shall be at His right hand "when He shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believe." We shall be among those to whom the King will then say, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit

the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Yet, by nature, we were "the children of wrath, even as others."

II. Now I must turn from that sad, solemn knell—"Children of wrath, even as others," to the joyous peal that rings out from our second text which tells us WHAT CHRISTIANS ARE—what we now are if we have believed in Jesus—"The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

It is such a wonderful thing that those who were the children of wrath should now be the children of God and that *there are two witnesses to it.* First, our own spirit says that we are the children of God and then the Holy Spirit comes and says, "Yes, and I also bear witness that you are the children of God."

Now, beloved, do you realize that God has worked this great miracle of mercy in you? *Does your spirit bear witness that you are now a child of God*? When you go out of this building and look up at the stars, will you say to yourself, "My Father made them all"? Will you feel that you must talk to your Father? And when you go to your bed tonight, should you lie sleepless, will you begin to think of your heavenly Father as naturally as a little child, when it lies awake in the dark, thinks of its mother and calls to her? If you are a true believer, this is the case with you. The Spirit of adoption is given to you by which you are enabled to cry, "Abba, Father." Do you not also know what it is, sometimes, when you are sitting down quietly by yourself, to think, "The God who made the heavens and the earth, and who upholds all things by the word of His Father, is my Father"? Then very likely a flood of tears will come as you stand silently before the Lord just as the lilies do, for at times there is no form of worship that seems possible to our joyous spirit except standing still and letting the love of the heart silently breathe itself out before the Lord like the fragrance of flowers ascending in a gentle breeze. In such a frame of mind as that, your spirit may well bear witness that you are a child of God!

Then comes the Holy Spirit, the infallible witness, and through the word and through His own mysterious influence upon our heart, *He bears witness that we are the children of God.* Two witnesses were required, under the law of God, to establish a charge that was made against any man. And under the gospel, we have two witnesses to establish our claim to be the children of God—first, the witness of our own spirit—and then the second and far greater witness, the Holy Spirit, Himself! And by the mouth of these two witnesses shall our claim be fully established. If our own spirit were our only witness, we might hesitate to receive its testimony, for it is fallible and partial. But when the infallible and impartial Spirit of God confirms the unfaltering witness of our own heart and conscience, then may we have confidence toward God and believe without hesitation that we are, indeed, the children of the Most High God! One of the points on which the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God is this—"We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." When we real-

ly love those who are God's children, it is strong presumptive evidence that we are, ourselves, members of His family! And when we truly love God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit—when we have a compassionate love to the souls of men and an intense love of holiness and hatred of sin, and desire for God's glory—all these are the further witness to the Spirit with our spirit that we are the children of God.

Then, as there are two witnesses that we are the children of God, so are there *two ways in which we become the children of God*.

First, we are the children of God *by adoption*. When God asked Himself the question, "How shall I put the children of wrath among My children?" He answered Himself by saying, "I will do it by adopting them into My family." We were far off from God by wicked works, "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Yet, by the grace of God, we have been adopted into the divine family!

Now you know that a child may be adopted into a nobleman's family, and yet he will not really be one of the nobleman's kindred. So there is a second way in which we become the children of God, that is, *by regeneration*. We are born into the family of God as well as adopted into it, and thus we become "partakers of the divine nature." So Peter writes, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who 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, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." *Adoption* gives us the *privileges* of the children of God. *Regeneration* gives us the nature of the children of God! Adoption admits us into the divine family. Regeneration makes us akin to the divine Father—it creates us anew in Christ Jesus and puts into us a spark from the eternal Spirit, Himself, so that we become spiritual beings. Before regeneration, we are only body and soul—but when we are born again, born from above—we become body, soul and spirit. Being born of the Spirit, we understand spiritual things and have spiritual perceptions which we never possessed before.

Becoming the children of God, we are entitled to all the privileges of childhood. It is the privilege of a child to enjoy its father's love, its father's care, its father's teaching, its father's protection, its father's provision and last, but by no means least, its father's chastening. Whatever a child receives as its right from its father, we also receive from our Father who is in heaven. "If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give to you who are His children every blessing that you can possibly need while you are here on earth, and heaven itself to crown it all?"

Then the apostle further says, "*and if children, then heirs*; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Now, in this country, it is not always true that, if children, then heirs, because we have laws, (of which some may approve, though I fail to see the justice of them), which make one son to be the heir just because he happens to be the firstborn. It is not so in

God's family! It is, "if children, then heirs," that is to say, all the children in the divine family are God's heirs! The last one who ever will be born into the family of God will be as much an heir as the first who said, "My Father, who art in heaven." And the least of the children of God—Little Faith, Ready to Halt and Miss Much Afraid, are just as much the heirs of God as Faithful, Valiant for Truth and Mr. Great Heart, himself! "If children," that is all, "if children, then heirs." Are they true born children of God? Have they the faith which is the characteristic mark of all who are in God's family? Are they truly converted? Have they been born again, born into the family of God? If so, then it follows of necessity that, "if children, then heirs." Does not this truth of God encourage poor Miss Despondency over there, and you, Mr. Fearing, and friend Little Faith over yonder?" If children, then heirs." Not, "if big children," nor, "if first born children," nor, "if strong children," but simply, "if children, then heirs"! If you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby you cry, "Abba, Father," you are an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ!

There is another remarkable thing in the family of God. If we, who were by nature the children of wrath, become by grace, the children of God, we thereby become all of us, the heirs of all that God has! Now, this can never happen in an earthly family. If the father was rich and all his children were his heirs, one son would have one farm and another son would have another farm. And each of the girls would have so many thousands of pounds for her dowry, but each one of them could not have all that there was—it would have to be divided between them—one would have what the others had not, and could not have anything that they had. But, in God's family, all the children are heirs of all that is His. My dear brother or sister in Christ, if you have a choice privilege that is yours because you are a Christian, I rejoice that you have it, but I have it, too! And if I have a precious promise that belongs to me because I am one of the Lord's children, you may be thankful for it, for it belongs equally to you! No child of God can keep Christ all to himself, for He is the portion of all His people! Some dear brethren whom I know would like to plant a very prickly hedge around their little gardens, so as to keep all their Christian privileges to themselves—but God's birds of paradise can fly over those hedges and share in all the good things they are intended to enclose!

"If children, then heirs, *heirs of God*." You, my dear brother or sister, have Christ, and I have Christ! You have the Spirit, and I have the Spirit. You have the Father, and I have the Father. You have pardon, you have peace, you have the righteousness of Christ, you have union with Christ, you have security in life, you have safety in death, you have the assurance of a blessed resurrection and of eternal glory, but so have all those who have believed in Jesus! There is the same inheritance for all the children of God—not a part for one, and another part for another. The covenant is not, "Manasseh shall have this portion of the promised land, and Issachar that portion, and Zebulun that other portion." But to every believer the Lord says, "Lift up now your eyes to the North, and to the

South, to the East, and to the West, for all this goodly heritage have I given to you by a covenant of salt forever."

There is another thing about this inheritance that makes it still more precious to us, and that is that every one of the heirs shall certainly inherit it—and that is more than you can say about any earthly inheritance. If you know that somebody has made a will in your favor, do not reckon that the estate or money is really yours until you are actually in possession of it, for "there is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip." The will may be revoked and the new one may leave you out, or there may be a flaw in it so that the estate will get into Court, and remain there for the term of your natural life. Even if there is no doubt that you are the heir, there may be many who will dispute your right to the inheritance. But if you are really a child of God, not even the devil, himself, shall be able to rob you of your heavenly inheritance! Satan may deny that you are an heir of God, but your heavenly Father will say, "Yes, he is, indeed, My child, and heir to all I have. I remember his first tear of penitence and I have preserved that in my bottle. I remember his first true prayer, his first look of faith, his first note of praise—they are all registered in My records that none can erase. I have his name here in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and it can never be blotted out! Yes, he is My child and My heir—all that I have belongs to him." There is a day coming when all Christ's sheep shall pass again under the hand of Him that counts them—and in that day, not one of the whole redeemed flock shall be missing! As the long roll of God's ransomed family is called, it shall be asked, "Is Little Faith here?" And he will answer to his name not at all in the trembling way in which he used to speak when he was upon earth. When it is asked, "Is Miss Much Afraid here?" she will reply, in jubilant tones, "Glory be to God, I am here!" No matter how weak and feeble you may be, if you are a child of God, you shall certainly be there and the inheritance shall assuredly be yours!

I have not yet done with this expression, "heirs of God." Paul does not say that the children of God are heirs of heaven. Our inheritance is much bigger than that, for heaven has its bounds, but God has none. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but God never will! We are heirs, therefore, of unending bliss, for we are "heirs of God." There is no one here, there is no one on earth, there is no man or angel in heaven who can tell the full meaning of this expression, "heirs of God." The words are simple enough for even a child to utter, but only God fully understands what they mean. And we shall go on learning throughout eternity all that is included in those three short words. To have God Himself as our inheritance, to be able to say, "The Lord is my portion," is a thousand heavens in one! And all the children of God are the heirs of God—no one of them will ever have to say, "My portion will have to be stinted because my elder brother has taken such a large share"—but everyone shall have God to enjoy here on earth, and then to enjoy forever in heaven!

Finally the apostle says, "*and joint heirs with Christ.*" It always adds to our enjoyment of any pleasure if we have someone whom we greatly love

to share it with us. Then how much more shall we enjoy our heavenly inheritance because we are to occupy it with Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior, to whose incarnation, life, death, resurrection and intercession we are indebted for it all! Oh, who would not be a child of God, to have such bliss forever and to enjoy it in such blessed company? Yet is there anyone here who despises his inheritance? Is there anyone here like Esau, "who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright," and who, "afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears"? Is there someone here who was once a professor of religion, who has gone back to the world in the hope of getting a better living or a little praise among men? Poor soul, pour soul, how I pity you! But, O child of God, have you been kept faithful even to this hour? Then let Naboth rather than Esau be your model! Ahab offered Naboth a better vineyard than his own, or the worth of it in money if he would sell it, but he would neither exchange nor sell his inheritance even though his refusal to do so cost him his life—and it would be better for us to die a thousand deaths than to think of parting with our heavenly inheritance! Happily, if we are really the children of God, He who has, by His grace, made us His children, will keep us His children! And He will both keep us for the inheritance and keep the inheritance for us!

There is, however, such a danger of being only children of God in name, and not in truth, that we shall all do well to give heed to the apostle's warning, "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." Having put our hand to the plow, let us not even *think* of looking back, but may we be proved to be the living children of the living God by walking in His ways until we come into His blessed presence to go no more out forever for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
EPHESIANS 2.

Verse 1. *And you has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.* [See Sermons #127, Volume 3—SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION; #2267, Volume 38—LIFE FROM THE DEAD and #2388, Volume 40—ONCE DEAD, NOW ALIVE—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org] Then you owe your very life to Him! You were dead, you were like a corrupt carcass, but His life has been breathed into you. "You has He quickened." Then you are no longer dead—you are a living soul before the living God—and as you owe this to Him, praise Him with all the life you have! You "were dead in trespasses and sins."

2, 3. *Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience: among whom we, also, all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.* It does us good to remember what we used to be. There was no

reason in us, by nature, why we should be made the children of God. There were in us no distinguishing traits of character by which we were separated from our fellow sinners. We ran in the same course. We were possessed by the same spirit. We worked the same works. We had the same nature. We were under the same condemnation—"children of wrath, even as others."

4, 5. *But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ, (by grace you are saved).* [See Sermons #2968, Volume 52—"HIS GREAT LOVE"; #805, Volume 14—RESURRECTION WITH CHRIST and #2741, Volume 47—SALVATION BY GRACE—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "By grace you are saved." I know that you feel that it is so. Our quickening out of our death in sin must have been by grace—and as God has done it—unto Him must be ascribed all the glory of it! There can be no merit in those who are dead in sin that they should be quickened out of their sin! This must be the work of the Lord, alone, and unto Him be all the praise. He "has quickened us together with Christ," so that our life is mystically linked with the life of Christ, as He said to His disciples, "Because I live, you shall also live." Until He can die, those who are one with Him cannot die.

6. *And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.* It is all in Him and it has a sevenfold sweetness about it because it is in Him. To live unto God is a wondrous mercy, but to live *together* with Christ is an unspeakable honor! To be raised up into the heavenly places would be a surpassing blessing, but to be raised up there *together with Christ*, and to be made to sit there with Him, is a gift that is above the superlative! I know not how else to speak of it.

7, 8. *That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are you saved through faith.* [See Sermons #1064, Volume 18—SALVATION ALL OF GRACE and #1609, Volume 27—FAITH—WHAT IS IT? HOW CAN IT BE OBTAINED?—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] It must be all of grace because of the greatness of the favor bestowed. A man dead in trespasses and sins cannot deserve to be made alive. And when he is made alive, he cannot deserve to be raised up to sit with Christ in the heavenly places! That is too great a gift to come to us by the way of the law—it must come to us emphatically as the gift of the grace of God in Christ Jesus! "For by grace are you saved through faith"—

8. *And that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.* "Not of yourselves." What do those people mean who keep on crying up the power of the human will, the wonderful dignity of human nature and all that kind of foolish talk? Salvation is not of ourselves! "It is the gift of God," not a reward which we have earned, but a free gift which God bestows according to the riches of His grace!

9. *Not of works, lest any man should boast.* God will not have a boaster in heaven! He will not have the creature exalting himself in His presence. The command, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." is backed up by this reason, "for I am God, and there is none

else." Therefore unto God, Himself, must be the praise and glory for all who are saved.

10. *For we are His workmanship.* [See Sermons #1829, Volume 31—THE SINGULAR ORIGIN OF A CHRISTIAN and #2210, Volume 37—THE AGREEMENT OF SALVATION BY GRACE WITH WALKING IN GOOD WORKS—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Salvation cannot be of works, for if we have any good works, it is because we are God's workmanship.

10-12. *Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. Therefore remember that you being in time past, Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ.* Certainly we were poor sinners of the Gentiles, having no participation whatever in the old Mosaic dispensation.

12. *Being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.* For us there was no paschal lamb, for us there was no high priest at Jerusalem, no altar smoked with a sacrifice for us—we were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel"—

12. *And strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.* That is where the whole Gentile world stood! And this is experimentally where you and I stood till sovereign grace interposed for our salvation. What knew we about the covenants of promise? We knew nothing and we did not care to know anything! What did we know about a hope? We would have died without a hope if God's mercy had not come to us! What knew we, or what cared we about a God in the world? We may have thought that there was a God in heaven, but as actually operating upon the daily life of man, we knew no such God! We were "without God in the world."

13. *But now.* Oh, what a blessed, "but"! How much hangs upon it! Think of what God has done for you by His grace! "But now"—

13. *In Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ.* [See Sermon #851, Volume 15—NEARNESS TO GOD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] What a power there must be about that blood—that God not only hears it speaking in heaven, that it makes a way of access for all the saints, that it cleanses from all sin—but that it brings the far off ones near! We will never cease to speak of the precious blood of Jesus! There are certain people who cannot bear to hear it mentioned, but a bloodless theology is a lifeless theology, and a ministry that can do without mentioning the blood of Christ has no power to bless the sons and daughters of men.

14. *For He is our peace.* We find in Christ, peace with God, peace with our own conscience, peace with all mankind!

14. *Who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us.* So making Jews and Gentiles one—

15. *Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, so making peace.* Our Lord Jesus Christ was a Jew, yet I venture to say that there was nothing Jewish about Him. He was the model of what man ought to have been and His words and His ac-

tions made Him worthy to be called cosmopolitan. He belongs to all mankind. He is the man in whom all races are summed up! And when we come to Christ, there is a link between us and the ancient people of God. I do not care about Anglo Israelism, what I care for is Christo Israelism—to belong to the Israel of God in Christ Jesus!

16-17. *And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were near.* Christ is the preacher of peace as well as the maker of peace—and no man ever knows the peace of God unless Christ preaches it to him.

18, 19. *For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore*—Here is another sweet "now."

19. *You are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.* A part of the family of the great householder, even God! Citizenship is well enough in its place, but citizens do not always know one another. But we are of the household of God—we are brought into an intimate relationship with one another through our elder brother who makes us to be the children of the great Father in heaven!

20, 21. *And are built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ, Himself, being the chief cornerstone in whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto an holy temple in the Lord.* We are put so close together, if we are really in Christ, that we are like the stones of the temple—so united as to become one. In Christ Jesus our union is not only that of relationship, but we enter into a perfect unity with one another and with the Lord.

22. *In whom you also are being built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.* [See Sermon #267, Volume 56—THE TABERNACLE OF THE MOST HIGH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] That is the most wonderful truth of all—that God Himself should come and dwell among His people and in His people, and that, being sanctified by grace, we become the dwelling place of the Most High! God grant that it may be so! Amen.

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HOW THE LAMBS FEED
NO. 3199

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 26, 1910.

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

***"Then shall the lambs feed in their pasture."* (NKJV)**
Isaiah 5:17.

THE sense of this passage may be that Judea would be so desolated that it would become rather a wild wilderness pasture for flocks than an inhabited country. But that is not the meaning which the old readers of the Bible were accustomed to give to it. The Hebrew commentators considered "the lambs" to mean the house of Israel and regarded this as a promise that in all times of distress and affliction, God's flock would still be fed—there would still be a people kept alive and these should still meet with suitable support. Whether that is the correct sense or not, I shall use the words as having some such meaning.

Our text deals with the lambs, and to the lambs we intend to speak—may the good shepherd speak to them also! Young converts, newborn souls, these words are for you—you shall feed in your pasture.

I. Our first observation is that GOD WOULD HAVE ALL HIS CHURCH FED—a simple enough observation, certainly, and clearly to be inferred from the common course of nature, for no sooner is any living thing created than there are appliances for its feeding. No sooner is a seed cast into the ground and vitalized than it gathers to itself the particles upon which it feeds. And no sooner is an animal born than it receives food. Surely the Lord does not create life in the regenerated soul without providing stores upon which it may be nourished! Where He gives life, He gives food.

Simple as this statement is, it has often been forgotten by those who should best have borne it in mind. It strikes me that it has been forgotten by some ministers. They have exhorted, threatened and thundered, but they have never fed those to whom they have preached! They have cried, "Believe! Believe!" but seldom explained *what* was to be believed, or, when they have mentioned the simple elements of the faith, they have gone no further, but have continued to speak the first principles of the gospel and no more. These brothers have their proper sphere, but they should not be pastors unless they can *feed* the flock of God! The wanderers must be gathered first, but afterwards they must be fed. For lack of this, many have remained in weakness and bondage—and have made no advance in the divine life. The necessity for spiritual food has been forgotten by some ministers who have continually harped upon the sublime doctrines of the gospel, but have not preached the elementary truths of God. Surely they have not carried out their Lord's command, "Feed My

lambs." They have been content to feed the older people, who by reason of use have had their senses exercised, forgetting that the same necessities befall all the flock and that the lambs need to be fed as well as the sheep.

If the teachers have forgotten this, the taught have also failed to remember it. I have been very anxious, beloved, that you should be diligent in the service of God and I have continually stirred you up, not to be sitting listening to sermons when you ought to be doing good—and the consequence has been that some have gone forth to attempt to do good whom I should not have exhorted to do so—for them it would have been better if they had waited a while, till they had learned somewhat more, both of doctrine and experience. Young brothers, there is a time for feeding as well as a time for working. There is work for strong men and there is nurture for babes. To little children we do not allot the labors of husbandry—some little service in the house is suitable for them and will do them good—but we do not exact much labor from them, for we know that youth is a time in which they must be learning and growing. Therefore let me say to some of you who know little or nothing of your Bibles, or of your own hearts—wait a little, and run not before you are sent. Sit, young brother, a while at Jesus' feet and learn what He has to say to you. Then, when you run as a messenger, you will have a message, whereas, perhaps, you now have more foot than heart, more tongue than brain, and this is dangerous!

Let us not forget that *our souls need to be fed* and this I say to some of you who do but little for the Lord Jesus, and may be said neither to work nor to eat. Look at the mass of our Christian people, what do they do? Monday morning early at business and on till Saturday evening late at business! What is their reading? The daily paper! I condemn it not, but of what use is this to their *souls*? What, then, do they read to nourish the inner life? Ah, what? A magazine with a religious tale in it! A tale which will probably be spun out to two or three volumes! If the religion were taken out of it, it would probably be improved—and if the rest of the book were burned, some light might come of it—but none comes by reading it! I will not judge severely, but what is the reading of many Christians? Is it food for their souls? And beyond reading, what else are they doing that their spirits may be nourished? Our fathers would go into their chamber three times a day and take a quarter of an hour for meditation—how many of us maintain such a habit? Is it done once a day? It was once my privilege to live in a house where, at eight o'clock, every person, from the servant to the master, would have been found for half an hour in prayer and meditation in his or her chamber. As regularly as the time came round, that was done, just as we partook of our meals at appointed hours. If that were done in all households, it would be a grand thing for us! In the old Puritan times, a servant would as often answer, "Sir, my master is at prayers," as he would nowadays answer, my master is engaged." It was still looked upon as a recognized fact that Christians did meditate, did study the Word of God, and did pray—and society respected the interval. It is said that if in the days of Cromwell, you had walked

down Cheapside in the morning, you would have seen the blinds down at every house at a certain hour. Alas, where will you find such streets nowadays? I fear that what was once the rule is now the exception! When will God's people perceive that it is not enough to be born again, but that the life then received must be nourished daily with the bread of heaven? It is not enough to be spiritually alive—our life, to be vigorous—must be familiar with its source! Every Christian should know that he needs times for supplying his soul with the food which endures unto life eternal. As the body needs its mealtimes, so must you sit down to your heavenly Father's table until He has satisfied your mouth with good things and renewed your strength like the eagle's. The more intensely earnest we are in feeding upon the Word of God, the better!

My young friends, *you require to be fed with knowledge and understanding* and, therefore, you should search the Scriptures daily to know what are the doctrines of the gospel, and what are the glories of Christ. You will do well to read the "*Confession of Faith*," and study the proof texts, or to learn the "*Assembly's Catechism*," which is a grand condensation of Holy Scripture. I would say, even to many aged Christians, that they could not spend their time better than in going over the Shorter Catechism again and comparing it with the book of God from which it is derived. Truly, in these days, when men are so readily decoyed to Popery, we had need know what it is that we believe! Protestantism grew in this land when there was much simple, plain, orthodox teaching of the doctrines which are assuredly believed among us. Catechism was the very bulwark of Protestantism. But now we have much earnest preaching and yet people do not know what the doctrines of the gospel are—be you not ignorant, but be you nourished up in the truth of God!

My young friends, may you obtain *a spiritual understanding of God's word* which is more than knowledge! May you discern the inward sense, compare spiritual things with spiritual, and see the relation between this truth and the other, and the relation of all truths of God to yourselves and to your standing before God! May the Holy Spirit feed you so! May you also be fed by mingling with the saints of God and learning from their experience! Many a young Christian gathers from advanced saints what he would never discover elsewhere. As they tell of what they have felt, and known, and suffered, and enjoyed, the lambs of the flock are strengthened and consoled. Seek for your companions those who can instruct you! It is a dreary thing for a young man to have association with those only who are below himself in experience and not to know those from whose lips drop pearls because they have been in those deeps where pearls are found. Be much with experienced Christians who have been with Jesus, and you will be fed by them!

Young friend, much feeding will come to you by *meditation on the truth that you hear*. As the cattle lie down and chew their cud, so does meditation turn over the truth of God, and get the very essence and nutriment out of it. To hear, and hear, and hear, and hear, as some do, is utterly useless because when they have heard, it is all over with them—it has

gone in one ear and out the other—and has left nothing upon the mind. Press the truth of God as men tread the grapes in the wine vat, filing the red clusters into the press of memory, and trample on them with the feet of meditation—then shall the rich juice flow forth to cheer your heart and make your spirit strong within you! Meditate, young man and maiden! This is the thing you need if you would be fed.

And, higher still, there is a divine nourishment in communion when the soul ascends to Jesus Christ and feeds on the Lord, Himself—when the incarnate God becomes the soul's bread and the bleeding Savior in His substitutionary sacrifice, becomes the heart's wine. Feed on Him, O beloved, you who have lately come to Him! Eat, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved! May the Lord give you a mighty hunger after His word, after Himself and then lead you by the still waters, and make you to lie down in green pastures!

Thus much on the first simple fact—that God will have all His sheep and His lambs fed.

II. Secondly, the text says that the lambs shall feed "in their pasture," and that leads us to observe that YOUNG BELIEVERS HAVE THEIR OWN WAY OF FEEDING.

I believe every single Christian has his own idiosyncrasy in that matter. Beloved, there are some of you who could not constantly hear me to profit and yet this is neither my fault nor yours, but a wise arrangement, for you can hear some other brother and thus there is work for him as well as for me. If all could be fed by me, and by no one else, where would I put my congregation, and where would others get theirs? Certain persons can receive the truth of God from one man better than they can from another, not because that man is any better, or the other any worse, but because there is a way of putting it, or there is a kind of congruity of nature between the hearer and the preacher. I am glad to think that God has not cast all His people in one mold and made them all desirous to listen to one voice in order to be spiritually fed!

It may happen, moreover, that in our church there are people who cannot be instructed in one of our classes. Well, if it is so, do not quarrel with the brother who conducts it—go to another teacher and try him! Or perhaps you are not edified by the teaching of some Christian with whom you associate. Well, the world is wide—try another. "Then shall the lambs feed in their pasture." Each Christian has his own way of feeding on the word. Let him have it in his own way, and do not judge him! There may be something of self in his peculiarity, but perhaps there is also something of God's purpose in it. Do not pass an Act of Uniformity, but rejoice in the diversities of operations—provided you see the same Lord!

There are several things certain about the manner of feeding of all lambs. The first is, that *if they feed in their pasture, they feed on tender grass*. Young Christians love the simple truths of the gospel and, therefore, these ought to be often preached. And we ought not to be angry with newborn believers if they cannot understand the higher doctrines. I hope we shall never, as a church, exact from young converts the wisdom of age. I trust we shall never say, "There, you must go back. You won't do

for us, you are not up to our mark, for you cannot expound the deep things of God." God forbid! If we shut out the lambs, where shall we get our sheep? If the Lord has received them, let us receive them! No father excludes a child from his table when he is three or four years old because he is not yet able to speak Latin. If the little ones know their A B C, it is a good beginning. We think a great deal of the first little verse our babes repeat—they say it in such a strange way that nobody thinks it is language at all except father and mother, but they are charmed with the simplest form of speech which infant lips can try! So, to see a little spiritual knowledge in new converts should gratify us and cause us to love them. Leave the lambs to feed on tender grass and you older ones may take as much of the tougher herbage as you like.

Again, *lambs like to feed little and often*. They are not able to take in much at a time, but they like to be often at it. I love to see our young people coming to the prayer meetings and weekday services so continually. You will grow in grace if you are often engaged in the means of grace—but it is possible to make such things a weariness to the flesh if they become protracted. Strong saints can bear whole days of devotion and delight in them. Yes, a whole week spent alone in a sacred retreat might be a glorious holiday—a holy day—rather, an anticipation of heaven! But for young believers, let them have here a little and there a little—a text and a text, line upon line, precept upon precept—but let them have it often. "Then shall the lambs feed in their pasture."

The lambs, if they feed well, feed quietly in their pasture. If there is a dog in the field, they will not feed. If they are driven about here and there and not allowed to rest, they cannot feed. I pity young Christians who get into churches where there are disturbances and troubles. Oh, may we always be kept at peace! I bless God for the love that has reigned among us. May it continue and may it deepen! Beloved friends, when we fall out with one another, we shall find that the Spirit of God has fallen out with us! We cannot expect to see young converts among us at all, much less can we hope to see them advance in divine grace if we indulge a party spirit, or a controversial spirit within the fold. All believers should endeavor to maintain a sacred quiet within the church for the sake of the little ones. Have you never heard of the child who was greatly impressed under a sermon and had resolved to pray on reaching home, but he heard his father and mother on the road home discussing the discourse and finding such fault with it, that the happy season of tenderness passed away from that child and, in later years, he was accustomed to say that his becoming an infidel was due to that conversation? Let the lambs feed in quiet. If a little bit of the sermon suits my boy, though it seems childish to me, let me be glad that there is something for him! If the preacher stated the truth in a way which I do not like, I daresay the preacher's Master knows how to guide him far better than I do! And perhaps my neighbor who sat next to me has profited by precisely that which I have criticized. Let the lambs feed quietly. I would say to young Christians—Never mix up in the controversies of these days. There are

people about who seem to be cut on the cross and the only use they are in this world seems to be to raise irritating questions. They and the mosquitoes were created by infinite wisdom, but I have never been able to discover the particular blessing which either of them confer upon us! Those persons who discuss and discuss, and do nothing else, had better be left alone. If there is a way to live peaceably with all men, I should say to the young Christian, "Follow it." The lambs feed best when they are not worried, but dwell in peace with all.

Then, next, *when lambs feed in their pasture, they feed in pleasure*. A very disorderly lot the lambs are! If you look over the gate at them, they are never proper and solemn. An artist could scarcely sketch them in their frisking and frolicking about! Young Christians ought not to be told to cease their holy mirth—they ought not to be expected as yet to groan with those that groan—but let them rejoice with those that rejoice! Their days of sorrow will probably come soon enough, without their being anticipated. Let them rejoice in the Lord, yes, let them rejoice always! I am glad our friends do not universally call out in the Tabernacle, "Hallelujah," and "Hosanna," and the like. But, for my part, when I am preaching in the open air in the country and our Methodist friends do so, it seems to stir my blood and I am glad of it. It is much better than having a sleepy congregation!

A little excitement in the Christian church, especially by young converts, is by no means to be deprecated. I remember hearing dear Doctor Fletcher say, when talking to a number of children, that he once saw a boy standing on his head, dancing on the pavement and displaying all sorts of antics of joy. He stopped near him and said, "Well, my lad, you seem to be exceedingly merry." "I think I am, and so would you be, sir, (or guv'nor, I think he said,) if you had been locked up three months and had just got out." "Well," said the venerable man, "I thought it very reasonable, indeed, and I told him by no means to stop his performances because of me." Now, when a poor man has felt the burden of sin and has been shut up in the prison of the law of God, and Jesus comes and brings him out—and he begins to rejoice with unspeakable joy, and full of glory—if any man living would stop him, I would not! No, let him rejoice! Let the lambs feed "in their pasture." And if somebody tonight should come to me, and say, "Your young converts have been extravagant in expression and injudicious in zeal," I would reply, "My dear brother, are you better than these young ones? At any rate, there is one respect in which you are worse, for you show a propensity to find fault with those who are serving God with all their might. Go your way and join them! If you have not a heart to do so, and if they seem to be enthusiastic beyond measure, only thank God that there are yet some few left among us who can appreciate fervor—and wish that there were a little more of it." For my own part, I would like to see a downright fanatic. It is so long since one has set one's eyes upon such a curiosity that I should like to see one—just one! I have seen snow enough, pray let me see a fire flake! I have seen thousands of wet blankets—oh for the touch of a live

coal! Enthusiasm in excess might be a blessing in disguise. Let the lambs feed pleasantly in their own wild, natural way.

Once more, *when the lambs feed in their pasture, they feed in company*. They like to get with others if they can. Sheep thrive best in flocks. I call upon every young Christian here to get into some part of Christ's flock. I invite you into this portion of Christ's church, but if you find another where, all things considered, you think it would be better for you to be, go there! Mind that you join yourself first to Christ—and after that unite with His people. Do not try to go to heaven as a solitary individual, that is not the Christian way. Jesus gathers His people into a church—He does not profess to lead His people one by one, as solitary pilgrims, but they are to go in groups and bands. From company to company they proceed towards the New Jerusalem. May you have much love to the visible church and believe that, notwithstanding all her faults, there is none like her on the earth! That, notwithstanding all her spots, she is excellent for beauty, and fairest among women!

III. I must close with the remark that IN THE WORST OF TIMES, GOD WILL SEE THAT HIS LAMBS AND THE REST OF HIS FLOCK ARE FED.

It is said, in the text, "*Then* shall the lambs feed in their pasture." That is, when the vineyard was destroyed and the hedge broken down. When thorns and briers had come up and the clouds had refused to rain. And God had sent desolation upon Israel and the people were gone into captivity—even then shall the lambs feed in their pasture! This is a blessed truth of God—come what may, God's people shall be saved and they shall have spiritual food! There may come persecuting times. Never mind! Never did Christ seem so glorious as when He walked with His church in the dungeon and up to the stake! Never were there sweeter songs than those which rose from the Lollard's tower and Bonner's coal hole. Never did the church have such marriage feasts as when her members died at the gallows and the fire! Christ Jesus has made Himself preeminently near and dear to a persecuted church! Therefore fear not if you should have your little trouble to bear in the family, or rebuke and shame from an evil world—for you shall feed in your pasture. Though your mother should be grieved, though your husband should be angry, though your brother should ridicule, though your employer should scoff—you shall be fed with spiritual food and your soul shall surmount all these evils, triumphant in her God!

"But I dread," says one, "that there will come times of sickness to me. I have premonitions of it." Yes, but you shall be fed in your pasture. And I, for one, bear witness that sometimes periods of sickness are times of the greatest spiritual nourishment! The Lord can furnish a table in the wilderness! A very wilderness sickness is of itself, but God can find us daily manna. He can make you strongest in heart when you are weakest in body. Therefore fear not, God will feed you!

"I am afraid of poverty," says one. Are you? That has been the lot of many of His people. For many an age has the Lord chosen the poor to be His disciples. You need not fear that. Your Master was poor—you will

never be as poor as He was, for He had nowhere to lay His head. Fear not, He will feed you. Can you not trust Him? "Ah, but I fear death," says one. "Then shall the lambs feed in their pasture." Even in the valley of the shadow of death you shall find tender grass! Have you never seen others die? Has it not been a joyous thing to see some saints depart? I recall to your memories, dear brothers and sisters, those who have but lately ascended whom we loved. Was there anything terrible about their deaths? Did they not smile upon us in their last hours and make us feel that we would willingly change places with them, and die as they died? Have I not often seen the young girl sickening with consumption and heard from her strange things that made me think her half a prophetess—a seer whose eyes had been anointed so that she had looked within the veil and seen the glory of the invisible? Oh, how texts of Scripture have been placed in golden settings by dying saints! How sweetly have they set promises to music! Speak of monks and their illuminated missals! Scripture illuminated by dying saints is far more marvelous! What amazing joy they have felt! They told us that joy was killing them—that they did not die of the disease, but of excessive delight! It was as though the great floods of glory had burst their banks and they were being swept right away by them to eternal bliss! It has visibly been blessed for the saints to die and, therefore, it is foolish—perhaps wicked—for any child of God to be afraid to depart. "Then shall the lambs feed in their pasture," feeding near the very scythe of death and cropping choice morsels at the grave's mouth—for the Lamb, Jesus Christ, being with them—no lamb of all the flock shall have cause to fear!

We shall now separate and scatter, as congregations have scattered, I might say, these hundreds of times from this house. And scattering and going each, our own way, to his home—shall we ever meet again? Probably by no means shall we, all of us, meet in the body, so that these eyes shall look to other eyes and say, "I saw those eyes before." Well, well, truth be the truth remembered that we are a flock and must gather again in one meeting place before the judgment seat, on that day of wrath, that dreadful day! Shall we meet, then, as the sheep of Christ, or, meeting, will it be to be divided, to the right and to the left, as the sheep of the great King, or the goats condemned to be cast away? We shall certainly meet there, but will it be an eternal meeting of unending joy? God grant it may! Oh, infinite mercy of the blessed God, let us all be united at the throne of Christ!

But I hear you say, O angel, in answer to that prayer—I hear you speak out of the glory and say, "There can be no union at the throne of God except there first be union at the cross." Listen to that warning and come to Jesus! There stands the cross, which is the center of the church! Lo, I see upon it the Son of God, His wounds still fountains of cleansing blood! Will you come to the cross? Will you trust the Redeemer? Will you bow before Him? Will you be washed in His blood? Will you be saved with His salvation? If so, we shall all meet in heaven to see the face of the Lamb in His glory. God grant we may, for Jesus sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 23, 24.

Did you ever notice that the 22nd Psalm exhibits "that great shepherd of the sheep" as laying down His life for the sheep? And that the 23rd Psalm exhibits "the good shepherd" with all His sheep around Him happy and restful, while the 24th Psalm represents "the chief shepherd" who shall appear in due time—and when He does appear, then shall His sheep, also, appear with Him in glory?

Psalm 23:1. *The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.* [See Sermon #3006, Volume 52—"THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] How can a sheep want, or have needs, when it has a good and wise shepherd able and willing to provide for it? And how can a believer want when he has God, Himself, the ever gracious and omnipotent Lord of all, to provide his needs and to prevent him from ever knowing what want means? David does not say, "I shall have all I wish for because the Lord is my shepherd," but he does say, "I shall not want. Not only have I no need now, but I never shall need while my shepherd lives. Though I am only one out of His countless flock, yet He cares for me and, therefore, 'I shall not want.'" Why should a believer think that he shall ever want? Let him look at his present condition.

2, 3. *He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul: He leads me in the path of righteousness for His name's sake.* Here are four blessed things that the Lord does for the believer. "He makes me to lie down." He gives me rest, perfect rest and He gives me so much spiritual provision that I am unable to take it all in—so I lie down and rest in it as a sheep does in the deep pastures where it seems lost in the provender! There are such deep doctrines, such glorious privileges, such wondrous revelations of the heart of God in this blessed book, that you and I cannot comprehend it all, but we can lie down in it—"He makes me to lie down in green pastures." Take a good stretch, brothers and sisters in Christ! Some are afraid to lie down in the green pastures of the Word of God. I know some of God's saints who seem to be afraid of being too happy—they do not like to be too restful. Let no such fear ever cross your mind. "He makes me"—and He would not make us do what was not good for us—"He makes me to lie down in green pastures."

Then come those three sweet words, "He leads me," which in themselves are full of music—

"He leads me. He leads me!
By His own hand He leads me!"

You know how our song makes these words ring out over and over again and it is truly charming. "He leads me." The Holy Spirit is our guide and as the softly flowing river of grace marks our journey, we sing, "He leads me beside the still waters." You and I sometimes go wandering by the noisy brooks that ripple over the stones and make such a noise because they are so shallow. But when the Spirit guides us, it is beside the deep rivers, the deep still waters that He leads us.

"He restores my soul." Is not that a blessed little sentence? When my soul gets empty, He stores it again—restores it. When it goes wandering away from Him—

"He brings my wandering spirit back
When I forsake His ways."

And when I get spiritually sick, He gives me a sweet restorative and renews my health—"He restores my soul." Blessed be the name of the great restorer!

"He leads me"—here comes those sweet words again—"He leads me in the paths of righteousness." They are very pleasant paths, for nothing is more pleasant to a believer than to be walking in "the paths of righteousness." God has so constituted His people that if they get out of the right way, they get out of the way of peace. He has so remade us that our peace and our righteousness agree together—and as long as we are led in the paths of righteousness, we are a happy and a restful people! The Lord does all this for us, "for His Name's sake."

4. *Yes, though I walk.* Yes, though *I walk*, not only though I *shall* walk, but though I *do* walk now—

4. *Through the valley of the shadow of death.* Though long before I die, I seem to learn what death means in the cold chill that takes hold upon my spirit and freezes all my joy—

4. *I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.* Some seem to think that God's people would have no distress of mind and no trouble if they were trusting in God. But it is not so. Even *they* "walk through the valley of the shadow of death," but they "fear no evil" even there! When all is dark around you, remember that verse, "Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of His servant, that walks in darkness, and has no light? Let Him trust in the name of the Lord and rely upon His God." There would be no room for faith if it were always summertime and always noontide. But Christians are sometimes called to pass through that gloomy experience which Mr. Bunyan has so beautifully pictured under the symbol here used, "the valley of the shadow of death." It is a terrible journey, yet there is no cause for fear to strike the Christian's heart even there for, let the worst come to the worst, he can say to his Lord, with David, "You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me"

Now look back to the 14th and 15th verses of the 22nd Psalm, and you will see how fully Christ can sympathize with His people—because He, also, walked through the valley of the shadow of death even as they have to do! Hear Him crying there, "I am poured out like water and all My bones are out of joint: My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of My body. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and My tongue sticks to My jaws and You have brought Me"—remember that this is the Savior speaking here—"You have brought Me into the dust of death." Well then, there is great comfort for the sheep in the fact that their shepherd has been along that gloomy way before them!

5. *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.* See what cool, calm courage David here displays. Usually, when a warrior is in the presence of his enemies, he just eats a bit of bread, or something

that he can swallow while getting ready for the fight that is impending. But David took matters much more quietly than that. Though his enemies were all around him, there was a table prepared for him—that is to say, there was everything ready for a feast just as if it had been a holiday instead of the day of battle! "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies." You may grin or howl, you devils! You may do what you like, but the true believer takes no notice of you! His table is being prepared by his God while you, armed to the teeth, are seeking to slay him! What a contrast there is between the rage of the believer's enemies and the quiet, calm confidence of the man himself!

5. *You anoint my head with oil.* A sweet savor shall be upon the man who is thus anointed by his God.

5. *My cup runs over.* [See Sermons #874, Volume 15—THE OVERFLOWING CUP and #1222, Volume 21—THE OVERFLOWING CUP—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "I have more than I expected—more than I ever asked for—more than I desired—more than I am capable of holding!" "My cup runs over." If ever your cup does thus run over, be sure to call your poor neighbors in to catch the overflowing mercy! If ever you have more blessing than you can hold, ask some other Christian to share it with you. Recollect what Peter and his companions did when, at Christ's command, they let down the net and caught more fish than their net could hold without breaking—they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. "What? Come and help them fish?" Oh, no—come and help them share the fish! Many persons say, "You are kindly invited to come to such and such a meeting," because they want to get something out of you—but it is a better kind of invitation when you are asked because there is something to be given away—and those who have an overflowing cup want you to share the blessing with them.

6. *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.* I shall never be able to outrun the goodness and mercy of my God! I shall always have closely attendant upon me His goodness to supply my needs and His mercy to forgive my sins.

6. *And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

Psalm 24:1. *The earth is the LORD'S, and the fullness thereof.* And therefore it is also the believer's! The real fullness of the earth belongs to the Christian. "The meek shall inherit the earth."

1, 2. *The world, and they that dwell therein. For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.* So, child of God, you are in your Father's house even while you are down here on earth! Still, that question in the next verse is very suggestive. Albeit that the earth is the Lord's, yet we do not want to stay in it forever.

3. *Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?* [See Sermon #396, Volume 7—CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Or who shall stand in His holy place? This is the portion of the Lord's people—to ascend the hill of the Zion that is above, to enter the New Jerusalem and to stand in the immediate presence of God. But who shall ever be able to do that?

4, 5. *He that has clean hands, and a pure heart; who has not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully; he shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.* The man who will go to heaven is the clean man, the man who has been washed from his sins in the blood of the Lamb. And he is clean just where he was most likely to be foul—he has "clean hands." Grace has enabled him to touch the things of the world without receiving a stain from them, and to touch holy things without defiling them. This expression—"clean hands"—refers to his outward life, but he is also clean inside, for he has "a pure heart." If a man were clean as to his actions, but not clean as to his motives, he would not be fit to enter heaven. But the man described here is a true man. He has not followed after vanity, neither has he uttered a lie, but he has followed the truth of God and he has spoken the truth. He is the man whom God will bless, but he has no righteousness of his own, so we read that, "he shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." So he needs to be saved and he needs a righteousness better than his own, and this God will give him!

6. *This is the generation Jacob, of them that seek Him, who seek Your face. Selah.* It is a wonderful thing that Jesus Christ should take His people's name but He does. He gives His church His own name in that remarkable passage in Jeremiah 33:16—"This is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord Our Righteousness." And now, to make the union complete, He takes her name as His own—Christ is here called "Jacob."

7-10. *Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lift up, you everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O you gates, even lift them up, you everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah.* Now, if Christ is our shepherd in the meadows down here where He makes us to lie down in the green pastures of His grace, He will also be our shepherd in the heavenly pastures up there on the hilltops of glory where the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed us and shall lead us unto living fountains of waters! And we shall delight forever to "follow the Lamb wherever He goes."

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FAITH JUSTIFYING SPEECH
NO. 3200

A SERMON
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 9, 1873.

"I believed, therefore have I spoken."
Psalm 116:10.

SOME translators render this passage, "I believed, though I have spoken as I have done," for the psalmist had spoken words suggestive of unbelief. But, although he had spoken unwisely and unbelievingly, yet, deep down in his heart, he did still believe in his God. What a mercy it is for us that God does not judge us by our hasty speeches! If He can see only a spark of faith amidst the dense smoke of our unbelief, He accepts it!

We will, however, take the text as we find it in our version—"I believed, therefore have I spoken." To speak what we believe to be false is atrocious. God grant that our lips may never be defiled by the utterance of anything that we do not really believe! To speak what we only think to be true is idle and often mischievous. Many have been grieved and hurt by the repetition of slanders which have passed from mouth to mouth without anyone being able to vouch for their accuracy—and those who repeated them have often done serious injury to the characters of those who were far better than themselves. On the other hand, to know the truth of God, and not to speak it, is cowardly. The Psalmist did not say, "I believed, and yet I was silent," for that silence might have proved that he was of a cowardly spirit and was afraid that some unpleasant consequences might come upon himself if he dared to deliver unpopular truth. Every speaker is glad enough to say that which will please his auditors and bring credit to himself, but a true man declares what he believes, even though his hearers gnash their teeth at him because of his faithful testimony! To speak what you believe is your duty—to speak what you believe will be likely to benefit those who hear it and to speak what you believe will bring honor and glory to God who taught you the truth. Therefore say with the psalmist, "'I believed, therefore have I spoken.' I spoke out with my tongue what I had verified in my inmost soul."

I am going to use the text in three ways. First, *as the justification of the Christian minister;* secondly, *as the argument for Christian profession;* and thirdly, *as the motive for supplication.*

I. First, then, let us consider our text as THE JUSTIFICATION OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER. "I believed, therefore have I spoken."

No man ever ought to speak in God's name, as a preacher of the gospel, unless he can say, "I believed, therefore have I spoken." When Paul quoted this verse, he added, "We also believe, and, therefore, speak." And we who preach the gospel, if we are really sent of God, believe what we speak in His name. It is a scandal and a shame that there are some ministers who do not believe the doctrines of the church to which they belong, yet they still retain both their position and their pay. I would not consider that I was worthy of the name of an honest man if I took money as the pastor of a Christian church after I had given up my belief in the truths I had professed to hold. We hear a great deal, nowadays, about the liberty of ministers to preach what they like, but what about the liberty of the people? Are they not to be considered? Are churches made for ministers, or ministers made for churches? After the people have elected a man to be their pastor, and he changes his views, it is only common honesty that he should say so and no longer pretend to preach what he does not believe, or to belong to a church with which he is not sincerely in sympathy. I cannot imagine a drearier task than it would be for me to stand here simply to repeat what you wished me to say although my heart did not endorse the words I had to utter! I would never be such a slave as that, but would sooner break stones on the road, or labor at the treadmill in prison!

There are some who do not believe the Bible, but we believe it. There are some who question the great truths of the faith, but we can lay our hand upon our heart and say that we do not question them. There are some who deny the deity of Christ and the efficacy of His atoning blood but, as for us, we verily believe them and, therefore, we proclaim them to others. We believe what we speak—and we speak because we believe God has called us to speak. If we could be silent, we would, but we feel that we must preach the gospel! The man who is sent of God cannot do otherwise than deliver the message that has been given to him—he feels that the fire within him would consume him if he did not let flaming words pour forth from his lips! It was because the Lord had made Ezekiel a watchman unto the house of Israel that he proclaimed his Master's message with such power and unction—and it must be in a similar way that a minister must be to his people as the mouth of God!

Moreover, *we believe that the truths of God we are bid to preach are so important that we cannot be silent concerning them.* We believe that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, that God is angry with the wicked every day and that, if men live and die in their sins, they must be cast away from His presence forever. There may be some of our hearers who will not give heed to our message, but we believe it and, therefore, we speak it. It has become unfashionable to talk of hell and to mention the wrath to come which is awaiting the ungodly, but fashionable or unfashionable, we cannot keep silent concerning these terrible

truths and we try to use them as Paul did, "Knowing therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." We will not, in unhallowed silence, keep back from sinners a true statement of their present lost condition and of their future awful doom unless they repent of their sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! I have often used as the language of my own heart those solemn lines that John Wesley translated—

"Shall I, for fear of feeble man,
Your Spirit's course in me restrain?
Or undismayed in deed and word,
Be a true witness for my Lord?
Awed by a mortal's frown,
Shall I conceal the Word of God Most High?
How then before You shall I dare
To stand, or how Your anger bear?
Shall I, to soothe the unholy throng,
Soften Your truths and smooth my tongue?
To gain earth's gilded toys, or flee
The cross endured, my God, by Thee?
The love of Christ does me constrain
To seek the wandering souls of men
With cries, entreaties, tears, to save,
To snatch them from the fiery wave."

There, is, however, more than this that we believe and, therefore, speak. We believe that a great atonement has been offered for sin, that by His death upon Calvary's cross, Jesus Christ cleared the channel of divine mercy so that now, without injury to His justice, God can forgive human transgression. Most intensely do we believe, "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." How can we keep silent when we have such good tidings to tell? Accursed would be our lips if we should retain this heavenly secret! We will not do so. We believe and, therefore, do we proclaim to all, that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

We believe that there is a full and free pardon for every sinner who believes in Jesus; that there is acceptance with God through the righteousness of Christ for every sinner who truly repents and believes; that there is regeneration; that there is adoption into the family of God; and that there is salvation here, and eternal glory hereafter, for everyone that believes in Jesus! And believing all this, can we remain silent concerning it? Why, sometimes when a man has made a great discovery, he feels as if he must run down the street, as that old mathematician did, crying, "Eureka! Eureka!" when he had solved the problem that had so long puzzled him. We, too, can cry, "Eureka! Eureka!" for we have found what we long sought in vain! We have found a sovereign balm for every wound, a cordial for all care. We have found that which brings even the dead to life and which will bring to heaven those who have been lying at hell's dark

door! How can we keep to ourselves such wondrous discoveries as these? Can we hide in our own heart all that we have learned concerning our blessed Savior? As for me, I say with Charles Wesley—

"My gracious Master and my God,
Assist me to proclaim
And spread through all the earth abroad,
The honors of Your name."

Further, we speak the truth of God that has been revealed to us because *we believe the preaching of the gospel will effect great good*. We do not preach the gospel merely because we believe that it may be useful—we preach it because we believe that it *must* be useful. It is not with us a question whether God will or will not bless the ministry that He has Himself ordained—we believe that He must bless His own word, for we have His promise that He will do so. "It shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." There is not a true sermon preached beneath the cope of heaven, whether in a cathedral, or on a village green, that God will not bless, in some way or other, and make it tend to His own glory. We do not expect this result because of any merit or fitness in our hearers, for they are spiritually like the dry bones that Ezekiel saw in the valley. Our faith is in the Spirit of God to whom we cry even as the prophet cried, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." And the result in our case is the same as it was in his—

"Dry bones are raised, and clothed afresh,
And hearts of stone are turned to flesh."

We believe and, therefore, do we speak—and *this often accounts for our style of speaking*—and sometimes accounts for the faults of it. The man who believes does not always weigh his words, or guard his statements, or speak as coolly and deliberately as others do. They tell us that we sometimes wax too warm. If we do, it is because we believe so fervently the truths of God that we preach! Some say that, at times, we are harsh and intolerant. But he who believes the truth cannot be tolerant of the error that would cloud it! Was Elijah too harsh? That is not a question that we need answer—we know that it was because he believed so fully in Jehovah that he could not have any part or lot with the prophets of Baal or the prophets of the groves. He would not have used the popular language of the present day and boasted of his charity to all men, true or false. He knew that as truth is true, a lie is a lie, and is to be treated as a lie, not as though it ought to be welcomed on equal terms with the truth! He believed, and, therefore, he spoke and acted as he did! And, dear friends, you must not be surprised if we sometimes speak more severely than you think we ought. Intense conviction often carries a man beyond what his hearers might think to be justifiable. I have seen politicians excited and some of their words have been anything but decorous. I have been in the Paris Stock exchange and have seen how excited the dealers in stocks and shares have been, and how they raged and raved like bed-

lamites as prices rose and fell. May other men be excited about gold or government and may we never be excited about God and His truth, about heaven and hell, about the eternal welfare of our own and our fellow creatures' souls? This is our justification—we believe and, therefore, speak—we believe so intensely that we are bound to speak with the accent of conviction!

Luther used to preach like one who had found the grand secret which he must proclaim to others. Some of the things that he said could not be repeated nowadays—they would not at all suit the modern taste—yet he spoke as the times in which he lived needed that he should speak! It must have been grand to hear him, or that other mighty preacher, John Knox, of whom it was said that he was so feeble and so full of pain that as he went up to the pulpit, one might have feared that he would have died before he finished his discourse, yet, before he had proceeded far, so excited did he grow as the truth of God burned and blazed up in his soul, that it seemed as if the pulpit, itself, would be smashed to pieces with the intense force that he threw into his preaching! Yes, Luther and Knox believed and, therefore, spoke with an emphasis and a fervor that would be accounted madness in these prim and proper times in which we live! And we would far rather be judged to be as "mad" as they were, than seek to please those to whom truth and lies appear to be of equal value! No, sirs, you may mark out certain boundaries beyond which you say that we must not go, but we shall leap over them if we can thereby save some! And it is quite possible that our mannerisms and eccentricities, as you call them, will cause a shock to some of your notions of ministerial propriety. If souls are to be saved from going down to the pit, we must be terribly in earnest even as our Master was. If brands are to be plucked from the burning, we shall not do such work with kid gloved hands! This generation is so engrossed with its idols and heresies that it will not be called to the living God by gentle whispering or the lisping of a lovesick maid. We must cry aloud and spare not! We must preach earnestly, intensely and, as some will judge, roughly. And even then, nothing will come of our preaching unless the Spirit of God, Himself, shall accompany it with His own effectual working in the hearts of our hearers. God grant that He may do so!

I must close this part of the subject by saying that when the Psalmist said, "I believed, therefore have I spoken," he meant, *"What I spoke, that I believed."* And we are prepared to adopt his language and to attach the same meaning to it and also to add that *what we have spoken in the past, that we still believe*. We have not changed our views, our sentiments, or doctrines. But do we not pay any tribute to the enlightenment of the age? Are we not to keep pace with the growth of the intelligence of this wonderful 19th century? Brothers and sisters, we do not believe in doing anything of the kind! What was true 20 years ago is true, now, and what is true now will be just as true 20 years hence. I once talked with a

minister who said to me, "You must find it very easy to preach." I asked him why he thought so, and he replied, "Because you believe a certain set of truths and you have only to preach them." "Yes," I answered, "it is so, but is not that also the case with you?" "Oh, dear no," he said, "I think my creed out every week. It is constantly changing, for I am so receptive." We are also receptive—not receptive of modern novelties and heresies, nor of the mere fantasies of our own brain, but we are receptive of all that we find in this blessed book! *And that never changes*. We may receive new light upon what is in the Word of God, but the new light will not make that false which was true before the new light came! We hope, when the time comes for us to die, that we shall be able to say, "As we commenced our ministry, so we finish it. Our first sermon was on the same lines as our last. Of course there was a growth in our power of receiving and expounding the truth of God, but it was the same truth that we received and that we preached at the first and at the last." The end of our conversion, like that of the Apostle Paul and the faithful preachers of his day, has been, is now and, we trust, by God's Grace, still will be, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

II. Now, secondly, we are to use our text as THE ARGUMENT FOR CHRISTIAN PROFESSION—"I believed, therefore have I spoken."

Brothers and sisters, true faith in the gospel is not dumb faith. *When a man believes it, he is bound to make an open profession of his belief*. What is the gospel? I will give it to you in our Lord's own words—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." There is to be the confession of faith made in baptism as well as the belief of the gospel with the heart. Paul thus summarizes "the word of faith" which he preached—"If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." You see how closely the confession of faith is connected with the faith, itself. And the promise of salvation is given at least in these two texts, to the faith that is united with the confession of it. It is the obligatory duty of everyone who believes in Jesus to confess that he does so believe. You know how Christ Himself put it—"Whoever, therefore, shall confess Me before men, him will I confess, also, before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, (and denying is, in that verse, tantamount to not confessing), him will I also deny before My Father who is in heaven." You have no right to say, "I am a believer in Christ, but I do not make a profession of my faith." The profession of your faith is, under the gospel, just as much your duty as the faith, itself, is! Indeed, I venture to say that true faith necessitates a confession of some sort. If a man believes the great truths of which I have been speaking, he cannot altogether conceal his belief in them—his conviction of their truth is bound to come out sooner or later—and the sooner it comes out, the better. John Bunyan tells us that when he had found the Savior, he wanted to tell the crows on the plowed

land all about it—which is to me an indication of the instinct which moves a man, when he has found Christ, to want to proclaim the good news far and wide!

Besides, *this confession of faith is due to the minister whose message has been blessed to his hearers*. Should he not be cheered and comforted by hearing that the word he has preached has been used of God to the salvation of souls? He has more than enough to depress his spirit—ought he not to have anything that he can to encourage him? And what can bring him greater joy than the knowledge that he has not labored in vain, nor spent his strength for nothing?

The confession of faith is also due to the church with which the convert unites. In the apostolic days they first gave themselves unto the Lord and then gave themselves unto His people according to the will of God. Why should it not be the same now? How else is the church to grow? How is it to have new blood put into its veins except concerning the coming forward of the young converts whom the Lord has looked upon in His mercy and saved by His grace?

The confession of faith is especially due to the Lord who has implanted it in the heart. In these evil days when the enemies of the faith seem to be ashamed of nothing, none of those who are His friends ought to be ashamed of Him. The challenge of battle has been thrown down. Many are massing around the black standard of the prince of darkness, so will not all of you who truly love the Prince Emmanuel, rally around His blood red banner?—

"You that are men, now serve Him,
Against unnumbered foes!
Your courage rise with danger,
And strength to strength oppose."

If, indeed, you have been redeemed by His precious blood; if His Spirit has, indeed, regenerated you, and if His grace is working in your hearts and lives, surely you cannot be so cowardly as to try to conceal yourselves as secret disciples of Christ! To do battle for Jesus is the most honorable service on earth! And, in the great day of account, happy shall he be who has bravely borne his part in the great conflict that is now raging between Christ and His truth and anti-Christ and his lies! Come to the front, brothers and sisters! Come to the front! Press forward to that point where the fight is the fiercest, for he is the happiest Christian who can *do*, and *dare,* and *suffer* the most for Jesus Christ, his Lord! Do not, for very shame, conceal your faith if you really believe in Jesus!

Probably the most of you are placed in positions where you are obliged to speak if you are believers. In the workshop, how much is there of infidelity! In common business life, how much of indifference! In the gayer circles of society, how much of contempt for true religion! And in the coarser circles, how much of vulgar blasphemy! Shame on the man or

woman who can live in the midst of worldlings and never let them know that they belong to Christ!

Surely, too, the very fact that you are so often in the company of Christian people ought to make you confess your faith. Even under the old dispensation, "they that feared the Lord spoke often, one to another." And they that truly fear the Lord do the same now. If you are among the God fearing people of the present day, your speech will betray you. Your brothers and sisters in Christ will note your accent, they will perceive that you use their shibboleth, that you have been with Jesus and have learnt of Him. If any of you have received the blessing of salvation through the ministry here, come forward and avow your faith! I do not urge you to do this simply that we may add to our numbers, but as I have already reminded you, this is the reward of our labor which we deserve at your hands. If you have, indeed, passed from death unto life, come out boldly and say so! Though you may be one of the poorer members of the congregation. Though your faith may not be as strong as that of others. Yet if it is genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall rejoice over you and with you with exceeding joy! Whoever you may be, if you are truly trusting in Jesus, "come with us, and we will do you good." When the question rings out in your hearing, "Who is on the Lord's side?" Answer, "I am! I have enlisted among the soldiers of Christ and as I take Him to be my Captain, now, I trust that He will acknowledge me as one of His in the day when the last muster roll of His troops is called and He gathers them all around Him to share with Him the spoils of His great victory."—

"Stand up! Stand up for Jesus!
The strife will not be long.
This day the noise of battle,
The next the victor's song!
To him that overcomes,
A crown of life shall be—
He with the King of glory
Shall reign eternally!"

III. I can only very briefly refer to the consideration of our text as THE MOTIVE FOR SUPPLICATION. "I believed, therefore have I spoken."

First, *I believed in prayer, therefore have I spoken unto God*. I did not regard it as a religious luxury, a pious but useless exercise and waste of time, as so many nowadays say that prayer to God is. I believe that as truly as you are listening to me, now, so God listens to me and I can speak to Him and receive answers from Him. That is the way to pray, young man—to speak to God because you believe that He is the hearer and answerer of prayer, for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

I also believed that Jesus Christ was pleading for me. By faith I could see the man, Christ Jesus, standing before His Father's throne, with His pierced hands uplifted and presenting my poor prayers to His Father and so making them acceptable through His intercession on my behalf. I be-

lieved in Him as the mediator between God and man and, therefore, I dared to speak to God by virtue of His mediation, though I could not have acceptably approached the Majesty on high in any other way.

I also believed in the Holy Spirit as working in me and teaching me how to pray. The Holy Spirit gave me right desires and helped my infirmities, for I knew not what to pray for as I ought. But because the mind of the Spirit is also the mind of God, I was able, under His gracious guidance, to approach the throne of grace acceptably and, therefore, because I believed in the Spirit, therefore have I spoken unto God in prayer—and I have not spoken in vain!

I also believed in God's promise to hear and answer prayer and, therefore, I have spoken unto Him in the full conviction that He would hear and answer me. I believed that every promise that He had given would be kept to the very letter, so I took each promise as I needed it, quoted it when bowing before God in prayer—and then left it with Him, saying, "Lord, do as You have said. Here is Your promise. I believe it, therefore have I spoken it in Your ears. Will You not fulfill this word unto Your servant, whereon You have caused me to hope?" I believed that God was faithful, so that He would fulfill His promise and that He was willing, so He could fulfill it and grant me all that I needed so long as I could find in His word a promise adapted to my case.

"I believed, therefore have I spoken." This is the way to pray. An unbelieving prayer asks God for a refusal of its requests. Remember what the Apostle James writes—"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."

If you believe the Bible, speak of it wherever you can. If you believe in Jesus, preach Him to all who are within sound of your voice. If you believe in the Spirit, walk in His might and tell others of that wondrous power. But if you have never believed, may the Lord grant you grace to believe in Father, Son and Holy Spirit! May He grant you grace to believe the Bible, grace to believe the gospel and then, when you have believed, may you not keep the blessing to yourself, but first make your own personal confession of faith—and then publish far and wide all that has been revealed to you by the Spirit! So shall you be able to say with the Psalmist, "I believed, therefore have I spoken." God grant it, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 116.

We have read this Psalm many times. Let us read it now, regarding it not so much as the language of the Psalmist uttered thousands of years ago, but as our own language at this moment.

Verse 1. *I love the LORD.* Let us go as far as that if we can. Let us, each one, say, "I love the Lord."

1. *Because.* There is a reason for this love. People say that love is blind, but love to God uses her eyes and can justify herself! "I love the Lord, because"—

1. *He has heard my voice and my supplications.* [See Sermon #240, Volume 5—PRAYER ANSWERED, LOVE NOURISHED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Can you go as far as that? Do you recollect answers to prayer when you cried to God with your voice, or when your voice failed you, but supplication rose to God from your heart? Surely there is not a man whose prayers have been answered, who does not love God! He must love the Lord when he recollects what poor prayers his were, what great blessings came in answer to them and how speedily and how often God has heard his prayers and granted his requests!

2. *Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.* That is a vow which we may well make and hope for grace to keep it. It means that as we have succeeded so well in begging at God's door, we will keep on begging of Him as long as we live. I suppose the Psalmist meant that because Jehovah had heard him, therefore he would never call upon any false god but, as long as he lived, he would resort to the one living and true God. I hope that you and I can say the same. We have tried the fountain of living waters—why should we go to broken cisterns that can hold no water? Prayer to God has always succeeded—why should we not continue it? All you who have plied the trade of beggars at the mercy seat must have been so enriched by it in your souls that you are determined to stand there as long as you live. "Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live." This is sound reasoning, for even the emotions of believers, when they are most fervent, are based upon solid reasons. We can defend ourselves even when we grow warmest in love to God and most earnest in prayer! Now the Psalmist tells one of his many experiences in prayer—

3, 4. *The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then I called upon the name of the LORD.* Dark days are good days for praying. When your eyes cannot see, you pray all the better! When there is no earthly prop to lean upon, you are all the more ready to lean upon God alone! The Psalmist was like a poor worm in a ring of fire—"the sorrows of death compassed me." The sheriff's officer seemed to hold him in his grip—"the pains of hell got hold upon me." As for his inner experience, he found nothing there but "trouble and sorrow." When the town of Mansoul was besieged, every way of escape was closed except the way upwards—and it was so with the

Psalmist and, therefore, he made use of that way! "Then I called upon the name of the Lord." His prayer was short, earnest and full of meaning—

4. *O LORD. I beseech You, deliver my soul.* [See Sermon #1216, Volume 21—TO SOULS IN AGONY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] He did not have to search for a form of prayer—his words were such as came naturally to his mind—and that is the best sort of prayer which arises out of the heart's sincere desire.

5. *Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yes, our God is merciful.* The Psalmist was delivered by an act of grace, yet it was an act of righteousness, for God is not unrighteous to break His own promise, and He has promised to help His people. Grace and righteousness both guarantee answers to believing prayers—and mercy comes in to make assurance doubly sure—"Yes, our God is merciful."

6. *The LORD preserves the simple.* Straightforward men, those who cannot play a double part, those simpletons whom others take in and laugh at because they are honest, true, genuine—the Lord preserves such people!

6. *I was brought low and He helped me.* Oh, these blessed personal pronouns! Are you laying hold of them as I read them? Are you speaking them out of your own soul?

7. *Return unto your rest, O my soul; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.* [See Sermon #2758, Volume 47—"RETURN UNTO YOUR REST"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Come home to Him, for you have no other friend like He in earth or heaven! Come back to Him, my soul, and rest where you have often rested before.

8. *For You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.* An eternity of mercies from the eternal, Himself!

9. *I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.* The best style of living is walking before God, so living in His sight as to be indifferent to the opinions and judgments of our fellow men and only caring to know that God is looking upon us with approval. This is the way to live! And if we have tried it, we have found it to be so pleasant that we are resolved to continue in it!

10, 11. *I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted: I said in my haste, All men are liars.* They have all failed me. Some of them could but would not help me, so they were as liars to me. Others would but could not, and as I have trusted them, they were as liars to me! But You, my God, are no liar, You are the truth itself! I ask those of you who have had a very long and varied experience to look back and tell me whether you can recollect even once when your God has broken His promise. You have sometimes been afraid that He would forget it, but has He ever done so? If you speak as you have found Him, you must praise and adore the faithful, immutable, all sufficient Jehovah who has made your strength to be as your days even to this very hour!

12. *What shall I render unto the LORD for all His benefits toward me?* That question contains the essence of true religion. This should be the one objective of our lives if we have been redeemed by Christ and are His servants. Whatever we have done for God, we should endeavor to do much more—and to do it much better.

13. *I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.* This is a curious way of rendering anything, yet you know that John Newton's hymn says—

"The best return for one like me
So wretched and so poor,
Is from His gifts to draw a plea,
And ask Him still for more."

14-16. *I will say my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all His people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints. O LORD, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid: You have loosened my bonds.* [See Sermon #312, Volume 6—PERSONAL SERVICE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] It is a great blessing if we are able to say, as David did, that we are born into God's house. Some of us had gracious mothers who brought us to the Lord in earnest prayer long before we knew anything. I can say to the Lord, "I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid"—and I have no greater wish than that all my descendants may be the Lord's.

17-18. *I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD, I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all His people.* Do it, beloved! Let your hearts pour themselves out in silence, now, and afterwards in grateful song before the Lord. Praise Him, magnify Him, bless His name, "in the presence of all His people." It is inspiriting to be with your brothers and sisters in Christ. Perhaps the devotion which burns low when there is only one brand on the hearth will burn all the better and brighter when we add many blazing brands to it!

19. *In the courts of the LORD'S house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Praise you the LORD.*

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MERCY FOR THE MEANEST OF THE FLOCK
NO. 3201

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***"In that day, says the LORD, will I assemble the lame, and I will gather the outcast, and those whom I have afflicted."* (NKJV)**
Micah 4:6.

THIS is spoken, I suppose, in the first place, of the Jewish people who have been so afflicted on account of their sin that they almost cease to be a nation. They are driven here and there among the lands and made to suffer greatly. In the last time, when Christ shall appear in His glory in the days of halcyon peace, then shall Israel partake of the universal joy. Poor, limping, faltering Israel, afflicted with tempest, shall yet be gathered and rejoice in her God!

However, I am sure that the text applies to the church of God and we shall not do amiss if we also find in it promises to individual Christians. We will regard the text in those two lights as spoken to the church and as spoken to individual souls.

I. First, then, AS REFERRING TO THE CHURCH OF GOD. "In that day, says the LORD, will I assemble the lame, and I will gather the outcast, and those whom I have afflicted."

The church of God is not always equally vigorous and prosperous. Sometimes she can run without weariness and walk without fainting, but at other times she begins to limp and is lame. There is a deficiency in her faith, a lukewarmness in her love, doctrinal errors spring up and many things that both weaken and trouble her—and then she becomes like a lame person. And, indeed, beloved, when I compare the church of God at the present moment with the first apostolic church, she may well be called, "the lame." Oh, how she leaped in the first Pentecostal times! What wondrous strength she had throughout all Judea and all the neighboring lands! The voice of the church in those days was like the voice of a lion—and the nations heard and trembled. The utmost isles of the sea understood the power of the gospel and before long the cross of Christ was set up on every shore. Thus was the church in her early days—the love of her espousals was upon her and her strength was like that of a young unicorn!

How the church now limps! How deficient in vigor, how weak in her actions! If I compare the church now with the church in Reformation times, when, in our own land, our fathers went bravely to prison and to the stake to bear witness to the Lord Jesus! When, in covenanting Scotland and Puritan England, the truth of God was held with firmness and proclaimed with earnestness and, what is, perhaps, still better, when the

truth of God was lived by those who professed it—then was she mighty, indeed, and not to be compared to "the lame," as I fear she is now in these days of laxity of doctrine and laxity of life—when error is tolerated in the church and loose living is tolerated in the world!

I might almost use the same simile for the church, today, as compared with those early days of Methodism when Whitefield was flying like a seraph in the midst of heaven—preaching in England and America the unsearchable riches of Christ to tens of thousands! When Wesley and others were working with undiminished ardor to reach the poorest of the poor and the lowest of the low! Those were good days with all their faults. Life and fire abounded, the God of Israel was glorified, and tens of thousands were converted! The church seemed as though it had risen from the dead and cast off its grave clothes, and was rejoicing in newness of life! We are not without hopeful signs today. There is not everything to depress, but much to encourage. At the same time, the church limps—she does not stand firm and run fast. Oh, that God would be pleased to visit her!

Moreover, if I look at the text, I perceive that the church not only is sometimes weak, but, at the same time, or at some other time, *the church is persecuted and made to suffer*, for the text speaks of "the outcast." And it has often happened that the church has been driven right out from among men. It has been said of her, "Away with her from the earth! It is not fit that she should live." But how wondrously God has shown His mercy to His people when they have been driven out! The days of exile have been bright days! The sun never shone more fairly on the church's brow than when she worshiped God in the catacombs of Rome, or when her disciples "wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented." In our own country, those who met in secret, perpetually pestered by informers who would bring them before the magistrate for joining in prayer and song, often said, when they got their liberty, that they wished they had the days, again, when they were gathered together in the lonely house and scarcely dared to sing loudly! They had brave times in those days, when every man held his soul in his hand. When he worshiped his God not knowing whether the hand of the hangman or the headsman might not soon be upon him. The Lord was pleased to bless His people when the church was driven out. If the snowy peaks of Piedmont, if the lowlands of Holland, if the prisons of Spain could speak, they would tell of infinite mercy experienced by the saints under terrible oppression—of hearts that were leaping to heaven while the bodies were bruised or burning on earth! God has been gracious to His people when they have been driven out.

Sometimes trouble comes to God's people in another way. *The church is afflicted by God Himself*. It seems as if God had put away His church for a time and driven her from His presence. That has happened often in all churches. Perhaps some of you are members of such churches now, or have been. Discord has come in and the spirit of peace has gone. Coldness has come into the pulpit and a chill has come over the pews. The prayer meetings are neglected, the seeking of souls is almost given up—the candlestick is there, but the candle seems to be gone, or not to

be lighted. The means of grace have become lifeless. You almost dread the Sabbath which once was your comfort. It is wretched for Christian people when it comes to this! And yet, in scores of villages and towns in England this is the case. The sheep look up and the shepherd looks down but there is no food for the sheep, neither does the shepherd, himself, know where to get the food because he has not been taught of God. It is a melancholy thing, wherever this has been the case, but I would encourage the saints to cry mightily for the return of God's Spirit, for the restoration of unity and peace, earnestness and prayerfulness, that once again the wilderness and the solitary place may be made glad and the desert may rejoice and blossom like the rose!

My brothers and sisters, may God never treat the church in England as she deserves to be treated, for when I look around me and see her sins, they seem to rise up to heaven like a mighty cry! We have been told lately in so many words, by an eminent preacher, that all creeds have something good in them—even the creed of the heathen—and that out of them all the grand creed is to be made, which is yet to be the religion of mankind! God save us from those who talk in this way and yet profess to be sent of God! They who know in their own souls what God's truth is, will not be led astray by such delusions. But God may visit His church and chasten her sorely by depriving her of His Spirit for a while. If He has done so, or is about to do so, let us still pray that He may gather the outcast and afflicted.

I may not dwell longer upon these points, but hasten to notice the blessing that will come, in answer to prayer, upon churches that are weak, or sorely persecuted. There are scattering times, no doubt, but we should always pray that we may live in gathering times, that we may be gathered together in unity, in essential oneness around the cross, in united action for our glorious Master, and that sinners who are far away may be gathered in, too, and backsliders who have wandered may be restored! Pray for gathering times, brothers and sisters, and may the day come when the Lord will assemble the lame and will gather the outcast and afflicted.

Notice that the text speaks of a "day." So we may expect that God will have His own time of benediction. "In that day, says the LORD, will I assemble the lame." I believe that to be a day in which we inquire after the Lord, a day in which we are prayerful, in which we become anxious, in which an agony lays hold upon the souls of believers until the Lord shall return unto His people—a day when Christ is revealed in the testimony of the church and the gospel is fully preached—in that day will the Lord assemble the lame! May that day speedily come! But if we do not see the blessing tomorrow, let us remember that tomorrow may not be God's day, and let us persevere in prayer till God's day does come. There are better days in store for the church—and before the page of human history closes, there will be times of triumph for her in which she shall be glorious—and God shall be glorified in her!

II. I shall, however, pass from this first point about the church, because I wish to speak to mourners, to melancholy ones. I trust I have a

message of mercy to some that are desponding. We shall look on the text, secondly, AS REFERRING TO INDIVIDUAL SOULS. "In that day, says the LORD, will I assemble the lame." There are three characters described here. Let us look at each of them.

First, *the soul that limps*. Of course by that is intended those Christians who are very weak. Some are "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." It would be a great mercy if all God's people were so, but there are some Christians who have faith of but a feeble sort. They have love to God, but they sometimes question whether they do love Him at all. They have piety in their hearts, but it is not of that vigorous kind one would desire. It is rather like the spark in the flax, or the music in the bruised reed. They are like Little Faith and Miss Much Afraid. They are alive, but only just alive. Sometimes their life seems to tremble in the balance and yet it is hidden with Christ in God and, therefore, it is really beyond the reach of harm! They are the weak ones and God speaks to such weak ones, and says, "I will assemble the lame."

It not only means that they are weak, but that they are slow and limping persons. A lame person cannot travel quickly and, oh, how slowly some Christians move! What little advance they make in the divine life! They were little children ten years ago and they are little children now. Their own children have grown up to be men, but they themselves do not appear to have made any advance. They are just babes in grace and still have need of milk. They are not strong enough to feed upon the strong meat of the kingdom of God. They are slow to believe all that the prophets and apostles have spoken, slow to rejoice in God, slow to catch a truth of God and perceive its bearing, but still slower to get the nutriment out of it and learn its application to themselves. But, slow as they are, I trust we may say of them that they are as sure as they are slow! What steps they do take are well taken. And if they come slowly, like the snail, yet they are like the snail in Noah's days crawling towards the ark—they will eventually get in!

With this slowness there is also pain. A lame man walks painfully. Perhaps every time he puts his foot to the ground, a shock of pain goes through his whole system. And some Christians, in their progress in the heavenly life, seem afflicted in like manner. I meet with some Christians who are very sensitive and every time there is anything wrong they are ashamed and grieved. I wish some other Christians had more of that feeling, for it is an awful fact that many professors seem to tamper greatly with sin and think nothing of it at all. Better the sensitive soul that is fearful and timorous, lest it should in any way grieve the Spirit of God—with a watchful eye over itself and a conscience that is quick and tender as the apple of the eye—than such presumption and hardness of heart as others have! But some have this sensitiveness without the other qualities which balance it—and it makes their progress to heaven a painful one, though a safe one. They do not look enough at the cross. They do not remember that, "if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship, one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." They have not come to see that the Lord Jesus Christ is able to deliver us from all sin, so that indwelling sin shall not

have dominion over us, because we are not under the law, but under grace. So their progress is painful. But, limping one, this word is for you, "I will assemble the lame, when I call My people together, I will call her; when I send an invitation to a feast, I will direct one specially to her. She is weak, she is slow, she is in pain, but for all that I will assemble her with My people."

The allusion, perhaps, is to a sheep that has somehow been lamed. The shepherd has to get all the flock together and, therefore, he must bring the lame ones in, too. And the good shepherd of the sheep takes care that the lame sheep shall be gathered. I find that the original word has somewhat of the import of one sidedness—a lame sheep goes as if it went on one side. It cannot use this foot, and so it has to throw its weight on the other side. How many Christians there are that have a one sidedness in religion and, unfortunately, that often happens to be the gloomy side! They are very properly suspicious of themselves, but they do not add to that a weight of confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ. Looking back upon their past and seeing their own unfaithfulness, they forget God's faithfulness! Looking upon the present, they see their own imperfections and infirmities—and forget that the Spirit helps our infirmities—and that if we had no infirmities, there would be nothing for the Spirit to do to glorify Himself in our weakness! When they look forward to the future, they see the dragons and the dark river of death, but they forget that promise, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you." What a mercy it is that the Lord will not forget these one sided limpers, but that even they shall be assembled when, with the shepherd's crook, He gathers His flock and brings them home!

We may add to these, those who have got tired with the trials of the way. It is a weary thing to be lame. It saddens my heart to often see the sheep go through the London streets. They go limping along, poor things, so spent and spiritless. There are many Christians who are like they are—they seem to have been so long in trouble that they do not know how to bear up any longer. What with the loss of the husband and the loss of the child. What with poverty and many struggles and no apparent hope of deliverance. What with one sickness and then another in their own bodies. What with one temptation and then another temptation, and then a third, they feel very wearied by the way. They are like Jacob when he limped on his thigh. The blessing is that the Lord says, "I will assemble the lame." Lay hold on that, you limping ones! I daresay you suppose you are the last one of the flock. You have got so tired and lame that you think that though all the others are close by the shepherd's hand, you are forgotten. You remember that the Amalekites in the wilderness fell upon the children of Israel and smote some of the hindmost of them and, perhaps, you are afraid that you will get smitten in that way. Let me remind you of a text—"The LORD will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your reward." Those that lead the way can rejoice that God goes before them, but you can rejoice that God is behind you, as we read again, "The glory of the LORD shall be your reward." He will take care that you shall not be destroyed.

But now, secondly, *the soul that is exiled*—"I will gather the outcast." Perhaps I address someone here who has been driven out from the world. It was not a very great world, that world of yours, but still, it was very dear to you. You loved father, mother, brothers and sisters, but you are a speckled bird among them now. Sovereign grace and electing love have lighted on you, but not on them. At first they ridiculed you when you went to hear the gospel—but now that you have received it and they perceive that you are in earnest—they persecute you. You are one by yourself. You almost wish you did not live among them because you are farther off from them than if you were really away from them. Nothing you can do pleases them. There are sure to be a thousand faults and they fling the taunt at you when you fail, and say, "This is your religion!" You cry out, "Woe is me that I dwell in Meshech!" Do you remember what became of the man when the Pharisees cast him out? Why, the Lord met him and graciously took him in! Remember what Jesus said to His disciples, "If you were of the world, the world would love his own, but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." When I go to a man's house and his dog barks at me, he does it because I am a stranger. And when you go into the world and the world howls at you—it is because you are different from worldlings and they recognize in you the grace of God—and pay the only homage which evil is ever likely to pay to goodness, namely, persecute it with all their might!

Perhaps, however, it is worse than that. "I should not mind being driven out from the world," you say, "I could take that cheerfully, but I seem driven out from the church of God." There may be two ways in which this may come about. Perhaps you have been zealous for the Lord God of Israel in the midst of a cold church and you have spoken, perhaps not always prudently. The consequence is that you have angered and vexed the brethren, and they have thought that you fancied yourself to be better than they, though such a thought was far from your mind. It is an unfortunate thing for a man to be born before his time, yet he may be a grand man. Some Christians in certain churches seem to live ahead of their brethren. It is a good thing but, as surely as Joseph brought down the enmity of his own brothers upon himself because he walked with God and God revealed Himself to him, so is it likely that you, if you are in advance of your brethren, will draw down opposition upon yourself which will be very bitter. Never mind if the servants repulse you! Go and tell their Master—do not go and grumble at them! Pray their Master to mend their manners. He knows how to do it!

But it is just possible that you have been driven out only in your own thoughts. Perhaps the members of the church really love you and esteem you, and think highly of you. But you have become so depressed in spirit that you do not feel that you have any right to be in the church. You have made up your mind that you will not be a hypocrite and, therefore, you have given up all profession. You have a notion that some of your fellow members think evil of you and wonder how ever such an one as you can come to the church. Oh, the many poor little lambs that come bleating around me with their troubles! And when I tell them, "I never heard

anything against you in my life! I never heard anybody speak of you but with love and respect. I never observed anything in you but tenderness of conscience and a quiet holy walk with God," they seem quite surprised!

Brethren, look after your fellow members—do not let them think you are cold to them. Some of them will think it whatever you may do. Some of you, brothers and sisters, are thought to be so proud that you will not look at people! If they did but know the truth, they would see that you are very different. Now, you lambs, do not be grieved about nothing. But you who are stronger than they, mind that you do not give any offense that can be prevented. It is impossible but that offenses will come, but "woe unto him through whom they come." Let us be careful not to break the bruised reed, even by accidentally treading upon it. But, dear brother or sister, if that is your condition, let me tell you that you are not driven out—it is quite a mistake. But if you think so—go to your Lord. If you will tell Jesus, He will make up for any apparent change that may come over His people.

Ah, but I think I hear one say, "It is not being driven out from the world that hurts me, nor being driven out from the church. I could bear that—but I am driven out from the Lord, Himself! I seem to have lost His company and losing that I have lost all—

"'What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill.'"

Thank God if you feel like that! If the world could fill your heart, it would prove that you are no child of God! But if the world cannot fill it, then Christ will come and fill it! If you will be satisfied with nothing but Him, He will satisfy you. If you are saying, "I will not be comforted till Jesus comforts me," you shall get the comfort you need. He never left a soul to perish that was looking to Him and longing for Him! Cry to Him, again, and this text shall be true to you, "I will gather the outcast." May that word come home to some of you! I do not know where you may be, but the Master does—may He apply the promise to your hearts!

One other person is mentioned here—*the soul that is troubled*—"those whom I have afflicted." Yes, and in all churches of God there are some dear, good friends that are more afflicted than others. They are often the best people. Are you surprised at that? Which vine does the gardener prune the most? That which bears the most and the sweetest fruit! He uses the knife most upon that because it will pay for pruning. Some of us seem scarcely to pay for pruning—we enjoy good health, but when trial comes, when the Lord prunes us, we may say—"Thank God! He means to do something with me after all!"

Perhaps this afflicted one is afflicted in body—scarcely a day without pain, scarcely a day without the prospect of more suffering. Well, if there is any child the mother is sure to remember, it is the sick one! And if there are any Christians to whom God is peculiarly familiar, they are His afflicted ones. "You will make all his bed in his sickness," is said con-

cerning a sick saint. The Lord makes your bed, dear brothers and sisters, if you are suffering bodily pain!

Some are mentally afflicted. Much of the doubts and fears we hear about comes from some degree of mental aberration. The mental trouble may be very slight, but it is very common. I suppose that there is not a perfectly sane man among us. When that great wind blew, at the time of the fall, a slate blew off everybody's house—and some are more affected than others so that they take the black view of all things. This mental infirmity, for which they are not to be blamed, will probably be with them till they get to heaven. Well, God blesses those who are thus troubled!

Then some are spiritually afflicted. Satan is permitted to try them very much. There is only one way to heaven, but I find that there is a bit of the road that is newly stoned, a harder path to travel on, and some persons seem to go to heaven all over the new stones—their soul is perpetually exercised—while God grants to others to choose the smoother parts of the way and go triumphantly on. Let those I have spoken of hear the word of promise, "I will gather those whom I have afflicted," for when God, Himself, gives the affliction, He will bring His servant through and glorify Himself thereby.

To close, let us regard this promise, "I will gather her," as meaning, "I will gather My tried ones into the fellowship of the church. I will bring My scattered sheep near to Me." The Lord Jesus will gather His dear people into fellowship with Himself. "I will gather them every day around My mercy seat. I will gather them, by and by, on the other side of Jordan, on those verdant hilltops where the Lamb shall forever feed His flock and lead them to living fountains of waters." Poor, tried, lame, afflicted, limping soul, the shepherd has not forgotten you! He will gather all His sheep and they shall pass again under the hands of Him that counts them—there shall not be one missing! I cannot make out how some of my brothers think that the Lord will lose some of His people—that there are some whom Jesus has bought with His blood who will get lost on the way to heaven! It is an unhappy shepherd who finds some of his flock devoured by the wolf, but our shepherd will never be in that strait with His sheep. He says, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." What do you say to that, you limping ones? What do you say to that, you, the last of all? He has given eternal life to you as much as to the strongest of the flock and you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of His hand! He will gather you with the rest of His sheep.

And when will He fulfill that promise, beloved? He is always fulfilling it and He will completely fulfill it in the day when He is manifested. As this chapter describes Him, when He comes to make peace, and men beat their swords into plowshares, then will He gather you. Even now, when He comes as the great peace giver, He gathers those whom are lame. When the storms of temptation lie still, awhile, and He shows Himself in the heart as the God that walked the sea of Galilee of old, then are His people gathered into peace—they rest in that day. Thank God, the most tried and troubled believer has some gleams of sunlight. In winter time, sometimes, you know there comes a day which looks like a summer's day

when the gnats come out and think it is spring—and the birds begin to sing as if they thought that surely winter was over and past! In the darkest experience there are always some blessed gleams of light—just enough to keep the soul alive. That is in one measure the fulfillment of the promise, "I will assemble the lame…in that day."

But the day is coming when you and I who have been limping, feeble and weak, shall be gathered, never to limp, never to doubt and never to sin again! I do not know how long it may be. Some of you are a long way ahead of me, according to your years, but we cannot tell. The youngest of us may go soonest, for there are last that shall be first, and first that shall be last. But there is such a day written in the eternal decrees of God when we shall lay aside every tendency to sin, every tendency to doubt, every capacity for tribulation, every need for chastisement—and then we shall mount and soar away to the bright world of endless day! What a mercy it will be to find ourselves there! Oh, how we shall greet Jesus with joy and gladness and tell of redeeming grace and dying love that brought home even the limping ones and the weakest and the feeblest!

I think those that are reckoned strong and do the most for God are generally those who think themselves weakest when it comes to the stripping time. I read of a man who had been the means of the conversion of many hundreds of souls by personal private efforts—I refer to Harlan Page. On his dying bed he said, "They talk of me, but I am nothing, nothing, nothing." He mourned over his past life—to him it seemed that he had done nothing for his Master, that his life was a blank. He wept to think he had done so little for Christ while everyone was wondering how he had lived such a blessed and holy life! That man only is rich towards God who begins to know his emptiness, and feels that he is less than nothing, and vanity.

Beloved, it is because those who serve God best often feel that they are lame, driven away, afflicted, and tossed with doubts and fears—it is because of this that this promise is put to the lowest case and the blessing given to the very meanest capacity! It is so in order that one who is strong may be able to come in, and when in depression of spirit say, "That promise will suit me! I will get a grip of it. I will come to God with it in my hands and at the mercy seat get it fulfilled to me, even to me." The Lord grant you, beloved, to be numbered among His jewels in that day!

What shall I say to those who know nothing about the divine life at all, who, perhaps, are saying, "Well, we never get to limping or doubting. We have a merry time of it"? Yes and so does the butterfly, while the summer lasts, but the winter kills it. Your summer may last a little while, but the chill of death will soon be on you—and then what is there for you but hopeless misery forever and forever? God give you grace to fly to Jesus now and be saved with an everlasting salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MICAH 4.

Verse 1. *But in the last days it shall come to pass that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills and people shall flow unto it.* [See Sermon #249, Volume 5—A VISION OF THE LATTER DAY GLORIES—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] God's cause and kingdom shall not be hidden away in a corner—"the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains," an Alp upon other Alps, higher than all the other hills! The day is coming when the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be the most conspicuous thing in the whole world, "and people shall flow unto it." The heathen, the people who knew nothing about it, shall flow to it like a great river!

2. *And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths.* That is the way the grace of God works in us—He teaches and then we not only learn—but we obey.

2, 3. *For the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off.* The kingdom of Christ, the Son of David, shall attract people and nations that were far off from the holy city where He lived and died.

3. *And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.* They shall give up the study of the art of war. Their spirit shall be softened—in many cases renewed by grace—and then they shall take to the useful arts. They shall not throw away their swords, but shall beat them into plowshares. They shall not hurl their spears into the earth, but shall bend them into scythes or pruning hooks. Oh, that the day were come when the wealth and ingenuity and power of nations were used in the pursuits of peace instead of in the arts of war! This is the tendency of the kingdom of Christ, for wherever He comes, He makes peace. Nothing is more opposed to the spirit of Christianity than war—and when men are Christians, not in name only, but in deed and in truth—wars must cease.

4. *But they shall sit, every man under his vine and under his fig tree: and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken it.* The best evidence that this will be the case is that the Lord of hosts, who has all power at His disposal, has said that it shall be so!

5. *For all people will walk, everyone in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever.* When we learn to know God in truth, we do not give Him up, but we walk in His name forever and ever. God's covenant with us is an everlasting covenant, reaching beyond time and enduring throughout eternity. Some nations have discarded their idol gods, but those who really know and love the Lord will walk in His name forever and ever.

6. *In that day, says the LORD will I assemble the lame.* God will bring to Himself you that limp, that hesitate, that tremble, that fear—"I will assemble the lame."

6. *And I will gather the outcast.* Hunted by Satan and harassed by care. Frightened by depression of spirit. "I will gather the outcast"

6. *And those whom I have afflicted.* If God has laid His hand upon one of you so that you have a special affliction from Him you have this gracious promise that He will gather you to Himself!

7. *And I will make those who limped a remnant, and those who were cast far off, a strong nation: and the LORD shall reign over them in Mount Zion from henceforth, even forever.* Little scattered communities, churches which have been weak and feeble, shall have the strengthening of God and they shall be, through His sovereign grace, a remnant saved by grace to His praise and glory! Note how everything here is done by God—you keep on reading, "I will," "I will," "I will." Oh, those blessed, "I wills" of God! Our wills are often defeated and disappointed, but God's, "I wills" stand fast forever!

8. *And you, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, unto you shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.* So it did. "Beginning at Jerusalem," was Christ's order concerning the preaching of the gospel after His resurrection. The first servants of Christ were of that ancient people who might be called the "tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion." Oh, that Christ would soon return in mercy to the—

"Chosen seed of Israel's race,
A remnant weak and small"—

and gather them to Himself, for that would be the fullness of the Gentiles, also!

9. *Now why do you cry out aloud? Is there no king in you? Is your counselor perished?* Sometimes our prayers may be the utterance of our fears rather than of our faith—and then the question comes, "Is there no king in you? Is your counselor perished?" Can we not trust to Him whose name is "Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace"?

10. *For pangs have taken you as a woman in travail.* They are sharp pangs, but they lead to life and, therefore, they are blessed pangs after all!

10. *Be in pain, and labor to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shall you go forth out of the city and you shall dwell in the field, and you shall go even to Babylon: there shall you be delivered; there the LORD shall redeem you from the hand of your enemies.* It looks more like a threat than a promise that God would send His people to Babylon, but there they were to be delivered. And it oftentimes happens with us that we must be brought into captivity before we are set free—we must feel the weight of the iron bondage of sin and Satan before we are brought out into the glorious liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free!

11. *Now also many nations are gathered against you that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eyes look upon Zion.* All the enemies of Israel came together, hoping to destroy her. They saw that God had left her for a while in their hands, so they maliciously sought her destruction.

12. *But they know not the thoughts of the LORD.* They had their own thoughts and they thought that the Lord meant what they meant—the entire destruction of the chosen race! So the prophet says, "But they know not the thoughts of the LORD"—

12. *Neither understand they His counsel: for He shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor.* God let them come together, great hosts of them, like the sheaves of wheat upon the threshing floor. Then see what the Lord says—

13. *Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make your horn iron, and I will make your hoofs brass; and you shall beat in pieces many people.* She was to be like the ox that treads out the corn and she was to have horns of iron and hoofs of brass with which to break in pieces those that had oppressed her!

13. *And I will consecrate their gain unto the LORD, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth.* So that, when they expected to destroy her, she destroyed them! And there may come a day when all the great men and the wise men and the proud men of the world will come together to destroy the church of Christ, but, oh, how mistaken they will be! For when their pride is at its height, then will the poor weak church of Christ be suddenly strengthened by the Most High and she shall tread them under her feet and they shall be utterly defeated to the praise of the glory of the God of Zion who lives forever and ever!

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"IT PLEASED GOD"
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"It pleased God."
Galatians 1:15.

WE will read the whole verse from which our text is taken—"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace." You will perceive, I think, in these words, that the divine plan of salvation is very clearly laid down. It begins, you see, in the will and pleasure of God—"when it pleased God." The foundation of salvation is not laid in the will of man. "It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy." It does not begin with man's obedience and then proceed onward to the purpose of God—but here is its commencement, here the fountainhead from which the living waters flow—"It pleased God." Next to the sovereign will and good pleasure of God comes the act of separation, commonly known by the name of *election*. This act is said, in the text, to take place even in the mother's womb, by which we are taught that it took place before our birth when as yet we could have done nothing whatever to win it or to merit it! God separated us from the earliest part and time of our being! And, indeed, long before that, when as yet the mountains and hills were not piled and the oceans were not formed by His creative power, He had, in His eternal purpose, set us apart for Himself. Then, after this act of separation came the effectual calling—"and called me by His grace." The calling does not cause the election—the election, springing from the divine purpose, causes the calling! The calling comes as a *consequence* of the divine purpose and the divine separation, and you will note how the obedience follows the calling. The apostle does not begin to be a preacher, according to the purpose and will of God, until first of all the Spirit of God has called him out of his state of nature into a state of grace. So the whole process runs thus—first the sacred, sovereign purpose of God, then the distinct and definite election or separation, then the effectual and irresistible calling and then afterwards, the obedience unto life, and the sweet fruits of the Spirit which spring from there. They err, not knowing the Scriptures, who put any of these processes before the others, out of the Scriptural order. They who put man's will first, know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm, for it is not of the will of man, says the

apostle in the most peremptory and positive manner—the salvation of any soul is a display of the eternal purpose and sovereign will of God!

And, beloved, by this test may we know the certainty of our election, if we have obediently yielded to the call of God. If the divine calling has produced in us the fruit of obedience, then we may assuredly believe that we were separated unto God before time began, and that this separation was according to the eternal purpose and will of God! Like golden links of a chain, any one of these will draw on the others. Am I justified? Then I was called by God's grace. Am I called? Then I was predestined to be called and, on the other hand, if I was predestined, then I shall be called, being called, I shall be justified, being justified, I shall be glorified! I think I have used this illustration before. On that bank of the great river of time is the massive pillar of divine foreknowledge and predestination, and on the other side of the river is the equally massive pillar of glorification. How are we to bridge these two? Both of these pillars are in the mists and clouds of eternity, but these stupendous chains stretch right across the intervening chasm—"Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." If I want to know what my relation is to predestination way over yonder in the past, I think of my calling, for I have been called, and so I am linked with the past! And if I want to know whether I shall be glorified, I know that, also, by the fact that I am today justified. So, as I stand here, I am linked with both the past and the future—linked so perfectly that neither time, nor life, nor death, nor hell shall ever be able to break the bonds that bind me equally to the predestination in the past and the glorification in the future! You see then, dear friends, that from this verse, as a whole, we learn the divine plan of salvation! And by it we may judge as to our own interest in it. But now, leaving the rest of the verse, let us consider the three words that form our text. "It pleased God."

I. First, we have here THE FOUNDATION OF DIVINE GRACE.

The reason why Paul was saved was this—"It pleased God." And the only reason why you or I will ever enter heaven must be this—"It pleased God." You can clearly perceive, in the apostle's case, that *there could be no other reason*. It could not be because of any merit of his that he was saved, for what was he? A blasphemer, he says, and a persecutor—so thirsty for the blood of saints that even in his younger days, he guarded the clothes of the murderers who stoned Stephen. Afterwards, he hated men and women, and committed them to prison, and compelled them to blaspheme, "and being"—to use his own expressive words—"exceedingly mad against them," he "persecuted them even unto strange cities." There could be nothing in that persecuting Jew, whose very breath was full of threats, and whose heart was like a furnace of fury against the saints—

there could be nothing in him which could be a reason why God should save him! If saved, it must be because "it pleased God."

And, most decidedly, *there was no co-action of the apostle's will tending to his conversion*. You remember the scene. I see him there, upon his proud charger, riding onward toward Damascus. He has in his possession letters which he treasures more than gold, for they give him the permission of the high priest to seize the saints at Damascus and carry them bound to Jerusalem. He rides on proudly, yonder is the city glittering in the sun, and he is meditating upon the deeds of blood and fury he will perform there—who can stop that man? But at midday God arrests him! "A light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun," shines upon him. The men that are with him see the light, but they know not what it is. He falls to the ground and a voice cries to him from heaven, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" He inquires, "Who are You, Lord?" The answer comes, "I am Jesus whom you persecute: it is hard for you to kick against the pricks," like an ox kicking against the sharp goad. He rises blind, yet seeing more than he ever saw before! He goes into Damascus, not to hunt Christ's disciples, but to learn from Ananias the good news that Christ's pardon may be given even to him! In three days' time, he is converted, baptized into the name of Christ, comes forth to tell the little church at Damascus what God has done for his soul and in the synagogues preaches that Christ is the Son of God! What reason can there be why this persecutor of the saints should have been saved but this—"It pleased God"?

Do not imagine that this is an exceptional experience. On the contrary, such cases occur every day! Many come into this place of worship as skeptics and go out sincere believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Some have I known who have come here only to laugh and scoff, but they have remained to pray. No thought was further from their mind than that they should ever become the followers of the Lamb—but the divine power, which was not necessarily connected with the preacher—carried the word into their hearts, arrested them on the spot, changed their natures, made them new creatures in Christ Jesus and sent them on their way rejoicing in their newly found Savior! And I am sure that all such persons will bear their willing witness that they can see no reason but for the grace which was bestowed on them but this —"It pleased God."

There are some whose lives have proved how sinful their nature was, for their sin has taken the form of open and gross vice. They are like that woman in the city who was a sinner. And as they resemble her in their sin, I trust that they will also resemble her in their love and be ready to wash the Savior's feet with their tears, and wipe them with the hairs of their heads! There may be some who are now truly converted, who have sinned as deeply as even Saul of Tarsus did. Then let them acknowledge, as he did, that their conversion was due to the undeserved favor of God! John Bradford's saying has often been quoted, but it will bear repeating

again and again. He lived in a house past which people used to be taken on the way to Tyburn to be hanged. And in those cruel times there were many poor wretches thus hurried out of existence—some of them for crimes which are far more leniently punished now. As the honest preacher saw them pass his house, he said, "There goes John Bradford but for the grace of God." He felt that he was, by nature, capable of doing just what they had done, and that only divine grace had made him to differ from them. And when I hear or read of some atrocious sinner, I say to myself, "That man is what I might have been if God had left me to take my own course, for by nature I am no better than he is. I might not have fallen into his special form of sin, for the bent of my constitution may not be in that particular direction, but I might have committed some other sin which would have been quite as bad as his." One vessel may leak at the bow and another may leak at the stern, but it does not much matter where the leak is—in either case the vessel will sink.

And those of you who have been converted as the result of a regular attendance at the house of prayer, when you come to remember how many others who are still unregenerate, who have been sitting side by side with you, you can only say, as you think who caused you to differ from them—"It pleased God." How often one is taken and the other left! Two women come up to worship at the same time and sit under the sound of the same message—one retires impenitent, the other's heart is broken. As we note the contrast between them, we can only stand and, holding up our hands in wonder, say, "What is the reason for this difference, Lord? There can be none except that so it seemed good in Your sight."

I know that there are many who the moment they hear this doctrine proclaimed, begin to quibble at it and quarrel with it. They do not think that God should thus do as He pleases in the work of salvation! But let me tell them that it is because they care not for God that they feel as they do in this matter. Opposition to divine sovereignty is essentially atheism. Men have no objection to a god who is really no God! I mean by this, a god who shall be the subject of their fancy, who shall be a lackey to their will, who shall be under their control—they have no objection to such a being as that! But a God who speaks and it is done! Who commands and it stands fast! A God who has no respect for their persons, but does as He wills among the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower world—such a God as this they cannot endure! And yet, is it not essential to the very being of God that He should be absolute and supreme? Certainly, to the Scriptural conception of God, sovereignty is an absolute necessity!

Let me say, then, to those who quarrel with the Lord for doing as He pleases in the conversion of sinners that first, He has the right to do so through His own inherent sovereignty. He made men and He has the right to do with them just as He pleases. "Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor, and another

unto dishonor?" If any man says to God, "Why have You made me thus?" The only answer is, "No, but, O man, who are you that replies against God?" Dread, mysterious and profound as the doctrine of divine sovereignty is, yet it certainly must be acknowledged that He who is God has an absolute and inherent right to do as He wills with all those whom He has, Himself, created—

"Mortals, be dumb! What creature dares
Dispute His awful will?
Ask no account of His affairs,
But tremble and be still."

But some of your animosity to this doctrine may perhaps be melted if you recollect that God's sovereignty is never displayed apart from His righteousness! To entrust a man with absolute power would be most dangerous, for he is fallible. But to entrust absolute holiness and righteousness with absolute power is the safest way of governing the whole universe. God cannot do an unrighteous thing, therefore let Him do whatever He wills! Who would wish to limit one whose acts must be from the very character that is essential to His being, just and true? No man who is lost will ever be able to blame God's sovereignty for it. The man that perishes shall justly perish because of his sins. And in hell, this shall be to him the pang of pangs—that he cannot reproach God, but that his damnation lies at his own door since he incensed the justice of God, which must punish him for his sin. And in like manner, the saints in heaven, though saved as the result of divine sovereignty, may boast that Sovereignty never violated justice, for, before God would bring one of them to heaven, He gave His Son to bleed and die that the demands of justice might be fully met before the sinner was saved!

I will venture to go even further than this and to say that the sovereignty of God is never exercised apart from His mercy and His benevolence. We know that "God is love," and who would limit love? As "God is love," let Him be absolute, for He will assuredly do that which, on the whole, is the best for all His creatures, as well as most for the glory of His own perfect character. Then, as this is the case, how ought we to delight to think that God is free and bound by no law but His own will, which is the fountain of all law, and constrained by no necessity but the carrying out of His own eternal purpose of love and mercy!

I feel sure that much of the opposition to the doctrine of divine sovereignty springs from a misunderstanding of God. I know that some misrepresent this truth of God as though God were an almighty tyrant, but Scripture gives no warrant for such a caricature. And I again enter, as I have already often entered, my earnest protest against such an insult to my God! When any man perishes, lay not his blood at God's door. If any man is lost, his ruin is caused by himself and not to be laid to the charge of our ever gracious God. Yet remember, at the same time, that if any are *saved*, the glory of their salvation must be ascribed to God! I am often asked, "How do you make those two statements consistent with one an-

other?" But that question does not perplex me, for I do not see how they are inconsistent with each other. Someone says, "But I do not understand this doctrine." Perhaps not, but remember that while we are bound to tell you the truths of God, we are not bound to give you the power to understand them. And besides, this is not a subject for understanding—it is a matter for *believing* because it is revealed in the Word of God! It is one of the axioms of theology that if a man is lost, God must not be blamed for it. And it is also an axiom of theology that if a man is saved, God must have all the glory of it. That "salvation is of the Lord" is as plainly revealed in Scripture as anything that we see in nature! And that destruction is of man, is equally plain, both from the nature of things and from the teaching of Scripture! Hold the two truths of God—do not try to run to the extreme, either of the Hyper Calvinist or of the ultra Arminian. There is some truth in Calvinism and some in Arminianism, and he who would hold the whole truth of God must neither be cramped by the one system nor bound by the other, but take truth wherever he can find it in the Bible—and leave it to the God of truth to show him, when he gets into another world, anything that is beyond his comprehension now. At all events, I have laid this down very plainly and I think every converted person must agree with it, that if any of us are saved, the explanation of our conversion is the same as the explanation of Paul's—"It pleased God."

II. Now, secondly, I shall use the text in another way. We have, here, GROUNDS FOR HUMILITY.

Paul was a preacher, but why was he a preacher? Because "it pleased God." You are a deacon, or you are an elder, or you are a minister—is there any ground for boasting here? Who made you what you are? "It pleased God." That is the only possible explanation! Had God willed it, you might have been sweeping a crossing. You might have been at this moment in some tavern groveling in drunkenness. You might have been a miserable wretch in prison. Any honorable office that you hold in the church is the result, not of your meriting it, but of God's graciousness towards you in having put you where you are. The angels in heaven are humble because they remember who made them and kept them angels, for they would have been devils in hell if God had not preserved them in their first estate. In like manner, office in the church is a ground for humility, not for boasting! If we are thus favored, it is because "it pleased God." The apostle was also a great laborer. He could truthfully say, "I labored more abundantly than they all." What then? Was that a reason for boasting? By no means, for he added, "yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." Are you passionately zealous for the conversion of men? Do you labor both by night and by day to propagate the truth of God and to bring sinners to the cross of Christ? Then continue in your noble employment, but do not plume yourself upon this as though you deserved some praise from God for it! Remember that every virtue you

possess, everything about you that is pure, and lovely, and of good report, has come to you because "it pleased God."

Paul was, moreover, a most successful preacher. Thousands acknowledged him as their spiritual father. Through a great part of Asia, through Greece and Italy, probably onward through Spain and, perhaps, even in Great Britain, there were found traces of the victorious march of this great soldier of the cross! Wherever he went, he confounded the reasoner, put to silence the boaster, made the heathen feel that one had come among them who would hurl their idols from their pedestals! He came like John the Baptist, casting down the high hills and filling up the valleys to make straight a highway for his God, yet I never find him boasting of all this, but, laying all his honors at Jehovah's feet, he said, "By the grace of God I am what I am," or, in the words of our text, "It pleased God."

There are some people in the world who are constantly warning some of us against pride and we are duly thankful for their warnings—they are, no doubt, greatly needed—and it is very generous on their part to bestow them upon us, especially as some of them sorely need the warnings themselves! I remember some time ago receiving a warning against pride from a Christian woman who told me that she would pray that I might be kept humble. I thanked her and told her that I should do the same for her, whereupon she said that she did not require it, for she had no temptation to be proud, she had nothing to be proud of and, therefore, she was quite sure she would never be proud. Then I told her gently but decidedly, that I thought she was already proud, or else she would not have uttered such a speech as that! I added that God had His own way of keeping humble those whom He calls to stand in conspicuous places—and His usual way was by chastening them in private when their people knew nothing about it. And I also said that it was quite as easy to be proud and to do nothing as to be proud and to do much. Oh, dear, the lay ministers that I have seen who seemed to have had their backs made of cast iron—idle preachers who would scarcely bring one soul to Christ in a century! Yet they were so dignified and maintained "the dignity of their profession" with such vigor that there seemed to be every reason to expect that they would die of dignity one of these days, like the Spanish monarch who perished because his chair was too near the fire! It was not according to court etiquette that he should move it, himself, or that he should ring the bell for anybody else to do it and, therefore, he sat still till he brought on a fever by which he afterwards lost his life. If we have nothing, we should be humble because of our poverty—and if we have much, we ought to be humble because we are so much in debt to God! A man who owes £10,000 has no cause to crow over his fellow debtor who owes far less than he does. He would be foolish if he said, "I have more to be proud of than you have, for I owe £10,000, but you only owe £100." Why, that would be the reason why he should hang his head down still

lower! And so should it be with the man whom God greatly honors. This should be the reason for keeping himself very humble because he knows—and God will make him remember it, too—that if there is any difference between him and other men, it is only because "it pleased God."

III. Now I am going to use our text in a third way as A REASON FOR COURAGE.

I should like to see more of this virtue than we see nowadays. We live in an age which needs to have a large infusion of the heroic martyr spirit which enabled our forefathers to go boldly to the block or to the stake for Christ's sake. We may well blush as we see how many professors are ashamed of the religion which they are supposed to have received. If they are called to do some work for Christ, how often do they stop and dialogue, and question, and hesitate and, at last, when they have summoned up enough courage to come forward, it is only with an apology upon their lips for daring to do something for Jesus! I heard one say of a certain preacher, "I greatly admired him, for he commenced his sermon by saying, 'Permit a young man to address you.'" I said, "That is not the way God's servants ought to talk. If God has given them anything to say for Him, they have not to ask anybody's permission to say it, nor should they apologize to anybody for saying it as God enables them to say it." Apologies are out of place in the pulpit! The man whom God sends to speak for Him is God's ambassador—he has no right to apologize for delivering his Lord's message! He who professes to be sent of God either is or is not God's ambassador. If he is not, let him at once take himself off the pulpit! If he is his Master's accredited representative, he needs no excuse and should make none.

I think it will make us courageous and help us to do exploits for God if we can feel that we do our work because it pleases God. I have never approved of the warfare of the old commonwealth days. I do not believe that, after all, England gained much by fighting. Under Cromwell, she gained liberty for a time, but it was soon lost again, as liberty always must be if it is only won by the sword. But mark you, I must say this—that which made Cromwell so mighty was the firm conviction that "it pleased God" to make him the leader of the Ironsides! And that which made his soldiers victorious on so many hard fought fields was that they also felt that "it pleased God." To them it was not a question as to whether it was lawful to fight—they had made up their minds about that matter. Taking out their little soldiers' Bible, they read some fiery Psalm. And having read it, their blood boiled and, as the old Crusaders cried, "Deus vult,"—"God wills it"—they shouted their battle cry, "The Lord of hosts," and dashed into the fight! And they were victorious because they felt that "it pleased God." And now, today, battling inch by inch, and contending hour by hour against the leaguered hosts of sin, you and I can never be mighty if we only stand in our own strength and question our call to be soldiers of the cross! But if we felt that each blow that we strike pleases God—and if in every advance we make into the enemy's territory we can

say, "It pleases God," and if our war cry as we dash to the conflict is, "It pleases God"—then we shall feel the earth shake again beneath the tramp of the heroes' feet and we shall see the church of God as she should be—"fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Why, even the power of the Crusaders arose from the fact that they thought the Crusaders "pleased God."

Brothers and sisters, we must get back this old enthusiasm if ever our land is to be swept clear of Popery! If ever Europe is to become free with God's freedom; if ever Africa is to have the light of the truth of God driving away her dense darkness; if ever Asia, America and Australia are to be won for the Lord Jesus Christ, they whom God has called to the conflict must fight because it pleases God! Surely none of you who profess to be Christ's will be content unless you do something to help toward this great end because it pleases God! As you come to the communion table, realize that God is within you, making your body His throne and enabling you to carry out your great life purpose of glorifying God in your body and in your spirit which are His. Do all that you do because it pleases God! If His Spirit shall help you to feel and act thus, blessed shall it be both for the church and for the world!

My time has gone, yet I am not nearly done, so I must give you the rest in brief. Here is AN ARGUMENT FOR PATIENCE. "It pleased God." The cup is bitter, the knife is sharp, the bit is hard, the bereavement is sore, but as it pleases God, we kiss the rod and patiently bow to our Father's will.

Then, next, we have here A SUGGESTION FOR HOPE. If it pleased God to save Saul of Tarsus—and if the only reason why He should save him was because He pleased to do it—then why cannot He save you? Have you been a drunkard? Have you dived into the foul slough of lust? Have you defiled yourself by dishonesty? Still, if it pleases God, He can save you! Now I know it pleases God to save everyone who trusts in Christ. Then if you trust in Christ, you are saved! Awake, O man! Awake, O woman and let this be your language—"I am the chief of sinners, but it pleased God to save another who called himself the chief of sinners, so—

'I'll to the gracious King approach,
Whose scepter pardon gives.
Perhaps He may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives.'"

If you will thus cast yourself upon the sovereign mercy of God in Christ Jesus, it will please God and you shall be saved!

And then, last of all, our text is A MOTIVE FOR HOLINESS AND ZEAL. If "it pleased God" and, therefore, He saved me when there was no reason in me why I should be saved. If He loved me when I was filthy—now that I have been washed I would be filthy no more—and in holiness I will seek to show my gratitude to Him! If He loved me when I was dead, now that He has made me alive I will not be lifeless and cold, but full of zeal and fire for Him! I do not know how to press this last point unless I get back

to the one I was urging upon you just now. If you feel that God has willed that you should be saved and that God wills that you should be the means of saving others—that God wills that you should become a spiritual father or mother in Israel—then I know that your heart will boil over with holy zeal and that you will go forth as a conqueror who has the certainty of victory already in his heart! God shall be with you and you shall go on conquering and to conquer! The Lord add His blessing for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
GALATIANS 1:11-24; 2.

Galatians 1:11-17. *But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel that was preached by me is not after man. For I neither received it from man, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: and profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in my own nation, being more exceedingly jealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them who were Apostles before me; but I went up to Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.* Paul was intensely desirous that the Galatian Christians should understand that he was no mere repeater of other men's doctrines, but that what he taught he had received directly from God by supernatural revelation. They knew that he had been a most determined opposer of the gospel. Indeed, he was a man of such great determination that whatever he did, he did with all his might! So, no sooner did God reveal Christ to him, so that he knew Jesus to be the Messiah, than he earnestly sought to learn yet more of the truth of God, not by going up to the apostles at Jerusalem, to borrow from them, but by getting alone in the waste places of Arabia! There, by thought and meditation upon the word, and by communion with God, to learn yet more concerning the divine mysteries.

18-24. *Then after three years I went to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But others of the apostles I saw none, save James, the Lord's brother. Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ: but they had heard only that he which persecuted us in times past now preaches the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me.*

Galatians 2:1, 2. *Then fourteen years later, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation*—he was sent by the church at Antioch, but the church there was

guided by revelation, so that Paul is correct in saying, "I went up by revelation"—

2-4. *And communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. Yet not even Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: and that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privately to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage.* There were always some among the Jewish converts who insisted that the Gentiles should come under the seal of the Old Covenant if they were to be partakers of the blessings of the gospel. But to this Paul would never consent—

5. *To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.* It is impossible for us to estimate how much we owe to the Apostle Paul! Of all who have ever lived, we who are Gentiles owe more to him than to any other man! See how he fought our battles for us. When our Jewish brethren would have excluded us because we were not of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, how bravely did he contend that if we were partakers of the same faith—Abraham is the father of all the faithful, that he was loved of God and the covenant was made with him, not in circumcision, but before he was circumcised—then we are partakers of that covenant!

6-10. *But of these who seemed to be something, (whatever they were, it makes no matter to me: God shows personal favoritism to no man) for they who seemed to be something added nothing to me: but on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter, (for He worked effectually in Peter to the Apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty to me toward the Gentiles), and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen and they unto the circumcision. Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.* [See Sermon #99, Volume 2—THE DUTY OF REMEMBERING THE POOR—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] One of the first things he did, when there was a famine in Judea, was to make a collection for the saints in other places, that he might aid the poor Christians.

11-14. *But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed. For before certain men came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas, also, was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If you, being a Jew, live after the manner of Gentiles, and*

not as do the Jews, why compel you the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? It must have been very painful to Paul's feelings to come into conflict with Peter, whom he greatly esteemed. But for the Truth's sake, he knew no persons, and he had to withstand even a beloved brother when he saw that he was likely to pervert the simplicity of the gospel and rob the Gentiles of their Christian liberty! For this we ought to be very grateful to our gracious God who raised up this brave champion, this beloved apostle of the Gentiles!

15, 16. *We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.* No mere man can keep the law of God—no mere man has ever done so. We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God! And as an absolutely perfect obedience is demanded by the law, which knows nothing of mercy, we fly from the law to obtain salvation by the grace of God in Christ Jesus!

17. *But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid!* That would not be caused by the gospel, but by our disregard of it.

18, 19. *For I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.* "Through my sight of the law, which I have seen to be so stern that all it can do is to condemn me for my shortcomings, I am driven away from it and led to come and live in Christ Jesus under the rule of grace—not under the law of Moses."

20, 21. *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness comes by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.* [See Sermons #781, Volume 13—CHRISTOS ET EGO; #2370, Volume 40—"CHRIST FIRST, ME LAST—NOTHING BETWEEN BUT LOVE"; #1534, Volume 26—SALVATION BY WORKS, A CRIMINAL DOCTRINE—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

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A SERMON
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"For He has made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."
2 Corinthians 5:21.

I DARESAY I have preached from this text several times in your hearing. [See Sermons #141-142, Volume 3—SUBSTITUTION; #310, Volume 6—CHRIST—OUR SUBSTITUTE; #1124, Volume 19—GOD BESEECHING SINNERS BY HIS MINISTERS and #1910, Volume 32—THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] If my life is spared, I hope to preach from it twice as many more! The doctrine it teaches, like salt upon the table, must never be left out—or, like bread, which is the staff of life—it is proper at every meal.

You see here the foundation truth of Christianity, the rock on which our hopes are built! It is the only hope of a sinner, and the only true joy of the Christian—the great transaction, the great substitution, the great lifting of sin from the sinner to the sinner's surety—the punishment of the surety instead of the sinner—the pouring out of the vials of wrath which were due to the transgressor, upon the head of his substitute! It is the grandest transaction which ever took place on earth! It is the most wonderful sight that even hell ever beheld and the most stupendous marvel that heaven, itself, ever executed—Jesus Christ, made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him!

You scarcely need that I should explain the words when the sense is so plain. A spotless Savior stands in the place of guilty sinners. God lays upon the spotless Savior, the sin of the guilty, so that He becomes, in the expressive language of the text, *sin*. Then He takes off from the innocent Savior His righteousness and puts that to the account of the once guilty sinners, so that the sinners become *righteousness*—righteousness of the highest and most divine source—*the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.*

Of this transaction I would have you think tonight. Think of it adoringly! Think of it lovingly! Think of it joyfully!

I. When you look at the great doctrine of substitution, you especially who are concerned in it and can see your sins laid upon Christ, I want you to LOOK AT IT WITH DEVOUT ADORATION.

Lowly and reverently *adore the justice of God*. God set His heart upon saving your souls, but He would not be unjust, even to indulge His favorite attribute of mercy. He had purposed that you should be His—He had set His love upon you, unworthy as you are, before the foundation of the world! Yet to save you, He would not tarnish His justice. He had said, "The soul that sins, it shall die," and He would not recall the word be-

cause it was not too severe, but simply a just and righteous threat. Sooner than He would tarnish His justice, He bound His only begotten Son to the pillar and scourged and bruised Him! Sooner than sin should go unpunished, He put that sin upon Christ and punished Him—oh, how tremendously and with what terrific strokes! Christ can tell you, but probably if He did tell you, you could not understand all that God thinks about sin, for God hates it, loathes it and must and will punish it! And upon His Son He laid a tremendous, incomprehensible weight, till the griefs of the dying Redeemer utterly surpassed all our imagination or comprehension! Adore, then, the justice of God, and think how you might have had to adore it, not at the foot of the cross, but in the depths of hell! O my soul, if you had had your deserts, you would have been driven from the presence of God! Instead of looking into those languid eyes which wept for you, you would have had to look into His face whose eyes are as a flame of fire! Instead of hearing Him say, "I have blotted out your sins," you might have heard Him say, "Depart, you cursed one, into everlasting fire." Will you not pay as much reverence to the justice of God exhibited on the cross as exhibited in hell? Let your reverence be deeper! It will not be that of a slave, or even of a servant, but let it be quite as humble. Bow low, bless the justice of God, marvel at its severity, adore its unlimited holiness, join with seraphs who surely at the foot of the cross may sing, as well as before the throne of God, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts."

While you admire the justice, also admire *the wisdom of God*. We ought to adore God's wisdom in everything we see in creation. The physician with his scalpel should adore the wisdom of God in the anatomical skill by which the human body is formed and fashioned. The traveler, as he passes through the wonders of nature, should adore the wisdom of God in the creation of the world, with its towering mountains and with its unknown depths. Every student of the works of God should account the universe as a temple in which the gorgeous outline does not excel the beauty and the holiness of all its fittings, for in the temple everything speaks of Jehovah's glory. But, ah, at the foot of the cross, wisdom is concentrated—all its rays are concentrated there as with a magnifying glass. We see God there reconciling contrary attributes as they appear to us. We see God there "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders," and yet "forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." He smites as though He were cruel. He forgives as though He were not just. He is as generous in passing by sin as if He were not the judge of all the earth. He is as severe to punish sin as if He were not the tender Father who can press the prodigal to His bosom. Here you see love and justice embrace each other in such a wondrous way that I ask you to imitate the seraphs who now that they see what they once desired to look into, veil their faces with their wings, adoring the only wise God!

Further, beloved, when you have thus thought of His justice and of His wisdom, bow your head again in reverence as you contemplate *the grace of God.* For what reason did God give His only begotten Son to bleed instead of us? We were insignificant worms, we were vipers of iniq-

uity—if He saved us, were we worth the saving? We were such infamous traitors that if He doomed us to the eternal fire, we might have been terrible examples of His wrath, but heaven's darling bleeds that earth's traitors may not bleed! Shout it! Shout it in heaven and publish it in all the golden streets every hour of every glorious day, that such is the grace of God, "that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

And here, while I ask you to adore, I feel inclined to close the sermon and to bow myself in silence before the grace of God in Christ Jesus. "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us!" Behold it in the sweat of blood which stained Gethsemane! Behold it in the scourging which has made the name of Gabbatha a terror! Behold it in "the pains, and groans, and dying strife" of Calvary! Bow, did I say? Prostrate your spirits! Lift up your sweetest music, but let your soul feel the deepest abasement as you see this super abounding grace of God in the person of the only begotten of the Father, making Him to be sin for us—He who knew no sin!

When you have thus thought of His justice, His wisdom and His grace, like a silver thread running through the whole, I want you once more to adore *His sovereignty*. What sovereignty is this, that angels who fell should have no Redeemer, but that man, *insignificant man*, being fallen, should find a Savior in heaven's only begotten! See this sovereignty, too, that this precious blood should come to some of us and not to others! Millions in this world have never heard of it. Tens of thousands who have heard of it, have rejected it. Yes, and in this little section of the world's population encompassed now within these walls, how many there are who have had that precious blood preached in their hearing and presented to them with loving invitations, only to reject it and despise it? And if you and I have felt the power of it, and can see the blood cleansing us from sin, shall we not admire that discriminating, distinguishing grace which has made us to differ? But the part of sovereignty which astonishes me most is that God should have been pleased to make *Him* who knew no sin to be sin for us," that God should be pleased to ordain salvation by *Christ* as our substitute!

A great many persons rail at this plan of salvation, but if God has determined it, you and I ought to accept it with delight. "Behold," says God, "I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious." The sovereignty of God has determined that no man can be saved except by the atoning sacrifice of Christ. If any man would be clean, Jehovah declares that he must wash in the fountain which Jesus filled from His veins. If God should put away sin and accept the sinner, He declares that it should only be through that sinner putting his trust in the sacrifice offered once and for all by the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross. Admire this sovereignty and adore it by yielding to it! Cavil not at it. Down, rebellious will! Hush, you naughty reason that would ask, "Why?" and, "Why is there no other method?" Yield, my heart! "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little." Oh, magnificent

love! A way as splendid as the end! A plan as glorious as its design! The design to save is not more resplendent than the method by which men are saved. Justice is magnified, wisdom extolled, grace resplendent, and every attribute of God glorified! Oh, let us, at the very mention of a dying Savior, bow down and adore!

II. Not to change the topic, but to vary the line of thought, let us endeavor to LOOK LOVINGLY at Jesus Christ made sin for His people.

Every word here may help our love. That word, *"Him,"* may *remind us of His person*—"He has made *Him* to be sin for us"—Him—the Son of God, coequal and co-eternal with the Father! Him—the son of Mary, born at Bethlehem—the spotless "Son of Man." "He has made *Him* to be sin." I am not going to enlarge. I only want to bring His blessed person clearly before your mind. He who trod the waves. He who healed the sick He who had compassion upon the multitudes and fed them. He who always lives to make intercession for us—"He has made *Him* to be sin for us." Oh, love Him, sinner, and let your heart join in the words—

"His person fixes all my love."

I delight to have you get a hold of Him as being verily a person. Do not think of Him as a fiction—never do so! Do not regard Him as a mere historical person who walked the stage of history and now is gone. He is very near to you right now! He is still living! We often sing—

"Crown Him Lord of all."

Well, this is that same glorious one! "He has made *Him* to be sin for us." Think of Him and let your love flow out towards Him!

Would you further excite your love? *Think of His character*. He knew no sin—there was none within Him—for He had none of our sinful desires and evil propensities. "Tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." Think of that, and then read, "He has made *Him to be sin for us*." Do not fritter that away by putting in the word, "offering," and saying "sin offering." The word stands in apposition—what if I say opposition?—to the word, "righteousness," in the other part of the text. He made Him to be as much sin as He makes us to be righteousness! That is to say He makes Him to be sin by *imputation*, as He makes us to be righteousness by imputation! On Him who was never a sinner—who never could be a sinner—our sin was laid! Consider how His holy soul must have shrunk back from being made sin, and yet, I pray you, do not fritter away the words of the Prophet Isaiah, "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." He bore our transgressions and carried our sins in His own body on the cross. There was before the bar of justice an absolute transfer made of guilt from His elect to Himself! There He was made sin for us, though He personally knew no sin, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." As you think of His pure, immaculate nature and perfect life—love Him as you see Him bearing the burden of sins not His own, for which He came to atone!

Will not your love be excited when *you think of the difficulty of this imputation*? "He has made Him to be sin." None but God could have put sin upon Christ. It is well said that there is no lifting of sin from one person to another. There is no such thing, as far as we are concerned, but

things which are impossible with man are possible with God. Do you know what it means for Christ to be made sin? You do not, but you can form some guess of what it involves, for when He was made sin, God treated Him as if He had been a sinner—which He never was and never could be. God left Him as He would have left a sinner, till He cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" God smote Him as He would have smitten a sinner, till His soul was "exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." That which was due from His people for sin, or an equivalent to that, was literally exacted at the hands of Jesus Christ, the Son of God! He was made a debtor for our debts and He paid them. You may guess what it was to be a debtor for us by the smart which it cost to discharge our liabilities. He that is a surety shall smart for it—and Jesus found that proverb true. When justice came to smite the sinner, it found Him in the sinner's place and smote Him without relenting, laying to the full the whole weight upon Him which had otherwise crushed all mankind forever into the lowermost hell! Let us love Jesus as we think that He endured all this.

Beloved in the Lord, there is one more string of your harp I would like to touch, and it is *the thought of what you now are*, which the text speaks of. You are made the righteousness of God in Christ! God sees no sin in you, believer! He has put your sin, or that which was yours, to the account of Christ—and you are innocent before Him. Moreover, He sees you to be righteous. You are not perfectly righteous—the work of His Spirit in you is incomplete as yet—but He looks upon you, not as you are in yourselves, but as you are in Christ Jesus and you are "accepted in the Beloved." You are, in His sight, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing! What Jesus did is set to your account. He sees His Son in you and then He loves you as He loves His Son. He has put you into union with His Son and you are now hid with Christ in God. I trust you will endeavor to realize this position of yourselves as made the righteousness of God in Christ, and when you do, surely you will love the Savior who has done all this for you—undeserving, helpless, dying, guilty mortals! Oh, that the Lord Jesus would now send fire into all your souls and make you love Him, for surely, if you have but the sense of what He has done and how He did it, and what it cost Him to do it, and who He is that has done it—and who you were for whom He has done it—you will surely say, "Oh, for a thousand hearts that I may love You as I should, and a thousand tongues that I may praise You as I should!"

III. And now, let us JOYFULLY VIEW THE GLORIOUS FACT OF SUBSTITUTION.

And here I will commence with the observation that *till your sin as a believer is gone, and till, as a believer, Christ's righteousness is at present your glorious dress, your salvation is in no sense realized by yourselves.* It is not dependent upon your frames and feelings. Your sins are not put away through your repentance. That repentance becomes to you the token of the pardon of sin, but the true cleansing is found, not in the eyes of the penitent, but in the wounds of Jesus! Your sins were virtually dis-

charged upon the accursed cross. You stand this day accepted, not for anything you are, or can be, or shall be, but entirely and wholly through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. We cannot state this truth of God, it seems to me, too boldly. This is the very doctrine of the reformation—justification by faith, or rather the basis doctrine upon which it rests. And I am persuaded the more plainly it is preached, the better, for it is the gospel of salvation to a lost and ruined world!

Beloved, your case is something similar to this. You are in debt and, according to the old laws, you must be cast into prison. You are brought up before the court. You cannot plead that you are not in debt—you are compelled to stand there and say, "Each one of these charges I must admit. These liabilities I have incurred and I have not a single penny with which to meet them." A friend in court, wealthy and generous, pays the debt. Now, the only reason why you go out of court clear, lies in the payment made by your friend. You do not leave the court because you never incurred the debt—no, you *did* incur the debt. And you must admit that you did not leave the court because you pleaded not guilty, or because you promised never to get into debt again. Not so—all that would not have answered your purpose. Your creditor would still have cast you into prison. You did not leave the court because your character is excellent, or you hope to make it so. The only ground of your liberation from your liabilities is found in the fact that *another person has discharged them for you* and that will not be affected by any act you may have committed or shall commit. You may have felt ill today. You might have labored under 20 diseases, but those diseases will not imprison you, neither will they help to set you free. Your freedom hinges upon the fact that the debt was paid for you by another!

Now, Christian, your hope and comfort hang here! This is the diamond rivet which rivets your salvation firmly! Jesus died for you—and those for whom Jesus died, in the sense in which we now use the language—are and must be saved! Unless eternal justice can punish two persons for one offense; unless eternal justice can demand payment twice for the same debt—first from the bleeding surety, and then from those for whom the surety stood—they must be clear for whom Jesus died! This is the gospel which we preach! Oh, happy they who have received it, for it is their joy to know it, sinners though they have been, guilty and ruined—and sinners though they are still—yet, since they have believed, Christ is theirs! Christ took their sins and paid their debts! And God Himself can bring no charge against the man who is justified by Christ! "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."

Now, Christian, I want you to come, tonight, and enjoy this. Why, man, *it ought to make your soul dance for joy within you to think that sin is pardoned and righteousness is imputed to you!* This is an unchanging fact, that Christ has saved you. If it was ever a fact, it is always a fact. If it was ever true, it is always true and always alike true—as true now that

you are depressed, as yesterday when you were rejoicing. Jesus' blood does not change like your poor heart. It does not go up and down in value, like the markets, and fluctuate like your faith. If you are saved, you are saved! If you are resting in the blood, you are as safe, today, as you were yesterday—and you are as safe forever! Remember that this is true of all the saints. It is true to great saints, but equally so to little ones. They all stand under this crimson canopy and are alike protected by its blessed shadow from the beams of divine justice. It is true to you now. O beloved, try to live up to it! Say, "Away, my doubts! Away, my fears! I trust a Savior slain and I am saved! Away, my questions! Away, my carnal reasonings! I hate my sins, but I cannot doubt my Savior! It is true I have not lived as a Christian should live, but I will still cast myself into His arms." It is not faith to trust God as a saint when you feel you are a saint. Faith is to trust Christ as a sinner—while you are conscious that you are a sinner. To come to Jesus and to think yourselves pure, is a sorry coming to Him—but to come with all your impurity—this is true coming!

I say to you, sinner; I say to you, saint; I say to you all this one thing, and I have done: When your souls are at the blackest, seek for nothing but the blood! When your souls are at the darkest, seek no light anywhere but in the cross! Do not cling to preparations, to humbling, to repentings. All these things are good in their way, but they cannot be a balsam to a wounded conscience! Christ and Christ crucified is what you need. Do not look within—look without. I say, when you repent, it is a base repentance that will not let you trust Christ, for while repentance should have one eye on sin, it should have the other upon the cross. While repentance should make you lie low, yet it is not repentance, but unbelief, that makes you doubt the power of Christ to save you! Christ never came to save the righteous—He came to save sinners. I would have you magnify the grace of God by believing that when your sin stares you most in the face, when you are most conscious of it and it seems to be worse than ever, Christ is the same to you and for you, your glorious surety and your blessed satisfaction! Still believe and still trust, and do not let go your confidence that Christ is able to save sinners, even the chief, and will save you without help from your doings or your feelings! His own right arm will get Himself the victory and, having trod the wine press of divine wrath alone, He will save you solely by the merit of His life and of His death! Oh, for grace to rest in the Savior and to know the truth of this text—"He has made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him"!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 5:1-10; 2 CORINTHIANS 4; 5.

Romans 5:1-3. *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also. Faith has such wondrous power that it makes us rejoice even in trial! It helps Christians to be glad even in the midst of sorrow.

3. *Knowing that tribulation works patience.* The more trial you have, the more spiritual education you receive. You cannot learn the virtue of patience without tribulation any more than a man can learn to be a sailor if he stays on shore! "Tribulation works patience."

4. *And patience, experience.* If you bear the trial patiently, it leaves the mark of its engraving tool upon your spirit, and you thus become fashioned into an experienced Christian.

4. *And experience, hope.* What God has once done, He may do again. And as He has shown us so much favor, we may reasonably hope that He will show us some more, and that He who has given us grace, will give us glory.

5. *And hope makes us not ashamed.* Our hope brings us courage—no longer are we trembling and diffident, but we feel like children do towards a loving father—we are happily, restfully at home with our God. "Hope makes us not ashamed."

5. *Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.* [See Sermons #829, Volume 14—THE PERFUMING OF THE HEART and #1904, Volume 32—THE PERSONAL PENTECOST AND THE GLORIOUS HOPE—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] When Mary, the sister of Lazarus, anointed the feet of Jesus with the very costly ointment of spikenard, "the house was filled with the odor" of it—and in a similar fashion the love of God perfumes every part of our nature.

6. *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."* [See Sermons #1191, Volume 20—FOR WHOM DID CHRIST DIE? and #1345, Volume 23—FOR WHOM IS THE GOSPEL MEANT?—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] What a wonderful statement! "Christ died for the ungodly." Yet it was no slip of the pen, for the apostle takes up his own expression and preaches the following little sermon upon it—

7. *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die.* If a man is known to be sternly just, like Aristides, nobody would care enough for him to die for him.

7. *Yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die.* For a benevolent man, a true philanthropist, a lover of his race, there are some who might say that they would die for him. Yet the apostle only says, "Perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die." It is not very likely, but it is possible.

8. *But God commends His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* [See Sermon #104, Volume 2—LOVE'S COMMENDATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Certainly we were not "good" men, we were not even "just" men, but we are included in this black description, "sinners." And "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." He died for us as sinners—He did not come to save saints, but to save sinners—and it was for sinners that He died.

9. *Much more, then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.* This is a fine piece of argument and strictly logical. If, when we were sinners, Christ died for us, will He let us be condemned, now that He has washed us in His precious blood? Is it possible that after dying for us, He will let us fall from grace and perish? That will never be! Notice the same kind of argument again—

10. *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.* [See Sermon #2587, Volume 44—"MUCH MORE"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] There is a threefold argument here. If Christ died for us when we were His enemies, will He not save us, now that we are His friends? If He died to reconcile us to God, will He not completely save us, now that this great work has been accomplished? And as we were reconciled to God by Christ's death, shall we not much more be saved by His life? There are three arguments and each one is sound and conclusive. The believer in Jesus must be eternally saved! If Christ died for sinners, what will He *not* do for believers, who are no longer enemies, but are reconciled unto God by the death of His Son?

2 Corinthians 4:1. *Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not.* Stern was the labor of the apostles, but they felt that their work was so all important, so divine , that they must not grow weary *of* it, though they were, doubtless, often weary *in* it.

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.* It is no part of the business of Christ's ministers to modify the truth of God which He has entrusted to them, or to put new meanings into it which God never meant, draining away the very life blood of the gospel and leaving it dead and useless! But it *is* both our duty and our privilege to state it just as we find it and to proclaim it in as plain a language as possible so that everybody may understand what the teaching of God really is.

3. *But if our gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost.* [See Sermon #1663, Volume 28—THE TRUE GOSPEL IS NO HIDDEN GOSPEL—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] It was not hidden under fine language and oratorical flourishes on the part of the apostles—there was a far more terrible barrier in the way of its entrance into the hearts of some who heard it.

4-7. *In whom the god of the world has blinded the mind of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels.* There is nothing remarkable in us. We are, in ourselves, poor, frail, fragile creatures, like

earthen vessels of no particular value! Yet this we do not regret, for there is a good reason for it—

7-10. *That the excellence of the power may be of God, and not of us. 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; 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.* He who wishes for an easy time of it must not become a minister of the gospel! If he is determined to preach it faithfully, fully, simply, straight from his heart, he will often find himself in such circumstances as the apostle describes in these verses.

11. *For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.* The apostles were always to the front where the shots were flying the thickest and with the deadliest aim! There they stood, the officers of the army of Christ—and Paul rejoiced that, for one, he was able thus to make himself to be *nothing* that Christ might be the great all in all!

12. *So, then, death works in us, but life in you.* So long as Paul could be the means of the salvation of the souls of men, he did not mind what became of himself. Though it should be death to him, he would count it as nothing so long as it should bring life to them!

13, 14. *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 up us, also, by Jesus, and shall present us with you.* Note the assurance of apostolic preaching and writing. There is no, "if," here, no hesitation, no doubt. The apostles knew what they believed and knew why they believed it—and they spoke with conviction—nobody was led into doubt by their hesitancy.

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.* Paul had said before that they did not faint, and now he reiterates it that though his ministry was enough to bear him down, and lay him prostrate in the dust, yet he did not faint.

16, 18. *But though our outward man perishes, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

2 Corinthians 5:1. *For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* [See Sermon #1719, Volume 29—THE TENT DISSOLVED AND THE MANSION ENTERED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Is not this grand courage on the part of the apostle? With all the world against him and he "always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake," he looks at the new body, the new house that God is making for him and he reckons that to shuffle off this mortal coil will

be no loss to him, since when he loses the tent in which he lives, here, he will go to "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

2-4. *For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed*—We are not impatient to enter the disembodied state—

4-6. *But clothed upon that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now He that has worked us for the same thing is God, who also has given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident.* Note the ground of the apostle's confidence. He is quite sure that, inasmuch as Christ rose from the dead, so all His followers must. And though they die in the Lord's service, yet they shall not be losers thereby, but they shall the more speedily ascend to their reward! "We are always confident"—

6-9. *Knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight): we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Therefore we labor, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him.* [See Sermons #413, Volume 7—TO DIE OR NOT TO DIE! and #1303, Volume 22—THE BELIEVER IN THE BODY AND OUT OF THE BODY—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] To be well pleasing to God everywhere, in everything that we do, should be the one aim of a Christian, whether he is in the body or out of the body.

10-13. *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad, knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust, also, are made manifest in your consciences. For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that you may have something to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart. For whether we are beside ourselves.* And men said that these apostles had gone out of their minds. Festus said to Paul, "you are beside yourself, much learning does make you mad." So Paul says, "Whether we are beside ourselves"—

13. *It is to God: or whether we are sober, it is for your cause.* "In either case, we have but one objective and that is to glorify God through your salvation."

14-15. *For the love of Christ constrains us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again.* The life of the saved man must never be lived for himself! He is false to his profession if it is so. He must henceforth live as earnestly for God as, previously in his unregeneracy, he lived for himself, for he now has a new life which is not his own to do with it as he pleases, but it belongs entirely to Him who purchased it with His own most precious blood.

16. *Therefore, from now on, we regard no man after the flesh. Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.* We do not see Christ with our natural eyes. We do not hear His voice with our natural ears. He is now to us a spiritual person who communicates with our spirit through His own ever blessed Spirit.

17. *Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.* There could not be a greater change than that which is worked by regeneration! It is a new creation, the passing away of the old, and the making of all things new. [See Sermons #881, Volume 15—THE BELIEVER A NEW CREATURE and #1328, Volume 22—CHRIST THE MAKER OF ALL THINGS NEW—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

18-21. *And all things are of God who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 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. 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. For He made Him who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.*

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THE SAINTS' RICHES
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A SERMON
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"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Romans 8:32.

MANY of you, dear friends, are coming to the Lord's Table at the close of this service. Our blessed Redeemer instituted that simple but sublime ordinance so that we might be kept in constant remembrance of Him. The bread is nothing but bread, yet it is the very suggestive emblem of Christ's flesh. And it shall be well with you if, after a spiritual fashion, you shall thus eat the flesh of Christ. The wine is nothing but wine, yet is it the emblem of Christ's blood. And they are thrice blessed who experimentally understand the meaning of Christ's words, "Whoever eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, has eternal life." Christ is yours, believer! You know that He is more yours than even your own life, for that you may lose. When God gave you your existence, He gave it to you without any covenant as to its prolongation, but He has given Christ to you by an everlasting covenant, to be yours forever and ever! Christ is yours, beloved! Oh, that you knew how to make the best use of this blessed property! Christ is yours to live upon and to spend, yours to have and to hold, to keep and to enjoy, yours not only to look at that you may be saved, and to wear that you may be justified, but yours to eat that you may be refreshed by Him and live upon Him! Christ is yours to the fullest extent possible! There is no reservation—He is your absolute, unforfeitable and inalienable property—yours, today, as perfectly as He will be when you are in heaven! Yours as certainly as you are His. Oh, that you may now, knowing that Christ is thus your property, live upon Him, rejoice in Him and feel that you are, indeed, immeasurably rich!

When we come to this communion table, to partake of these emblems of Christ's death, it will be a very happy thing for us if we remember that possessing Christ, we have everything. There is no need that you have which will not be supplied if you really know that Christ is yours. There is no necessity, however great, which may press upon you which shall not be instantaneously supplied if Christ is truly yours. You come to Christ's table to meet with Christ and you know that when you have Him, you have everything, so you do well to sing—

"You, O Christ, are all I need"—

for in Him you have all that you can possibly need. And, moreover, the gift of Christ is God's solemn pledge that He will keep back from you nothing that you really need. "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." "Whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." Having given you Christ, He must, He will—with Christ—freely give you all things—

"How vast the treasure we possess!
How rich Your bounty, King of grace!
This world is ours and worlds to come—
Earth is our lodge and heaven our home.
All things are ours—the gift of God!
The purchase of a Savior's blood
While the good Spirit shows us how
To use and to improve them, too."

I am going to make it my business, in a very simple but earnest manner, to try and exhort the children of God to cast aside all thoughts of their being poor and to rejoice, now, in their boundless riches in Christ Jesus!

I. First, let me remind you, believer, that, whatever you may really require, God will not deny it to you, for He has already given you Christ! THINK WHAT THIS GIFT WAS TO THE FATHER—it was His only begotten and well beloved Son!

Perhaps you have a willful, wayward boy—one who costs you much, but brings you little comfort—yet, would you like to lose him? If you saw him in his coffin tomorrow, would you not cry over him as David cried over his son, "O my son, Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for you, O Absalom, my son, my son"? Vile he may be, and a disgrace to your name, yet he is still your child and you could not bear to give him up. But what shall I say of the child who, from his youth up, has been obedient to you? Who, having grown up to manhood, has become your friend as well as your offspring? Who has been with you in every holy enterprise and has proved himself to be worthy of his father's love and esteem? Could you give him up? Mother, you know how dear your firstborn son to you is. Of all griefs that tear a mother's heart, perhaps the greatest is to lose her firstborn. Even if he is only in his infancy, it is a wound from which the mother's tender heart does not soon recover. But to lose that son in manhood. To see the hale strong man suddenly cut down—this is no small sorrow—and many, under such trying circumstances, have found it no easy task to say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

To lose one's child even for some object which is nearest and dearest to our heart, is pain and grief, indeed. Then what must it have cost God to give up His Son to die for His people? What must God's love to His only begotten Son be? We can only speak of God after the manner of men, for we know not how otherwise to speak of Him and, inasmuch, as God is infinitely greater than we are, His love is infinitely greater than ours! We

can only love to the finite degree of which humanity is capable, but God loves beyond all degree. The heart of God is filled with fathomless oceans of eternal affection—and this affection has always been fixed upon His Son! Christ is infinitely more dear to God than your son can ever be to you because of the greatness of the heart of the Father who loves His Son who has always been with Him, and ever His delight, who has never offended Him, who takes His share in all the Father's plans and who said of old, and says it always, "I delight to do Your will, O My God."

Besides, Christ is one with His Father in essence. What that mysterious unity is, we cannot tell. And how Christ is the Son of God, we do not know. We know that His Sonship does not imply any inferiority in the Son, nor that the Father existed before the Son. He was not the Father till the Son was His Son and the names, "Father," and, "Son," are not to be understood as they are used among us, although the marvelous, indescribable relationship which we cannot fully understand cannot be better expressed than by the terms used, "the Father" and, "the Son." Again I ask—what must it have cost such a Father's heart to give up such a Son—a Son so near and so dear to Him? Yet the Father gave up His Son to die for you and for me, beloved! Theologians lay it down as an axiom that God cannot suffer, but I am not sure that they are right. I cannot understand God's love to me. I cannot rejoice as I should in His goodness to me unless I believe that the gift of His Son cost His heart awful pangs. I know that I am treading upon delicate ground and that I am standing where thick darkness gathers, but I am not certain that what theologians take for granted is necessarily true. That God can do everything, I do believe. And I also believe that if He wills to suffer He can do so. I cannot think of God as an insensible being when He gave His Son to die for sinners. I cannot imagine Him giving His only begotten Son and feeling no more than a heathen idol of stone could have done. I think that the Father, in giving up that Son who had always given Him such intense joy, must have suffered in His Son's death.

Well then, as God has thus given up His only begotten and well beloved Son, how can He deny anything to you who believe in Him? Do you feel anxious about the bread that perishes? Is that worthy to be compared with God's only begotten Son? Are you concerned about how you are to get food and clothing? How can God deny you such trifles as these when He has given you His Son? Perseverance in grace—is that what you ask? Even that is but a crumb under the Master's table compared with His Son! You need certain virtues, you need help in trouble, you need sustenance under stern difficulties—I know not what you need, but this I know—all the needs of all of us put together could only make one little drop in comparison with the tremendous ocean of benevolence which flowed out of God's heart when He spared not His own Son but delivered

Him up for us all! As we look at Christ, whom God has given to us, we must believe that, with Him, He will give us whatever we need!

II. I shall try to knock a second time at the door of your hearts to comfort you by reminding you how PRECIOUS CHRIST WAS INTRINSICALLY IN HIMSELF.

The wonder is not only that God gave His Son, but that His Son was what He was. Paul says He is "over all," God blessed forever." Jesus Himself said, "Before Abraham was, I Am"—claiming the very name of the eternal Jehovah. In due time, Christ became man and, as man, He was very dear to His Father. Even His earthly mother could not look upon her child with half the affection that His Father had for Him. He was a perfect man and, therefore, lovely in His Father's sight. He was, indeed, Himself God and, therefore, one with the Father even while He was man. The loftiest angel could not adequately preach to you upon this point—unto what, then, shall I liken the preciousness of this gift? Similes fail me, metaphors I have none, "no mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls, for the price of Jesus is above rubies." He shall not be given for gold, no, not for much fine gold. As for topaz, and onyx, and sapphire, and all other precious stones, these must not be mentioned in comparison with Him. Paul's expression is the only appropriate one, "Thanks be unto God for His *unspeakable* gift." Eternity alone can reveal the value of Christ! By the miseries of the hell from which He saves us, let us measure Him! By the bliss of the heaven to which He lifts us, let us estimate His worth! By the depths of ignominy and shame into which He dived, let us conceive of Him! By the glories He relinquished and by the agonies He bore, let us attempt to form some faint idea of His value! But this pearl of great price is so precious that I am bold to say that if heaven, and earth, and all the starry orbs could be sold, their united price could not buy such another pearl as this one which God has given to us in Christ Jesus!

So, beloved, as God has already given you this priceless pearl, will He not also give you all else that you need? If a man gave you ten thousand pounds, would you doubt his willingness to give you a farthing? If he should give you a munificent income to last throughout all your life, would you doubt his willingness to give you a penny if you were ever in need of one? I think I need not attempt to draw the inference—you can draw it for yourselves. See, then, the wondrous treasure you possess if you are a believer in Jesus—God is yours, the perfect man is yours, Christ's life, His death, His blood, His righteousness, His intercession, His incarnation, His second advent are all yours—and all else that you need. Do but ask boldly, receive gratefully, wait patiently, hope trustfully and walk rejoicingly, for as God has given you His Son, shall He not, with Him, also freely give you all things? Sing with good old John Ryland—

"He that has made my heaven secure,
Will here all good provide!

While Christ is rich, can I be poor?
What can I need beside?"

III. But now, as a third blow at your unbelief, I want you to remember, beloved, THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS GIFT WAS GIVEN.

The text says, "He that spared not His own Son." A mother may give up her tall strong son to fight in the army of her country and he may perish by an enemy's hand. But I cannot conceive of a mother slaughtering her own son for her country's good! We have wondered as we have read of Brutus, who, when his sons had entered into a conspiracy against the Republic, could say, "Lictors, do your duty." The father saw the corpses of his sons with the pangs of a father, but with the stern serenity of a judge they had offended—so they must die. Strong must be a man's sense of justice to be able to overcome his love so as to give up his own son to die. But our gracious God not only gave up His Son to die for us, but He was Himself, (if I may use such an expression), the executioner of Christ. Isaiah tells us in his wonderful 53rd chapter, that "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all…It pleased the Lord to bruise Him. He has put Him to grief…you shall make His soul an offering for sin…We did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." This, indeed, was the very sting of Christ's death, for He cried out in His worst agony, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Oh, what love God must have had to you and to me, for it overcame His love to His only begotten Son! So we read in Zechariah 13:7, "Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, says the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." My tongue cannot tell the story of this marvelous grace of God to you and to me, but I again remind you that although God knew that His plan of salvation involved His smiting His own Son and deserting Him in His hour of deepest need so that you and I should not perish—the Father smites, and wounds, and slays His own Son! And there upon the accursed tree, in intense pangs, unutterable, unknown, the Son of God dies, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

Well, then, beloved, as God has given you His Son, will He not also give you all else that you need? You are about to ask for fellowship with Christ, but that will not cost the Father the smiting of His Son, again, so He will surely give it to you! You are going to ask God for holiness, but it will give Him pleasure, and nothing but pleasure to make you holy! It will certainly not involve His lifting up His hand against His only begotten Son anymore, so it shall be God's delight to give you your heart's desire! Having given you His Son, will He not, with Him, give you whatever you believingly ask of Him? He still says, "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it." Tell Him what your present need is and you shall have all that you need. Cast all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you and He will take all your cares away. Shame on you, Christian, if you shall give way to

sadness—surely you will not let unbelief vex you, now! You know that God has given Christ for you—then can you fear that He will deny you anything, or leave you, at last, in trouble to sink? That is impossible! God forbid that you should slander Him by thinking that He can so act! What were you saying, poor aged Christian? "I shall want for bread." How can it be? How can it be? The God who out of His amazing love to you has smitten His only begotten Son will certainly give to you whatever your soul or body may need—

"Seek first His kingdom's grace to share.
Its righteousness pursue,
And all that needs your earthly care
Will be bestowed on you!
Why then despond in life's dark vale?
Why sink to fears a prey?
The Almighty power can never fail,
His love can never decay."

IV. Now, as a fourth stroke of the axe at the root of unbelief, let me remind you of THE SPIRIT IN WHICH CHRIST WAS GIVEN.

The Father gave His Son, but who asked Him to do so? Not you, certainly, for even after the Father had given Christ, you despised the wondrous gift! Who asked Him? No one of the whole human race! The thought never crossed any created mind. Angels did not throw themselves down between justice and the sinner and intercede for him. I have never read of any burning seraph crying to God, "Spare the guilty, Lord, spare the guilty! Give up Your only begotten Son to die and let the guilty live!" I cannot conceive of anyone proposing to the Most High to make so tremendous a sacrifice. The Father did it according to His own sovereign will, unswayed by anything outside Himself. That self-sustained, almighty being deigned to give this matchless manifestation of His inflexible justice and His infinite love to the sons of men—it was His own conception freely welling up from the deeps of His own loving heart! Well, beloved, if He gave His Son unsolicited, will He not give you all you need, now that you have learned to ask of Him, now that you understand the art of the widow woman who came to the unjust judge and can plead with the Lord in holy importunity? Now that you have been taught to knock and knock again at God's door—as the man knocked at his friend's door until, at last, he arose at midnight to give him the loaves he needed—surely He will not deny you what you ask! As He gave you Christ unasked, unsought—when you were dead in sin, when you were His enemy, when you hated Him—how much more, now that you are His son, adopted into His family and taught by His Spirit to pray and to plead the promises He has given you—how much more will He give you all things that you need! If you have not, surely it must be because you ask not, or because you ask amiss. Ask now! Ask in faith! Ask in the name of Jesus and all your need shall be given to you!

V. A fifth time let me try to smite down that old giant, incredulity, by bidding you remember THE PERSONS TO WHOM THIS GIFT WAS GIVEN—"delivered Him up for us all.

Not one child of God is left without that gift. Little Benjamin has as great a share in Christ as Reuben or Judah has. Mr. Ready to Halt has as true an interest in the blood of Jesus as Mr. Greatheart, himself, has. The ancient Jews, on the day they were numbered, had to each pay half a shekel as a ransom for their souls. The Lord said to Moses, "The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less." The redemption money was the same for all—and Christ has paid the redemption money equally for all who believe in Him! Not one of those whom He bought with His blood is left out! Not one of His chosen, not one whom He calls, not one whom He justifies—all are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. I know you are apt to say, "No doubt the Lord will give much to so and so, for he is an eminent saint, but not to me." Yet, as He gave Christ to you, why should He not give you all else that you need? "Oh, but I am so obscure, no one will take notice of me." Did not the Lord take notice of you when He gave you Christ? Then why should He not, with Him, freely give you all things?

"Ah," says another, "but I have been such a backslider. Not only my faith, but all my other graces are so feeble, I do not feel fit to be numbered with the Lord's people." Ah, poor heart, that may be true, yet as God has given you Christ, why should He deny you anything that you need? I wish I could put this truth of God in words that would never be forgotten! I would like to help every heir of heaven to carry this truth with him even to his tomb! It is certain that as you believe in Christ, He is yours—then it must be equally certain, be you who you may be, that "all things are yours." Go, you lonely ones, up from the hour of your mourning! Take down your harps from the willows and make every string in them praise the name of the Lord! Come, you afflicted ones, wherever you wander! Come, you who think yourselves poverty stricken, and find yourselves infinitely rich in Christ Jesus! It always delights me to know how many poor people there are, and some very poor ones, too, who say that this house of prayer is the happiest place to which they ever go. Dearly do they love the truth of God and the preacher, too, for the truth's sake. And he often thinks with gratitude, when other things have failed to cheer him, that there are poor and needy ones who will come up to the sanctuary, seeking comfort and finding it, while critics, who come only to judge, will go away thinking there is nothing notable here. And the wise men of the world and the disputers will quibble at this, and object to that, and get no good out of it at all. But these afflicted and poor people of God know the joyful sound of His truth and they walk in the light of His countenance and find it sweet, indeed, to know that Christ is theirs and that all good is theirs in Christ!

VI. Now let us turn to another argument from THE VALUE OF CHRIST TO US.

What is the value of Christ to us? Christ is to us—I pause, for what shall I say? I cannot tell all that Christ is to us, for what is He *not* to us? He is the sun of our day! He is the star of our night! He is our life! He is our life's life! He is our heaven on earth and He shall be our heaven in heaven! How sweetly does Madame Guyon sing of Christ and of His exceeding preciousness to her soul! I was reading only yesterday, an account that she gives of herself and of the persecutions she endured for Christ's sake. Yet she says that it seemed to her to be just the same whether she was a prisoner in the Bastille or in the gay society of Paris, as long as she was in communion with Christ, for Christ was everything to her! And the grace taught Christian will tell you that he has had his happiest times on a bed of sickness, or when losses and crosses have come quickly, one upon another! Fellowship with Christ transforms a desert into a garden, a wilderness into a paradise! It makes the beggar a prince and sets the prince above the angels. Give a man, Christ—and this is no dream I speak of, no vision of a heated imagination, but in sober solemn earnest do I say it—and he has everything that a believer can desire! Yes, there is more in Christ than a Christian can hold and, like good John Welsh, the old Covenanter, he is ready to cry, at times, when Christ's love is very sweet to him, "Hold, Lord, hold! For I can bear no more! The joy of Your love is too great for me!" Beloved of God—not beloved of kings, though men grow great if they have a king's affection—not beloved of angels, yet it were no trifle to have a seraph's affection, but beloved of Jesus, the eternal Son of God! To have our names written on His heart and engraved on His hands, oh, how exceedingly precious is Christ to us!—

"Precious in His death victorious,
He the host of hell overthrows!
In His resurrection glorious,
Victor crowned over all His foes!
Precious, Lord! Beyond expressing,
Are Your beauties all divine!
Glory, honor, power and blessing
Be henceforth forever Thine."

Well then, I hope you never set your food and raiment in comparison with Christ. He who gave you His unspeakable gift will give you such trifles as those! I hope you never put your worldly estate, nor even your spiritual comforts, in comparison with your blessed Lord Jesus, for as God has given you Him, what can He deny you? Pluck up your heart, poor fainting one! Be of good courage and face the foe again! You have no armor for your back, so show your breastplate to your adversary and never even dream of defeat. He who has brought you thus far and enriched you with such a priceless gift can deny you nothing that you really need!

VII. And, lastly, remember THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH GOD GAVE HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST, FOR US.

His purpose was our salvation and it is inconsistent with all right ideas of deity to believe that the purposes of God can be frustrated. We know that our God made the heavens and the earth and that the word of our God shall stand forever. Our God is not a lackey to the will of men and His purposes are not like footballs to be kicked about as men may please. What God says, is done! What He commands, stands fast forever! And what His heart devises, that His hands do. "God is not a man that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should change." And if He wills to save, none can damn. He has proved the honesty and sincerity of His purpose to save us by giving us Christ. And if my faith has laid hold of Christ, and Christ is mine, then I know that it is God's purpose to save me! And I also know that all things that are necessary to my being saved must surely be bestowed upon me. I have never yet been able to put my mind into such a condition as to understand that God would give Christ to die with the intention of saving a man—and yet that man would not be saved!

I know that you and I, in ordinary business transactions, are accustomed to expect, if we pay the price for anything, that we should have what we buy. I am sure that I could not speculate with another man's blood—and especially I know that I could make no speculation with the blood of my own son! I must know beforehand what so great a sacrifice would effect. In like manner, we believe that God well knew what Christ's blood would buy, and what Christ's death would effect—and we cannot think that Calvary was a venture, that the cross was a speculation—and that the death of Christ was a lottery. God forbid! Be of good courage, then, you who are redeemed—not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ—all things must be yours! How can He who has already given Christ to be the way to heaven, leave you without shoes for your feet, or without armor for the fight, or without anything else that you will need? He who has given the greater must and will give the less! Lay your many needs before Him. Your plea is a plea that must prevail, a knock that shall make heaven's gates ring till the porter shall open them—and the favor that you need shall be given with open hands!

The only question I have to ask before I have done is this—*Is Christ yours*? Is Christ yours, my hearer? Answer "Yes," or "No," tonight! He is yours, or He is not yours, there is no third answer! Is Christ yours? Do you say "No"? Alas, poor wretch, how miserable is your state now!—"condemned already." How wretched shall your state be hereafter, when, "Depart, you cursed," shall be your sentence! "I know not," says one, "whether Christ is mine or not." Do you trust Him? This is the deciding question. If you fully and implicitly trust yourself with Christ, He is

yours! If you rest in any degree upon your own works, feelings, doings, or willings, He is not yours! But if you take Him now to be your all in all, trusting Him and Him, alone, He is yours and He shall be yours forever and ever! Let there be no aching heart at this communion table tonight! Let everyone of us come to this feast of love with joy and gladness because when we can say that Christ is ours we—

"Can smile at Satan's rage,
And face a frowning world."

May the Lord give Christ to each one of us and unto Him shall be the glory world without end! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 8:26-39.

Verse 26. *Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities.* Oh, how many these are! Lack of memory, lack of faith, lack of earnestness, ignorance, pride, deadness, coldness of heart—these are some of our infirmities. But thank God we have the omnipotent Spirit of God to help us!

26. *For we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groans which cannot be uttered.* These groans are too deep, too full of meaning to be expressed in words. There are some things the Christian needs for which he cannot ask. Perhaps he does not even know what it is that he needs. There is a vacuum in his heart, but he does not know what would fill it. There is a hunger in his spirit, but he knows not what the bread is, nor where the bread is that can satisfy his needs. But the Holy Spirit can articulate these unspoken groans and the deepest needs of our soul can thus be brought before God by His own Spirit. You, then, who find it difficult to pray, do not give up praying! The devil tells you that such poor prayers as yours are can never reach the ear of God. Do not believe him! The Spirit helps your infirmities—and when He helps you, you shall, you *must* prevail!

27. *And He that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.* [See Sermon #1532, Volume 26—THE HOLY SPIRIT'S INTERCESSION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] It cannot be supposed that the Father does not know what is the mind of the Spirit, since they are one God, and, moreover, inasmuch as the Spirit of God never intercedes for anything which is not according to God's will, we are sure that our heavenly Father will grant every Spirit composed prayer!

28. *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."* [See Sermon #159, Volume 3—THE TRUE CHRISTIAN'S BLESSEDNESS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Almost everything in this world looks to us to be in confusion, but to God's eyes, all is in

order. One wave dashes this way and another that, but they are all working together, and they are all working with one great purpose, too. Say not, Christian, "All these things are against me." Ah, poor soul! This is the verdict of your unbelief, but you will know better than that one of these days! All things are working for you, and not one of them is working against you—therefore, be not dismayed. They are all working together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

29. *For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.* [See Sermons #355, Volume 7—PORTRAITS OF CHRIST and #1043, Volume 18—GLORIOUS PREDESTINATION—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] That was the very end and object of their predestination that they might become like Christ, their great perfect elder brother—

"'Christ, be My first elect,' He said,
Then chose our souls in Christ our head
Before He gave the mountains birth
Or laid foundations for the earth!"

30. *Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called.* [See Sermon #241, Volume 5—PREDESTINATION AND CALLING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] My soul, have you been called of God? Has the Spirit of God ever called you? If so, rejoice in your predestination! Have no doubts and fears concerning that matter, for He would never have called you if He had not intended to save you from before the foundation of the world!

30. *And whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.* [See Sermon #627, Volume 11—JUSTIFICATION AND GLORY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] My soul, do you believe in Jesus? Have you trusted in His precious blood? Then you are justified! Never give way, then, to any fears concerning your eternal salvation, for as surely as there is a heaven, you shall be a partaker of its glories—for never was there a soul justified who was not afterwards glorified!

31. *What shall we then say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?* [See Sermon #580, Volume 10—GOD IS WITH US—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Have you the world against you, Christian? What is the opposition of the world when God is on your side? Is your own heart against you? What then? God is greater than your heart! Is the devil against you? Ah, he is mighty, but God is almighty and He shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. Paul was no fanatic—he was a man of great experience and of sound sense—yet he makes nothing of all our foes when God is on our side!

32. *He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things?* When God gave

us Christ, He gave us everything, for all the blessings of this life and of the life that is to come lie hidden in Christ as the kernel is within the shell of the nut! What encouragement we have here for believing prayer! Christian, Christ is the golden key of God's treasuries! You have but to use Him aright, and whatever you need shall be yours!

33. *Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?* Here is true boldness! Paul, who called himself the very chief of sinners dares to challenge anyone to lay anything to the charge of God's elect! Surely God can do so. "No," says Paul—

33. *It is God that justifies.* He is both just and the justifier of all who believe in Jesus, and they are "God's elect."

34. *Who is He that condemns?* [See Sermons #256, Volume 5—THE BELIEVER'S CHALLENGE and #2240, Volume 38—A CHALLENGE AND A SHIELD—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "Why," says one, "Christ, the great judge, will condemn." No, that He will not, for—

34. *It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.* Christian, as Christ makes intercession for you, He will never condemn you! Did He shed His blood for you and yet will He cast you into hell? Did He rise from the dead for you, and yet will He leave you among the dead and the lost? Think not so strangely of the Christ of God who is the same yesterday, and today, and forever—and who will never condemn those who trust in Him!

35. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?* They have been tried again and again.

36. *It is written, For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.* What was the effect of this persecution? Were the saints turned away from Christ by it?

37-39. *No, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* [See Sermon #2492, Volume 45—PAUL'S PERSUASION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

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SCALES TAKEN FROM THE EYES
NO. 3205

A SERMON
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"And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales."
Acts 9:18.

THIS means that the film upon Saul's eyes was comparable to the scales of a fish, or else that it fell off as scales might fall. When the blinding film was gone, light broke into the darkness of Saul. In different men, sin manifests its chief power in different parts of their nature. In the case of many, sin is most apparent in their eyes. That is to say, ignorance, error and prejudice have injured their mental sight. Some have the withered hand of conscious inability, others have the deaf ear of mental dullness, but there are far more who hear the joyful sound and display much energy, but they hear without understanding and are zealous without knowledge, for they are blind. This was Saul's condition. He was thoroughly honest—we might say of his heart, when it was at its worst, that it was always true to its convictions. He was no deceiver and no time-server. He went in for what he believed to be right with all his might—lukewarmness and selfish policy were alien to his nature. He dashed with all his might against the doctrine of the cross because he thought it to be an imposition. His fault lay in his eyes and so, when the eyes were set right, Saul was right. When he perceived that Jesus was, after all, the Messiah, the man became just as earnest a follower of Christ as before he had been a persecutor!

We will talk about scales falling from men's eyes. I want to address those who would be right if they knew how. Those who are earnest, but in the wrong direction, for they do not see the truth. If the Lord, in His infinite mercy, will but touch those sightless eyeballs and remove the film, so that they discern the right way, they will follow it at once. May the Lord remove many scales while we are proceeding!

First, we will speak of *scales which men fail to perceive because they are inside*. Secondly, we will *show what makes these scales come to the outside so that men do perceive them.* Then, thirdly, *what instrumentality the Lord uses to take these outside scales away.* And, fourthly, *what did Saul see when the scales were gone*?

I. First, then, THERE ARE SCALES WHICH MEN DO NOT PERCEIVE. Saul had scales upon his eyes when he was on the road to Damascus, but if you had looked at his face, he would have appeared to have as bright an eye as any man. Scales on his eyes? Why, he was a sharp sighted philosopher, a Pharisee and a teacher of others. He would not have believed you for a minute if you had said to him, "Saul, you are

blind." Yet blind he was, for his eyes were shut up with inside scales—the worst sort of scales that can possibly cloud the sight.

Saul had the scale of *self* to darken his eyes. He had a great idea of Saul of Tarsus. If he had written down his own character, he would have begun it, "A Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law of God, a Pharisee." And then he would have gone on to tell of countless good works, fasts, prayers and have finished with, "concerning zeal, persecuting the church." He was far too great in his own estimation to become a disciple of Jesus Christ! How could the Rabbi who sat at the feet of Gamaliel become a follower of the despised Galilean? Poor peasants might follow the man of Nazareth, but Doctor Saul of Tarsus—a man so educated both in the knowledge of the Hebrew literature and of the Greek philosophy—it was not likely that he would mingle with fishermen and peasants in adoring the Nazarene! This is the reason why a great many people cannot see the beauties of Christ and cannot come to Him that they might have life, namely, because they are so great in their own esteem! Ah, my lord, it might have been a good thing for you if you had been a pauper! Ah, good moralist, it might not be amiss for you if you would sit by the side of those who have lost character among men and discover that after all, there are not many shades of difference between you and them! Great "I" must fall before the great Savior will be seen! When a man becomes nothing in his own estimation, then Jesus Christ becomes everything to him, but not till then. Self is an effectual darkener of the windows of the soul. How can men see the gospel while they see so much of themselves? With such a noble righteousness of their own to deck themselves with, is it likely that they will buy of Christ the fine white linen which is the righteousness of saints?

Another scale on Saul's inner eye was *ignorance*, and learned ignorance, too, which is by far the worst kind of ignorance! Saul knew everything but what he ought to have known. He was instructed in all other sorts of learning, but he did not know Christ. He had never studied the Lord's claim and character—he had picked up the popular rumors and he had thought them to be sterling truth. Ah, had he known, poor Soul, that Jesus of Nazareth really was the Christ, he would never have hauled men and women to prison! But the scale of ignorance was over his eyes. And how many there are in this city of London, in what we call this "enlightened" 19th century, who know a great deal about a thousand things, but nothing about the one thing necessary! They have never troubled to study Christ and so, for lack of knowledge, they grope about as the blind!

With ignorance generally goes another scale, namely, *prejudice*. The man who knows nothing about truth is usually the man who despises it most. He does not know and does not want to know. "Don't tell me," he says, "don't tell me." He has nothing but a sneer for you when you have told him the truth of God to the best of your ability. The man has no candor. He has made up his mind, *he* has! Besides, his father before him was not of your religion and do you think he is going to be a turncoat and leave the old family faith? "Don't tell me," he says, "I don't want to know anything of your canting Methodism," or, "Presbyterianism," or whatever it is that he likes to call it. He is *so* wise! He is wiser than seven

men that can render a reason! O Prejudice, Prejudice, Prejudice, how many have you destroyed! Men who might have been wise have remained fools because they thought they were wise. Many judge what the gospel *ought* to be, but do not actually inquire as to what it is. They do not come to the Bible to obtain their views of religion, but they open that book to find texts to suit the opinions which they bring to it. They are not open to the honest force of the truth of God and, therefore, are not saved by it! Oh, that this scale would fall from every eye which it now closes!

Saul's soul was also darkened by the scale of *unbelief*. Saul had seen Stephen die. If he saw the martyr's heavenly face, he must have noticed the wondrous peace which sat upon his countenance when he fell asleep amid a shower of stones. But Saul did not believe. Though no sermon is like the sight of a martyrdom, yet Saul was not convinced. Perhaps he had heard about the Savior more than he cared to remember, but he did not believe it. He counted the things rumored concerning Him to be idle tales and cast them under his feet. O brothers and sisters, what multitudes are being ruined by this cruel unbelief towards Christ! Some of you, too, whom I have been addressing for years, are believers in the head, but unbelievers in the heart, not really putting your trust in Jesus! Who can see if he refuses the light of God? Who shall find salvation if he will not trust the Savior for it? Unbelief is as sure to destroy those who are guilty of it as faith is sure to save believers!

Then the scale of *habit*, too, had formed over Saul's inner eyes, for he had been for a long time what he then was. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" If so, then he that is accustomed to do evil may learn to do well. They say that use is second nature and when the first nature is bad, the second nature is like the first, only it goes further in wrong. Ah, dear friends, some of you have been so accustomed to refuse the gospel, so accustomed to follow after the pleasures and the vices of the world, that it does not seem possible that you should follow after Christ! Habits of secret sin are peculiarly blinding to the soul. May this scale be speedily made to fall!

Another scale is *worldliness*, and Saul had that upon his inner eyes, for he loved the praise of men. He had his reputation to maintain, for he had profited beyond most of his brothers and was reckoned to be a most hopeful and rising teacher of Israel. It was not likely that Saul would believe in Jesus Christ, for then he would have to lose the esteem of his countrymen. The fear of man and the love of man's applause—how they prevent men from seeing the truth about Jesus and recognizing Him as the Son of God! "How can you believe, which receive honor, one of another?" How can men bow themselves before Jesus Christ when, all the while, they are bidding high for the homage of their fellow sinners? The love of adulation, which is a form of worldliness, blinds the eyes and so will any other love of things beneath the moon! Let but the heart be set upon this blinding world and there will be little sight for things divine.

II. These scales were upon the inside of Saul's eyes when he was on the way to Damascus, but now we have to notice them BROUGHT TO THE OUTSIDE. Those outside scales revealed in type and figure what

had always been the matter with Saul—they were the material index of the spiritual mischief under which he had long labored! Only now they were brought outside so that he knew they were there, and others could perceive that they were there. Now there was hope that they would be removed from the eyes! Now that he was conscious of them, the evil was half cured! What brought those scales to the outside and made Saul know that he was blind?

Well, first, it was *the exceeding glory of Christ*. He says, "About noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me," and he adds, "I could not see for the glory of that light." Let my Lord Jesus Christ only manifest Himself to any of you and you will be well enough aware of your blindness and you will say to yourselves, "What a strangely blind being I must have been not to have loved such beauty as this—not to have yielded myself to such grace as this—not to have trusted myself to so complete a Savior as this!" Oh, the glory of Christ! It has even laid the saints prostrate when they have seen it! Those who dwell nearest to their Lord are frequently overcome with the exceeding brightness of His glory and have to confess with those favored three—

"When in ecstasy sublime,
Tabor's glorious steep we climb,
At the top transporting light,
Darkness rushes over our sight."

So it is with the sinner when he gets his first view of a glorious Christ—the inrush of the glory makes him mourn his native blindness—he perceives that he has had no perception and knows that he has known nothing!

Another thing which made the scales pass to the outside of Saul's eyes was *that unanswerable question*, "Why do you persecute Me?" That brought home to him a sense of his sin. "Why?" That was a "why" for which Saul of Tarsus could not find a, "because." When he discovered that the man of Nazareth was the glorious Christ of God, then, indeed, he was "confounded." He could make no reply to the demand, "Why do you persecute Me?" Oh, that the Lord would fix such a "why" in some of your hearts! Why should you live in sin? Why are you choosing the wages of unrighteousness? Why are you hardening your hearts against the gospel? Why are you ridiculing it? Why do you sneer at the servants of God? If the Holy Spirit drives that "why" home to your heart, you will begin to say, "What a blind fool I am to have acted as I have done, to go kicking against the pricks, fighting against my best friend and pouring scorn on those whom I ought most of all to admire!" The *why* from the lips of Christ will show you your blindness!

The scales were on the outside of Saul's eyes, now, because *his soul had been cast into a terrible bewilderment*. We read of him that when his eyes were opened, he saw no man, but trembling and astonished, he asked the Lord what he must do. Some of us know what that experience means. We have been brought under the hand of God till we have been utterly astonished—astonished at our Savior, astonished at our sin, astonished that there should be a hope remaining for us, astonished that we should have rejected that hope so long! With this amazement, there was mixed trembling lest, after all, the mercy should be too great for us

and the next word from the Lord would be, "You have kicked against the pricks so long that, henceforth, the gates of mercy are shut against you." May the Lord fill some of you with trembling and astonishment! And if He does, then you will perceive the blindness of your soul—and cry for light!

I have no doubt the scales became all the more perceptible to poor Saul when he came to those *three days and nights of prayer,* for when you get a man on his knees and he begins crying for mercy, he is in the way of being more fully taught his need of it! If relief does not come at once, then the penitent cries more and more intensely—his heart all the while is aching more and more and he perceives how blind he must have been to bring himself into such a condition. It is a good thing, sometimes, when the Lord keeps a man in prayer, pleading for the mercy and pleading, and pleading, and pleading on and on, until he perceives how great his need of that mercy is! When he has bitterly felt the darkness of his soul, he will be exceedingly bold in bearing light to his fellow men. May God bring many of you to agonizing prayer! And if that prayer should last days and nights and you should neither eat nor drink for anguish of spirit, I guarantee you that you will thoroughly learn your blindness and the scales upon your eyes will be painfully evident to you!

III. Now thirdly, and here I should like to stir up the people of God to a little practical business—we have seen Saul with the scales outside his eyes. He now knows that he is blind, though he did not know it before when he was a proud Pharisee. He can see a great deal better, now, than he could when he thought he could see. But still, there he is, in darkness—and we long for the scales to be removed! WHAT INSTRUMENTALITY DID THE LORD USE TO TAKE THE SCALES AWAY?

It was not an angel, nor was it an apostle, but it was a *plain man* named Ananias, who was the means of bringing sight to blind Saul! We do not know much about this useful brother. We know his name and that is enough. But Ananias was the only person whom the Lord used in taking off the scales from this apostle's eyes. Dear brothers and sisters, there are some of you, if you are but alive to it, whom God will bless in like work! Perhaps this very night, though you are unknown and obscure Christian people, He may make you to be the means of taking the scales from the eyes of somebody who will be eminently useful in future years. The Holy Spirit blessed the great apostle to the Gentiles by Ananias and He may lead another of His mighties to Himself by some obscure disciple!

Ananias was a plain man, but he was a *good man*—you can see that Ananias was a thorough man of God. He was one who knew his Lord and recognized His voice when He said to him, in a vision, "Ananias." And he was a man whom the Lord knew, for He called him by his name. "I have called you by your name: you are Mine." The Lord will not send you on His errands unless you are sound, sincere and living near to Him. But if you are that, no matter how feeble you may be, I beseech you to be looking, even tonight, for some blind soul to whom you may be as eyes!

Notice that this Ananias was a *ready man*, for when the Lord spoke to him, he said, "Behold, I am here, Lord." I know many professors who would have to answer, "Behold, I am somewhere else, Lord, but certainly

not here." They are not "all there" when they are in Christ's work! The heart is away after something else. But, "Behold, I am here, Lord," is a grand thing for a believer to say when his Lord bids him seek the wanderer. It is well to say, "Behold, I am here, Lord, ready for the poor awakened one. If he needs a word of comfort, I am ready to say it to him. If he needs a word of direction, here am I, as You shall help me to speak it to him." My brother, be you like Ananias was, a ready man!

And he was an *understanding man*, for when the Lord said to him concerning Saul, "Behold; he prays," he knew what that meant. He well understood the first indication of grace in the soul! Beloved, you must have a personal experience of the things of God, or you cannot help newborn souls! If you do not know what it is to pass from death to life, and do not know the marks of regeneration, you are useless.

At the same time, he was a *discerning man*—an inquiring, discriminating man, for he began to say, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man." He wanted to know a little about Saul, so he inquired of the great Master as to his character, and whether it was a genuine work of grace in his soul. It will not do to pat all people on the back and give them comfort without examining into their state. Some of you must know by this time that indiscriminate consolation does more hurt than good. Certain classes need no consolation, but rather require reproof. They need wounding before they can be healed! And it is a good thing to know your man, and especially to wait upon the Lord and ask Him to tell you about your man, so that you may know how to deal with him when you do come to him. As Ananias did, use all diligence to know the case.

But when once he had made his inquiry, he was an *obedient man*. He was told to go into a house where I do not suppose he had ever left his card in his life, but he did not stop for an introduction—he went off at once to the house of Judas, and inquired for one called Saul, of Tarsus. He had divine authority—the Lord had given him a search warrant, and so he entered the house—

"Thus the eternal mandate ran,
Almighty grace, arrest that man!"

Ananias must be the sheriff's officer to go and arrest Saul in the name of the Lord! And so away he went.

And you will notice what a *personal dealing man* he was, for he did not stand at a distance, but, putting his hands on him, he said, "*Brother Saul*." Ah, that is the way to talk to people who are seeking the Lord—not to stand five miles off, and speak distantly, or preach condescendingly, as from the supreme heaven of a sanctified believer, down to the poor sinner mourning below! No, go and talk to him! Call him, "Brother." Go and speak to him with a true, loving, brotherly accent, as Ananias did, for he was *a brotherly man*.

Ananias was also *a man whose subject was Christ*. As soon as ever you do speak to the sinner, let the first thing you have to say be, "The Lord, *even Jesus*." Whatever you say next, begin with that, "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus." Have something to say about Jesus, but say it personally and pointedly, not as though you were alluding to persons liv-

ing in Australia seven hundred years ago, but as referring to Brother Saul, and intending the word for him!

Among Christian people there are mighty hunters before the Lord who strive after souls, but I wish that a hundred times as many really cared for the souls of their fellow men. Some church members never speak to anybody about spiritual things. You come into your pews and you like two seats if you can get them—like gentlemen in a first class carriage, you want a compartment to yourselves! And then, after service, no matter who is impressed, many of you have not a word to say. Should it be so, brothers and sisters? We should always be on the lookout to seat strangers comfortably and afterwards to drive home, by personal remark, any truth of God which may have been advanced. "Ah, says one, but I may speak to the wrong person." Suppose you did? Is it such a mighty misfortune to miss your mark once? Ah, brothers and sisters, if you were to address the wrong person 50 times and ultimately meet the right one once in a year, it would well reward you! If you were to receive rebuffs, and rebuffs, and rebuffs, and yet at last you should find out that Brother Saul who is to have the scales removed by you—and by none but you—you would be well rewarded! A plain common sense word from a common sense Christian has often been the very thing to set some able critic at liberty! Some man of profound mind—a Thomas of abundant doubts and questions—has only just needed a simple hearted Christian to say the right words and he has entered into peace and liberty. You must not think that learned persons, when the Lord touches them in the heart, need to be talked to by doctors of divinity. Not they! They become as simple hearted as others and, like dying kings and dying bishops, they ask to hear a shepherd pray because they find more savor, more plainness, more earnestness, more faith and more familiarity with God in the humble expressions of the lowly than in the language of courtly preachers. Do not, therefore, Brother Ananias, say, "I cannot go and talk to anybody. I have never been to college." Do not, sister in Christ, stay back because you are a woman, for oftentimes the Lord makes the sweet and gentle voice of women to sound out the music of grace! God grant that many of us may be the instruments of taking the scales from men's eyes!

IV. LASTLY, WHAT DID SAUL SEE WHEN THE SCALES WERE GONE?

The first person he saw was *Brother Ananias*. It was a fine sight for Saul to see Brother Ananias' Christian countenance beaming with love and joy! I fancy he was like one of our elders, a fine old Christian man with love to souls written on his face. When Saul opened his eyes, it must have done him good to see just such a face as that—a plain, simple man full of holy zeal and intense anxiety for his good. Dear friend, if the Lord opens your eyes, you will see the brotherhood of Christians. Perhaps you will enjoy that among the first delights of your Christian experience and, for a little while, your faith, it may be, will hang upon the testimony of an instructed Christian woman and your confidence will need confirmation by the witness of a more advanced brother in the Lord. But, my fellow worker, the saved one will never see Brother Ananias unless

Ananias goes to him and becomes the means of opening his eyes! And if you will go and do that, you will win a friend who will love you as long as life lasts. There are some of you between whom and myself there are ties which death cannot snap. I will find you in heaven if I can and I know you will desire to meet me. The Lord gave you to me as my spiritual children and if it should come to pass that earthly fathers should not see their children in heaven, yet the spiritual father will see his children there praising and blessing the Lord! One of the next joys to knowing Christ, yourself, must surely be that of leading others to know Him. Seek after this bliss!

The next thing that Saul would see would be *a Savior in Christ*, for Ananias said to him, "The Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto you in the way as you came, has sent me, that you might receive your sight." Now he would see what an opener of the eyes Jesus is, what a mighty Savior for sinners! And, oh, this is a blessed sight—to see Christ as a Savior, as *my* Savior, opening *my* eyes, so that I can say, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see." This is a heavenly sight. May you help many to gaze upon it!

Right speedily he saw *the Spirit of God waiting to fill him*—"that you might receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Ah, dear soul, when you have come to see Christ, then the blessed Spirit will become dear to you and you will rejoice to think that He will dwell in you to sanctify you, to enlighten you, to strengthen you, and to make you a vessel of mercy unto others!

One more thing that Saul saw, when his eyes were opened, was what some do not see, although their eyes are opened in other aspects. "He received sight forthwith, and *arose, and was baptized*." He saw the duty of believers' baptism and he attended to it directly. You who believe in Jesus should confess Jesus. And you who have confessed Jesus should gently stir the memories of those very retiring young converts who are afraid to put on Christ in baptism. You know right well that salvation lies in the believing, but still, how amazingly the two things are put together, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." The two things are joined together by *Christ*, so let no man put them asunder! Surely, dear friends, wherever there is a genuine faith in Christ, there ought to be a speedy obedience to the other matter! I once met a man who had been a Christian 40 years and believed it to be his duty to be baptized. But when I spoke to him about it, he said, "He that believes shall not make haste." After 40 years delay, he talked about not making haste! I quoted to him another passage—"I made haste, and delayed not to keep Your commandment," and showed him what the meaning of his misapplied passage was. Now, soul, do not delay! As soon as Saul's eyes were opened, straightway he took upon himself the outward badge of the Christian faith and arose, and was baptized! Now I call upon you who love the Lord Jesus Christ not to play the coward, but come out and acknowledge your Lord and Master! You that are truly His disciples, confess it! I like to see a soldier wearing his red coat—it is the right thing for him to wear his uniform. It is the same with the soldiers of Christ. What are you ashamed of? Be ashamed of being ashamed, if you are ashamed

of Christ! "Oh, but, I am afraid I might not hold on my way!" Whose business is it to make you hold on your way? Is it not His business who has bid you to take up your cross and follow Him, and who has said, "Whoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess before My Father which is in heaven; but whoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven"?

I pray the Lord to bless these feeble words of mine. O souls, O souls, it does seem to me so dreadful that so many of you should come here continually and yet be blind! I try to talk plainly about your souls' needs and about Christ Jesus as able to meet those needs—how long must I repeat the old story? Once again I beseech you, think upon my Lord and Master and see what a Savior He is, and how suitable He is for you! I would entreat you to delay no longer, but to close in with the invitations of His mercy. I think, sometimes, that my Master deserves that we should do more than invite you. We *command* you, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, to bow before His scepter, for He is the King! Acknowledge His dominion and let Him be your Savior, for know this—His gospel comes with divine authority as well as with gentle persuasion—and neither can men reject it except at the peril of their souls! He whom I preach to you tonight will shortly come to be your judge. And if you will not trust Him on His cross, you must tremble before Him on His throne! Oh, come to Him! Simple trust is the way to come to Him. Believe in Him and He is yours and His salvation is yours!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ACTS 9:1-22; 22:1-16.

Acts 9:1, 2. *And Saul, yet breathing out threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this Way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.* His very breath was hot with malice against the saints! He could not live without venting his spite upon the disciples of Christ. He showed this by the fact that he not only sought to arrest men, but he was equally cruel towards women, who, from their weakness, one would have thought might have been left alone—but he expressly desired it to be written in the letters that, "whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem."

3. *And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven.* When speaking before Agrippa, Paul said that it was "a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun." Was it not that very Shekinah which of old had shone forth between the cherubim over the mercy seat?

4, 5. *And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me? And he said, Who are You, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom you persecute: it is hard for you to kick against the pricks.* There is something very characteristic about Christ's answer to Saul's question. He did not say, "It is hard for Me," although

He was, Himself, persecuted in His members and felt intense sympathy with them. He did not dwell upon that, but He said to Saul, "It is hard for you." There was much pity in the rebuke. Saul was like a bull that has been pricked by the sharp ox goad and kicks against it—and so is hurt all the more. Our Lord knew what sorrow it would cause Saul in the years to come, for he would never cease to lament that he had persecuted the disciples of Christ.

6. *And he, trembling and astonished.* Finding that Jesus, whom he thought to be dead and buried, and those followers he was so violently opposing, was yet alive—

6-8. *Said, Lord, what will You have me to do? And the Lord said to him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told you what you must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth and when his eyes were opened, he saw no men: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.* So the proud persecutor, who was going to Damascus as a conqueror to crush the saints of God was, himself, led into the city as a captive, to be forever afterwards the slave of Jesus Christ!

9. *And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.* What passed through that mind which was darkened to natural light, but was being filled with spiritual light, we can well guess. I mean, those of us who have experienced true conviction of sin. In those three days, he lived his life of opposition to the Lord Jesus over again—what heartbreak he must have felt and what anguish of soul—and what holy resolves he must have made during his three days' blindness and fasting!

10, 11. *And there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here Lord. And the Lord said to him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called, Saul of Tarsus: for, behold, he prays.* [See Sermon #16, Volume —PAUL'S FIRST PRAYER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] He had been a praying man for most of his life, for he was a devout Jew and, according to his light, he had lived up to his knowledge. But now he was praying in the Christian sense of the term, drawing near to God through the very Christ whom he had in his ignorance and unbelief persecuted! How many prayers of unregenerate men, who know not Christ, and are not constrained by His love, go for nothing! When they first from the heart confess their sin and cry to God for mercy, *then* they begin to really pray!

12-16. *And has seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he has done to Your saints at Jerusalem: and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on Your name. But the Lord said unto him, go your way: for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake.* [See Sermon #944, Volume 16—AN ENCOURAGING LESSON FROM PAUL'S CONVERSION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Ananias said to the Lord, "I

have heard by many of this man, how much evil he has done to Your saints at Jerusalem." And now the Lord says to Ananias, in response to that, "I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake." As he had made others suffer for Christ's name's sake, he must, himself, suffer in the same way. Yet in this he was greatly favored, for it is one of the highest honors that the Lord Jesus Christ can put upon His chosen ones that they should be called to suffer for His name's sake!

17-21. *And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house and putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto you in the way as you came, has sent me that you might receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. And immediately there fell from his eyes, as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. And when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed.* I should like to have heard one of those first sermons of the apostle and to have seen the astonishment of the people as they listened to the converted persecutor—"All that heard him were amazed"—

21, 22. *And said; is not this he that destroyed them who called on this name in Jerusalem, and came here for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.*

Chapter 22:1, 2. *Men, brethren, and fathers, hear you my defense which I make now unto you. (And when they heard that he spoke in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silent.) And he said—* Men like to be addressed in their own language. They give the more heed to the message if it is spoken to them in words that they can understand.

3-9. *I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as you all are this day. And I persecuted this Way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. As also the high priest does bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem to be punished. And it came to pass that, as I made my journey, and was come near unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, Saul, Saul, Why do you persecute Me? And I answered, Who are You, Lord? And He said to me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you persecute. And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of Him that spoke to me.* Paul's companions could not help sensing that extraordinary light and though they did not understand what it was, they were alarmed by it. They also heard a supernatural sound, but they could not comprehend what the voice of Jesus said to their leader as he lay prostrate upon the ground.

10-12. *And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said to me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told you of all things which are appointed for you to do. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there.* These particulars concerning the character of Ananias do not appear in the former part of the narrative. Paul was endeavoring to conciliate his hearers and, therefore, he mentioned that Ananias was a devout Jew, having a good report of all his brethren who dwelt in Damascus.

13, 14. *Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive your sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. And he said, The God of our Fathers has chosen you, that you should know His will, and see that Just One and should hear the voice of His mouth.* If Paul was to be an apostle, it was necessary that he should see the Lord Christ, for one of the qualifications of an apostle was that he should be able to bear witness, from his eyesight, and from his hearing, to the existence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore it was that Saul did, at that time, "see that Just One," and did "hear the voice of His mouth."

15, 16. *For you shall be His witness unto all men of what you have seen and heard. And now why do you tarry? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.* These two things were necessary—first, he was to be baptized on profession of his faith in Jesus. And then he was to have in his soul a vivid consciousness that his sins were all washed away. This was not baptismal regeneration, for he was already regenerate! It was, however, the *obedience to the Lord's command*, which brought with it a sweet reassurance of the forgiveness of his sins.

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"THE CHURCH OF THE FIRST-BORN"
NO. 3206

A SERMON
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 30, 1862.

"The general assembly and church of the first-born,
which are written in heaven."
Hebrews 12:23.

PAUL had just been giving a brief description of the great gathering of the children of Israel around Mount Sinai, "the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire," like a huge volcano. He had vividly portrayed "the blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of trumpet, and the voice of words," and the frightened multitudes standing, trembling, at a distance, and even Moses, their great leader, so alarmed that he cried out, "I exceedingly fear and quake." Paul intends that description to teach us the effect that the legal dispensation can produce—it can alarm and condemn—but it cannot save! You who are under the law of God, you who are trying to win God's favor by your good works. You who fancy that human merit can bring you salvation, look to the flames which Moses saw and sink, and tremble and despair! You who think that you can live as the law requires and so attain to everlasting life, may well stand shivering and trembling before this Almighty, though invisible God whose lightning blazes before your eyes and whose voice of thunder must alarm the most stout heart! Terrible is the plight of the man who has to depend upon what Sinai can give him—he is wretched in life, he shall be troubled in death, he shall be lost forever in eternity! "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." "By grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

Having given that description of Sinai by way of contrast, Paul now brings out the much more pleasing picture of the gospel dispensation. Christians shall also have their great assembly! There is a mountain upon which all those who are under grace shall one day gather—a mountain that does not smoke, for it is Mount Zion—the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem! There will be words there, but they will be words of sacred song and names of holy gladness. There may be trumpets there, but they will be the silver trumpets that will proclaim the eternal

jubilee. Moses will be there, but no longer fearing and quaking, for when he comes to that mount of God, he will forget all his fears and rejoice without ceasing in the Lord his God. Believers are the multitude whom no man can number, who will assemble upon that glorious mountain to keep the everlasting holy day! Happy indeed shall we be when, by grace, we come to the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven—when we shall see that sight which was revealed to John in Patmos—a Lamb standing on the Mount Zion—and with Him those who have His Father's name written on their foreheads, who follow the Lamb wherever He goes and who are without fault before the throne of God!

The first point to which I am going to draw your attention is *the description given of believers as the church of the first-born*. Next, I want to remind you of *what is said about their enrollment*—they are written or enrolled (as the original reading renders it) in heaven. And then, thirdly, I shall have something to say concerning their *great general assembly*, when all the righteous shall be gathered to Christ, to be parted from Him no more forever.

I. To begin then, from our text it seems that BELIEVERS IN CHRIST ARE DESCRIBED AS THE CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN. I shall try to make my remarks, as I utter them, self-examining, so that you and I may question ourselves to see whether we belong to this general assembly.

By the term "first-born" is often meant, in Scripture, *the most excellent, the chief*. Jesus Christ, because of the excellence of His character, is said to be "the first-born among many brethren," "the first-born of every creature," "the first-born from the dead, that in all things He might have the preeminence." So, although believers are, by nature, the children of wrath, even as others, yet, after Christ has renewed them, they become the excellent of the earth in whom should be all our delight. Point me out a man who makes a profession of religion, but who is a drunk, and I will tell him at once that his profession is a lie! Show me another who says he is a follower of Christ, although he oppresses the poor, defrauds the laborer of his wages, is a covetous man who cares only for himself and shuts up his heart of compassion from his needy brethren—and I hesitate not to ask, "How dwells the love of God in him?" If the "grace" we profess to have does not make us better than others, the sooner we get rid of it, the better! "What do you do more than others?" was the question of Christ to His disciples. "If you lend to them, of whom you hope to receive, what thanks have you? For sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again." Of Christians there is something to be expected that is not to be looked for in others—they profess to be twice born, and to have God dwelling in them, as Paul says to the Corinthians, "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" Christians profess to be heirs of heaven and members of the mystical body of Christ, so shall they talk and act as the ungodly do, and demean

themselves as those do who have never received this new and higher life? God forbid! When divine grace comes, it lifts us up and keeps us up! And makes us new creatures in Christ Jesus, so that the evil things in which we once delighted, we do not so much as name, while anything that is virtuous or of good repute we pant after, that we may exhibit it to the praise of His grace who has called us according to the counsel of His own will.

Now, dear friends, you can make this a test by which to try yourselves. What is your life? What fruits do you bring forth? If you bring forth thorns, surely you are brambles! If you bear the grapes of Gomorrah, surely you belong to Sodom's valley! "Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles?" If the stream is foul, what must the fountain be? If the outside of your cup and platter is filthy, what must the inside be? If that which men see of you is foul, how foul must you be where only God can see you? We are, none of us, better than we seem, but we are, all of us, far worse than we think! May God tear away every veil which hides us from ourselves, that we may see ourselves even as we are in His sight!

So you see that God's first-born are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation," "a peculiar people, zealous of good works," who seek to adorn the doctrines of God their Savior in all things.

But the term, "first-born," has a second meaning in Scripture. The first-born, under the old Mosaic economy, were *chosen by God for Himself*. When He smote the first-born of Egypt, He set apart for Himself all the first-born of Israel. He might have selected the youngest of the family, or the second, if He had chosen to do so, for God does as He wills and, "He gives not account of any of His matters." You may ask Him why He does this or that, but He deigns not to answer your inquisitive or impertinent inquiries. He is not disturbed by your questions. He never gives the reasons why He chooses any man unto salvation. That He does choose them is clear enough from Scripture, so clear that even such an unbeliever as Bolingbroke said to Mr. Whitefield one day, "Let it be taken for granted that the Bible is true, then no other doctrine but Calvinism can be true, for the Bible teaches it from beginning to end." Certainly, if men's minds were not willfully perverted, they must read this truth of God in such words as these, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God who shows mercy." And what says the Scripture when the sinner begins to quibble at this truth of God? "No, but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why have You made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" It is a fact that God has ordained unto eternal life a multitude that no man can number! And just as the first-born among the Jews were typically elect,

so the saints become saints as the result of the divine decree passed long before the earth was created. When as yet this world and the sun and moon and stars slept in the mind of God like unborn forests in an acorn cup, even then had the Almighty written the names of all His chosen in the Lamb's book of life and fixed the place, the date, the very *moment* when they should be born—and when they should be born a second time—when they would come to Christ and so find salvation and everlasting life! This doctrine is far from palatable to men, but, inasmuch as it glorifies God and makes man to be but as a grasshopper before the eternal, we delight in it, and humbly bow before the sovereign disposer of all events and say, "It is the Lord; let Him do what seems good to Him."

Then, thirdly, the first-born were *inheritors of great privileges*—of which we cannot just now speak particularly, but will do so further on—and *they became so entirely by birth*. The rights of the first-born lay only in his primogeniture—not in his stature, not in his comeliness or beauty, not in his mental capacity, not even in his moral virtues. If he was as lame as Mephibosheth, yet, if he was the first-born, he could not be disinherited! Or if, instead of having the towering stature of a Saul, he was as diminutive as Zacchaeus, yet, if he was the first-born, neither his parents nor all the courts of law could reverse the rights of primogeniture! So, beloved, all those who are believers in Christ, who are known to men by their excellence of character while God knows them by having chosen them by His grace, are in time brought to realize their privileges through the new birth which is worked in them by the Holy Spirit. If we are born only once, we must die twice—but if we are born twice, we die but once—and after that one death which is not really death, we enter into eternal life! Regeneration makes us actually the children of God, just as adoption makes us virtually the children of God. By regeneration, we become really and truly heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—and our right to heaven, to all the blessings of the covenant of grace, and to the promises of God—arises from this new and heavenly birth! Heaven is the inheritance of the children of God, not a possession purchased by their money, or won by any deeds that they have done. This heritage is the birthright of all who have been born again, born from above. So the question for every one of us to ask is, "have I experienced this new birth?" "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and only flesh. "And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." And as heaven and all the other blessings of the covenant are spiritual, we cannot possess them until we are "born of the Spirit."

The first-born, then, had certain rights because of their birth. And the first-born, spiritually, have certain rights because of their *new* birth. May the Lord help you all to make sure work here! I pray you do not take it for granted that all is well with your soul, nor treat this question as though it were of little account. On the fact of your being born again, or not being born again, must hang your everlasting destiny! Live and die

unregenerate, and unutterable woe will be your eternal portion. Pass from death unto life and all the glories of the Paradise of God become yours by a promise which death and the devil, himself, cannot break! Have you passed from death unto life? How can you tell that? "By their fruits you shall know them," is our Lord's own test! Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you trusting alone in Him? These are vital questions and if you can truly say—

"My hope is built on nothing less
Then Jesus' blood and righteousness"—

and if that hope is accompanied by the faith which works by love and purifies the heart and life, then you are one of the children of God! And in that fact you may well "rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

Now, fourthly, upon the first-born, more than upon any others, God was pleased to multiply the types of redemption in order to show to us very plainly that the heirs of heaven are a redeemed people. First of all, the great majority of the first-born were redeemed by blood. In the dark and dreadful night, the destroying angel is let loose with noiseless wings and with a sharp sword that never misses its mark. He is speeding from house to house throughout all the land of Egypt, and from the first-born of Pharaoh upon the throne, to the first-born of the slave women behind the mill, they fall dead! And Egypt's wail goes up to heaven in an exceedingly bitter and piercing cry. But throughout the houses of the Israelites a different scene is being witnessed. The doors are shut, a roasted lamb lies upon the table and men and women stand around it, girt as for a journey, with their staves in their hands—and they eat in haste. There is a first-born child in his mother's arms, or a first-born male who is grown up, yet they show no sign of trepidation, though it is well known that, on that night, the first-born are to die! Why are they so calm? Had you been present, an hour or two ago, you would have seen that the father, when he slew the lamb, drained the warm lifeblood into a bowl and, as his children gathered about him, he said to them, "Come, follow me." And taking with him a bunch of hyssop, he went to the outside of his door, and smote the lintel till it was crimsoned with the blood of the lamb. And then he sprinkled the posts on either side so that the blood mark was all about the door. "And now," he said, "my children, we are safe, for when God sees the blood, He will pass over us, and our first-born will not be slain—the blood will make them secure." In like manner we who are the first-born of God are saved by the blood of Jesus! Can you, friend, by faith say, "My confidence is in that blood alone"? Has it been applied to your heart and conscience? Has it spoken peace to your soul? Does it cleanse you from all sin? Do you now rejoice that there is no condemnation to you, as you are in Christ Jesus, and He has endured the whole of the divine wrath that was your due because of your sin?

But lest we should not learn this great truth by one type, God has given us another. In the course of two years, over 22,000 children were born to that large population, and these had not been redeemed by the blood of the paschal lambs, for they were not then in being. So another method was adopted—a Levite was to stand in the place of each first-born male child and God accepted the Levite, and allowed the child to remain in his father's house. Here was a symbol of the great truth of substitution, but the privileges which appertained to some of the Jewish first-born in the type belong to all the spiritual first-born children of God. Christ is the Levite who stands before God in our place and who there ministers for us, and honors His Father's law, and fulfills its every jot and tittle on our behalf. There were 273 first-born Jewish children for whom no Levite substitute could be found, so five shekels per head had to be paid to Aaron and his sons as redemption money for them. And, in like manner, the divine plan of redemption is very rightly set forth by the Apostle Peter when he says, "You know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold…but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot."

Put these three things together—redemption by blood, redemption by substitution, and redemption by purchase—and you will then have a very clear idea of what atonement in reference to the first-born means. Any one of the three will be sufficient for the enlightened saint, but the whole together will reflect a beautiful light upon the cross of Christ—and in that light we may clearly see how He bore our sins in His own body on the tree and brought in everlasting redemption for all His chosen. Let each one of us put these questions to himself or herself, "Am I redeemed with the precious blood of Christ? Did He stand as substitute and surety for me? Am I bought with the price that He paid for His people on the cross? For, if not, I cannot be numbered among the first-born, for all the first-born must be redeemed in this way."

Our time flies so quickly that I am afraid the other two divisions of my discourse will have to suffer. But I must remind you, as I promised to do, that *the first-born, having been redeemed, had very special privileges*. First, they had a double portion of their father's goods. Hence, Elisha, who was, in the prophetic sense, the first-born of Elijah, pleaded with him as his spiritual son, "I pray you, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me." Now God is good to all men, and His tender mercies are over all His works, but His special favor is reserved for the called and chosen, and faithful ones whom He has redeemed. The first-born also had the privilege of priesthood in the old patriarchal times, and every true child of God is made a king and a priest unto God, to offer daily, spiritual and acceptable sacrifices through Jesus Christ. The first-born was, in many respects, a ruler over the whole household—and Christ, the great first-born—is the supreme ruler over His church, and we, in and through Him, are made rulers over many things. And He bids us ascend the

throne and reign with Him as God's first-born, kings and priests unto Him forever.

II. Now, secondly, and but very briefly, let us inquire WHAT IS MEANT BY THE ENROLLMENT OF THE FIRSTBORN?

Moses had to set down the names of the Jewish first-born. And we find that right down to the apostles' age, there were some who were very busy about what Paul calls "endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith." But, dear friends, there is an enrollment about which we should be greatly concerned. There are certain names written in the Lamb's book of life and it should be to you and to me a matter of solemn interest to inquire if our names are written there. Is your name, is my name, inscribed upon that secret, sacred roll of the elect of God? We cannot scale the heights of heaven to search the pages of that sealed book, nor can we discover the secrets that the Most High has recorded there. It is impossible for us to read our names there, yet there are certain evidences by which we can tell whether they are or are not there!

First of all, *do you think they are there*? Are there not many here who must truthfully say, "No, we have no reason to think they are"? When the muster roll of our troops is called, if you are there, you can hear the names and the men's answers. "John so and so?" "Here, sir." "Thomas?" "Here, sir." "Here, sir." "Here, sir," and so it goes all down the ranks. Now, suppose it could be possible for an angel to read from this pulpit the muster roll of the redeemed? Do you think that he would read your name, and that you would be able to answer, "Here, sir"? "No," you say, "unless I tell a willful lie, I dare not say that I think my name is in the Lamb's book of life." Well then, if your own hearts condemn you, remember that God is greater than your hearts and knows all things—so how much more must He condemn you!

Possibly there are some who say, "We hope our names are written there." So I ask you, dear friends, *are you like those whose names undoubtedly are inscribed there*? Have you the faith of Abraham, or something like it? Do you desire to have such holiness as Paul craved? When you read the record of a good man's life, do you feel that your life is in conformity with his? For character, character, *CHARACTER* must, after all, be the great ground of judgment! And if your life is not like the life of the saints, how can you hope to find your name recorded where their names are written?

Again, *all the elect have their names written beneath the name of their Lord, the Lamb.* So, are you trusting in Christ? Are you resting in Him? Is your life linked with His? Do you feel that there is a bond that cannot be snapped, which binds you and Christ together so that no one and nothing that can possibly happen shall be able to separate you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus your Lord? Very well then, if this is the

case with you, rest assured that your name is in that book! But, "without Christ," you are without hope! Separated from Him, it is certain that your name is not written in heaven, as one of "the general assembly and church of the first-born."

I ask you another question, *are you really a child of God*? Can you say to Him, "Abba, Father"? Is God your Father? Have you learned to trust Him as His children trust Him and to love Him as His children love Him? Do you depend wholly upon Him? Do you seek to submit yourself entirely to His will and to walk in His way? For, if you are not a child of God at all, certainly you are not one of His first-born!

I must also ask, *Have you passed from death unto life*? Has there ever been a vital change in you—such a change as can only be worked by the Holy Spirit? I do not mean such a change as some silly people talk of seeing, sometimes, when a man is dying. There may have been no sign of grace whatever in the man, yet someone said, "I saw such a change come over him, his face looked so different." Very likely it did, but it is not a change of face that is needed, but a change of *heart*! It is no physical change, but a mental, moral, *spiritual*, Divine change that is worked in regeneration! Let not any one of you be satisfied unless you have unquestionable evidence that this change has been worked in you by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit, for unless you are born again, your name will not be found written upon the roll of God's first-born!

Now, in closing, let me remind you that to all these first-born of God, whose names are written in heaven, the day is coming when they shall be assembled around the throne of God in glory. What a meeting that will be! There shall not be one unholy person there, for they shall all have been washed white in the blood of the Lamb! How happy they will all be! There shall be no tears in any eye, nor a groan in any spirit, nor a single note of sorrow on any tongue, for the days of their mourning shall be ended forever! How united an assembly it will be! There shall be no heresy, no schism, no discord, no coldness of heart—they shall all love even as they have been loved! What a vast assembly it will be! And when ten thousand times ten thousand meet together there, what a shout of sacred joy it shall be when they lift up hallelujah upon hallelujah! John says, "I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters." You may have heard the sea roar in the fullness of its strength. Possibly you have heard the mighty Atlantic Ocean booming on the shore when lashed to fury by a storm. Such is to be the grandeur of the singing before the throne of God in the general assembly and church of the first-born—only it is not merely to be like the voice of one water, but of many waters—oceans piled upon oceans, the Atlantic upon the Pacific, and the Arctic and the Antarctic, and all other oceans piled upon these! And such shall be the music of the saints! Such shall be the song of the blessed when they see their Father's face without a veil and pour out their vast volume of praise "as the voice of many waters."

Let each one of us ask himself or herself, "Shall I be there?" If anyone says, "I fear that I shall not be there," let him cry mightily unto the Most High to pull him out of the horrible pit and to set his feet upon the Rock and to establish his goings. Sinner, you will either be there or in that dreadful place where the wailings shall be more terrible than the cry of men in a battle or the shrieks of women in a massacre! You will either be up there in glory or else down there where darkness, death and long despair sit on their thrones of woe! Fly, sinner, fly away to Christ! His wounds, like clefts in the rock, are open to the doves that need a shelter. Fly, sinner, fly! The avenger of blood pursues you! I hear the sound of his feet close behind you and he is about to strike you dead! But the city of refuge is near at hand, standing with open gates ready to welcome you! Fly, sinner, fly! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." To believe on Jesus is to trust Him. To be baptized is to be immersed in water upon profession of that faith.

I dare not alter my Master's commission—"Go you into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believes not shall be damned." There is no other alternative! Turn or burn! Believe and be saved, or disbelieve and be lost! May God, in His mercy, make the choice for you, sinner, this very hour, and lead you in the way everlasting. And unto Father, Son and Holy Spirit shall be the glory forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 12.

After giving a long list of the heroes of faith, the apostle adds—

Verses 1-3. *Therefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand on the throne of God. For consider Him*—[See Sermon #1073, Volume 18—A HONEYCOMB—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Look to Him, look at Him! Study Him—know all you can about Him—meditate upon Him—

3, 4. *That endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds. You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.* It has not yet come to that with any of you who are now here. You have not shed your yet blood for Christ, for these are not martyr days—so can you be wearied and faint? If you run with the footmen and they weary you, how will you contend with horses? We ought to be ashamed of ourselves if we grow weary in a race that is so

easy compared with that of the men and women who laid down their lives for Christ's sake!

5. *And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to children, My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked by Him.* Both these states are wrong—either to think nothing of chastisement or else to faint under it—we are not to fall into either evil, but to keep the golden mean between them.

6. *For whom the Lord loves.* The Greek word is a strong one and means, "whom the Lord tenderly loves"—

6. *He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.* Everyone does not receive the same measure of chastisement—but he who has the largest share of the love of God will feel the most of His chastising hand. Are you not willing to take that portion and to be among the Lord's tenderly loved ones?

7. *If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not?* God had one Son without sin, but He never had a son without suffering. And the Son who was without sin was the "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

8. *But if you are without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards, and not sons.* If you are without chastisement, you may bear the name of sons, but you are not really so—you are mere professors.

9. *Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of Spirits, and live?* Should we not give Him reverence when we are chastened, instead of murmuring and complaining against Him, thus calling Him to account at our judgment seat? Oh, yes, let us be in willing subjection to Him, and the more willingly subject we are, the less painful will the chastisement be. Our most bitter sorrow will be found at the root of our self-will—and when our self-will is gone, the bitterness of our sorrow will be past.

10. *For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness.* Is there no way for us to "be partakers of His holiness" but through chastening? It would seem so from the wording of this verse! The Lord, as our loving Father, makes use of the rod that He may make us to be truly holy.

11. *Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous,* How could it be? It would lose the very nature of chastening if there were joy in it.

11. *But grievous: nevertheless afterward*—[See Sermon #528, Volume 9—CHASTISEMENT—NOW AND AFTERWARDS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] These are truly blessed words, "nevertheless afterward"—

11-13. *It yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby. Therefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the*

feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. [See Sermon #2543, Volume 49—LAME SHEEP—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Come, children of God, do not be despondent because of your tribulations. You are in a race, so run even while you are smarting from your chastisements! Still run, and keep on running until you win the prize!

14. *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.* [See Sermon #2902, Volume 50—HOLINESS DEMANDED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The holy God can only be seen by holy eyes. He must make us like Himself before we can see Him.

15. *Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God.* Seeming to have divine grace and yet not really having it.

15. *Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many are defiled.* [See Sermon #940, Volume 16—THE WINNOWING FAN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Sin is a bitter thing and a defiling thing and unless we look diligently, it will grow in our hearts like the weeds grow in our gardens after a heavy rain—it will spring up before we are aware of it.

16. *Lest there be any fornicator.* Fornication was far too common in the early church, but it was not thought to be sin by the great mass of the heathen! But, oh, what a defiling sin it is!

16. *Or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.* He was thus guilty of spiritual fornication, preferring his meat to his Maker, thinking more of one morsel of meat than of his birthright.

17. *For you know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.* He could not get his father to change his mind concerning Jacob. On the contrary, he said, "I have blessed him; yes, and he shall be blessed." His many tears availed not—they were not repenting tears, but only selfish ones. He did not repent that he had bartered his birthright for a mess of pottage—he regretted that he had lost the blessing, that was all.

18-21. *For you are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (for they could not endure that which was commanded, and if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake).* We have not come to that mount of terror, for we are not under the law but under grace—we have come to a very different place from that.

22-24. *But you are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. And to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.* [See Sermons #211, Volume 4—THE VOICE OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST; #708, Volume12—THE BLOOD OF ABLE AND THE BLOOD OF JESUS; #1888, Volume 32—THE BLOOD OF SPRINKLING (FIRST SERMON) and #1889, Volume 32—THE BLOOD OF SPRINKLING (SECOND SERMON)—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] We are come to that blood, and it is that blood which has made such a change in us! We may rejoice together, now, and we ought to do so if we are all one in Christ Jesus.

25-29. *See that you refuse not Him that speaks. For if they escaped not who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaks from heaven: whose voice then shook the earth: but now He has promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth, only, but also heaven. And this word, yet once more, signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore we, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire.* Not "God out of Christ," as some say, but God *in* Christ! God is a consuming fire anyway and we should each one pray, "consuming fire, refining fire, go through my heart and purge me of all that can be consumed! Holy Spirit, drive out of me all that can be shaken and removed, that only Your abiding kingdom may remain in me, and Yours shall be the praise and the glory forever! Amen."

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SECRET DISCIPLES ENCOURAGED
NO. 3207

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

"You are not also one of His disciples, are you?" (NKJV)
John 18:25.

BLESSED be His name, there are some of us who count it our highest joy to answer this question, "Yes." Whatever may be entailed by the confession, we shall be glad to endure! We could not do otherwise than say, "He acknowledged us of old and He is still not ashamed to call us brethren and, therefore, we are not ashamed of Him, but we delight to call Him Master and Lord." In an interview I had about a fortnight ago, with a dear and venerable friend who is just upon the borders of the grave, he said to me, "There is a verse in the hymn book which I know you do not like, sir, and which I do not like, though both of us have sometimes been obliged to sing it—

"Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought.
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"

"But I have no doubt about it," he went on to say, "any more than I have about my own existence! Let others doubt if they like. I know I love the Lord. I am sure I do. If there is anything in all this world that is beyond a question to me, it is that I do love Him with all my heart, soul and strength." That ought to be the condition of every Christian! There ought to be no question here. We should, each one, be able to reply at once, when asked, "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?" "I am! I count it my honor, my joy that He permits me to sit at His feet and to be instructed by Him, and to go forth into the world bearing His reproach." But, at the same time, dear friends, there are some in the world who could not go that length, of whom, nevertheless, we have the hopeful belief that they are His disciples.

I thought of speaking a little to such persons. This, perhaps, will be unfortunate for most of you, for I shall not be addressing many, perhaps, here present. Still, if there are but a few such, we must look after the one at the risk even of leaving the ninety nine. So I address myself to those whom we assuredly suspect to be followers of Jesus, concerning whose faith we need to have a little better evidence and whose life we would see a little more consistent with their being truly His followers.

I. First, then, I would ask, WHY ARE YOU SUSPECTED OF BEING A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST? Please observe the reasons why Simon Peter was suspected, for the same reasons may be applicable to you.

He was suspected by some of being a disciple of Christ *because he had been seen with the disciples*. One of the servants of the high priest said to Peter, "Did not I see you in the garden with Him?" Now, there are some of you who are always seen in the house of God—not only at stated services which are attended by the general public, but you are seen at the prayer meetings, you are seen at times when the interest is more spiritual—and when only the spiritual, it would be supposed, would be attracted and find anything that would interest them—there are you found. It is not only in the house of God that you are seen with Christ's people, but out of doors, too. You do not enjoy frivolous society. You are not at home in the haunts of vanity. Your companions are the godly. You delight in their conversation and the more spiritual the conversation becomes, the more you enjoy it!

Now, I do not know that you are a follower of Christ, but I have a strong suspicion that you may be and I would like to put these questions to you, if I might. "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?" Did not I see you in the garden with Him? Why do you keep such company and love such society, if you are not one of them? Is not the old proverb true, 'Birds of a feather flock together'? How is it that you love the footsteps of the flock and the way of the shepherd's tents, if you are not one of the sheep? I dare not say that you are, for I cannot read your heart, but I will venture again to put the question, 'You are not also one of His disciples, are you?'"

They suspected him, again, *because of his conversation*. Peter did not want to be known and, therefore, I do not suppose that he voluntarily said anything that would betray him. I daresay, if he conversed at all at the fire, he kept clear of all topics and subjects that would reveal him, or lead to the question being put as to whether he was a disciple or not, but, somehow or other, whatever he talked about, there was a sort of brogue, a twang in his speech, a something which showed that, at any rate, he was a Galilean—and they began to suspect that he might also be a companion of Jesus of Nazareth. It was his talk that betrayed him!

Now I do not know, dear friend, whether you are a disciple of Christ, and I do not propose to press you to tell me, but excuse my asking the question. Your language and accent have about them a seasoning and a flavor of Christianity. You earnestly put aside from your speech everything unclean and you delight to speak words that honor Christ. If at any time in conversation there is a word said that seems to reflect upon the Lord Jesus, you are grieved at it and you would not repeat any sentiment or sentence that would dishonor Him. You are cautious and careful, too, about truth in your speech. You also desire to speak for the good of others. Especially during the last few months you have been very particular, and your prayer has been, "Open You my lips." You have been afraid of speaking those idle words for which God will bring men into judgment.

Now, I do not know that you are Christ's disciple, but I suspect it, for a man is judged by his speech. We generally know what is in the well by what comes up in the bucket, and the metal of a bell can be pretty well judged by the stroke of the clapper. And I think we can form some estimate of who you must be when we perceive in your conversation the tone of a Christian, when we hear that you speak as one does whose heart has been renewed by divine grace. I shall, therefore, put the question to you, expecting an affirmative answer, "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?"

Further than this, Peter was recognized, I suspect, *as having acted for his Lord*, for the person who said, "Did not I see you in the garden with Him?" was a relative of him whose ear Peter had cut off. As for you, it is not long since you were angry when someone had blasphemed or spoken unkind words against one of God's servants, or against God's gospel. I am not sure that you did well to be angry, but at any rate, it was a holy zeal that made you angry. Why, you were quite red in the face as you defended the truth of God! I say again, I am not sure that you did well to be angry, but at any rate, while you were cutting off that fellow's ear with that sharp sword of yours, and dealing such hard blows for Christ—if I had been there to see you, I would have thought that you were one of His disciples—even though I would have known that your Master would not have wished you to use that sword, or to be so violent as you were. Yet your very zeal for Him though, perhaps, it was indiscreet, and perhaps not altogether what He could approve, showed that you really had some love to Him, some concern for His cause, some zeal for His glory. Is it not so? Surely you are also one of His disciples! These things led them to suspect Peter, and these things lead us to suspect you.

One other thing, I doubt not there was about Peter, as he stood warming himself by the fire—*he was especially interested in the fate of Jesus*. Alas for him, he had so far forgotten himself that he tried, perhaps, to avoid showing that he took any particular interest in the trial. But I will guarantee you that those who could read faces could read something in Peter's face as it was lit up by the glare of the coals! When he heard them smite his Master with the palms of their hands upon His cheek, did you not see that tear roll down his face? He pretended he was brushing away a drop of sweat from his brow, but anyone who was watching him, especially one with the quick eyes of the maid that spoke, could see that it was a dewdrop of another sort that was falling from his eye!

Now, you have not *said* that you are a disciple of Christ, but have we not sometimes caught you unawares and read it in your face? The other Sunday, when we spoke of the Redeemer's sufferings, your soul was melted. When we talked of His glories, we could see how you exulted in the theme. And when the gospel was freely preached to the chief of sinners, your eyes looked as if you understood it—and as if you loved it. Though, perhaps, even now, you would hardly venture to say, "I am saved," yet you experience a joy and delight in hearing the truth of God

which you would not have known if you had not been one of Christ's disciples—and a holy trembling and heart searching under the Word of God that you would not have experienced unless you had been first of all quickened by the Spirit of His grace. Yes, the countenance will often betray what is going on within—and those dear ones who are saved—I have no doubt they have observed about you a great many things and have compelled them cheerfully to say, "We believe so and so is a Christian. We cannot doubt it. There is a something about his whole manner and conversation, his manner of speech, his mode of thought and style of action that betrays him as being a disciple of Christ."

Now, beloved friend, I cannot follow you home and judge as to your secret life, but I will put this question to you in various ways, in which, of course, I must leave Simon Peter out of the question. You have lately put your trust in Christ Jesus, alone. That is to say, if you have not done so, or if you are not sure you have done so, at any rate you have not any other trust and all the trust you have is set on Him. You see that there is an end of all perfection in the flesh and you are looking for the perfection which He gave to His people when He finished His atoning sacrifice and sat down at the right hand of God. Though you cannot see much light, yet you know that there is no light except in Him and you have cast away forever that false light in which you once rejoiced. Well, I am glad, and I am inclined to put to you the question, "Are not you also one of His disciples?"

You have lately begun to pray and that not as a matter of form. You have left off that form you once repeated and now you pray from your very heart. Sometimes you cannot pray as you would—in fact, you never do make your petition quite such as you desire. Still, you pray as well as you can, with groans and tears and longings that you may be taught how to pray better. Well, I never yet heard of a praying soul that was not one of Christ's disciples! It was a token that Saul of Tarsus was a convert to Christ when it was said of him, "Behold, he prays." So I will put to you the question, since you utter the living prayer of a truly earnest soul, "You are not also—despite your doubts, questions, and humble lamentations—one of His disciples, are you?"

Moreover, *you now have an interest in the Word of God*. The Bible was very dull to you once. A three volume novel pleased you much better. But now anything that will tell you of your Lord and of His love, and will instruct you in His truth—anything of that sort you care for—you have a hungering after it. Well, I have not yet known dead people become hungry and I do not know that I ever yet heard of a carrion crow that desired to feed on the food of the dove! I think there must be some change in you, or you would not love the clean winnowed grain which delights God's children. I am not sure about it, but still, I shall venture to put the question and believe that I know what answer you will give, "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?"

Besides, *you know that there is a change in your life*. As a child, you are now striving to honor your parents. As a tradesman, you have now

left off many practices that you once allowed yourself to adopt. As a common man speaking to others, you are now more charitable in your words than you used to be. There are things that were once amusements to you which yielded you pleasure, but which have now become vanity of vanities to you. Now you know that when you rise in the morning, the thing you are most afraid of is that you should do wrong during the day—and if you are troubled at night, it is because you have done a wrong. And the matter that pains you about it most is not the loss of custom, but the loss of a peaceful conscience. Now, I think if you are all this, surely you are also one of Christ's disciples!

I have suggested many hopeful things that would lead me to think that you are His disciple, but if you are not, then assuredly you are His enemy! What do you think of that? If I should make a list of this congregation and should write down all the disciples of Christ, (supposing I were able to do that), and if my pen were just about to be withdrawn from the paper, could you bear that I should say, "I am about to close this roll. I have written down all the disciples of Christ here. I have finished the list, and your name is not there"? I am sure you would say, "Oh, stay your hand a while, sir! I was afraid I was not one of His, but now it comes to the push, I dare not withhold my name!" And I am certain that if I were then to take another roll and to begin to write down the names of all those who did not believe in Jesus, you would say, "Oh, no, do not do that! Stop a moment. Do not let my name be written down there! I could not stand that, for I think I am not quite His enemy. At any rate, I long to be His disciple."

I sometimes wish you would push yourself into this corner. If it came to the point, beloved—if it really came to the point—some of you who have said, "I am afraid I do not love Him," because you do not love Him as you ought. Some of you who have said, "I am afraid I do not trust Him," because you have some doubts and some fears, I have no doubt that if it came to the point, notwithstanding all things, God would lead you to trust Him and to rejoice in Him! Remember that story of one of the martyrs who had been condemned to die for Christ, and who, about a week before he died, was full of fear and trembling? He was afraid of the fire and much cast down by the prospect of being burned. There was a fellow prisoner with him who scolded him for it and told him that he ought to trust in God, that he ought not to be dismayed, and ought not to be cast down. When the day came for them to burn together, the poor, weak, trembling man stood on the firewood and he said, before the fire was kindled, "Oh, He has come! He has come! He has come and He has filled my soul with His presence!" He died triumphantly, while the other man, who had scolded him for his lack of faith, recanted at the last moment and became a traitor to the truth of God. The Lord will help you if you are but right toward Him. Still, I pray that you may be delivered from every question about whether you are His disciple or not.

II. Now, having thus uttered my suspicions about some of you, I shall, in the second place, demand from those of you who seem to be Christ's disciples, WHY DO YOU NOT ACT AS IF YOU WERE A DISCIPLE? "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?

Why, then, are you not sharing His reproach? Peter is standing there warming his hands, looking to his personal comfort. His Master is over yonder being despised and rejected, maltreated and smitten. If you are one of His disciples, Peter, is this the place for you—among the ribald crowd around the fire? Is not your proper place at your Lord's side, to be laughed at as He is, falsely accused as He is, and buffeted as He is? I may be speaking to some who love Christ, or are to be suspected of it, but they have never borne His reproach. You are not numbered with any Christian church because well, it is not a very respectable thing in the circle in which you move! You have not professed those truths of God which you have believed because it would render you extremely unpopular if you did! You have not said in your household, "I am a Christian," because it is clear to you that your husband might not like it, or that your father might not have patience with it. You have sneaked into the workshop and you have hidden your colors and you have been comfortable with ungodly men—and when they have uttered hard things about Christ, though you have not liked what they said, you have not expressed your disapproval—and so your silence gave consent to them.

"Are not you also one of His disciples," and do you refuse to share the reproach of Christ? Have you forgotten Moses, who, though he might have been like a king in Egypt, yet took his place with the poor despised, enslaved Israelites, "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt"? Can you not take your place with Christ's poor people? Are you ashamed of them because they are not titled and rich, or because their literary standing is not very high? Are you ashamed of them because other people misrepresent and slander them? Has the offense of the cross ceased? Do you expect that true Christianity will ever be fashionable? Do you believe for a moment, in your heart, that Christ spoke a lie when He said to His disciples, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves"? If there is a religion concerning which all men speak well, woe be unto it, for it cannot be the religion of Christ! Do you not know that the way to heaven is upstream? The current runs downward to the gulf of destruction! Are you not willing to take the cross and go against popular opinion—and against everything else that is necessary for Christ's sake?

The day comes when they who have been ashamed of His cross will find themselves losing His crown. "No cross, no crown." This is what Christ, Himself, says "Whoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels." If you dare not follow Him because you fear shame—shame shall be your perpetual inheritance! Remember that verse, "But the fearful, and unbelieving...shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is

the second death." Oh, that we may never be among those cowards, for those are the persons He means, not the fearing ones, but the fearful ones who dare not be reproached for Him! Is there listening to these words one who loves his Lord and knows the truth, and knows where God's church is, but has been afraid to join His people—ashamed to confess the truth and to follow Christ? I come to you with this word and I would gladly look you in the face and say, "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?" Yet you go in and out with the ungodly and you warm your hands at their fire! And you are mirthful with their jollity and you are pleased with their ungodliness. "Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." Confess Christ before men that He may confess you before His Father and the angels in heaven!

Again, if you are among Christ's disciples, *why are you not witnessing for Him*? It was not only that Peter was not sharing His shame, but that when Christ was on trial, it was due to Him that every person who could have spoken a good word for Him should do it—but everyone was silent. When Christ said, "I spoke openly," Peter might have said, "Yes, I have heard all He said and I have never heard Him utter sedition or blasphemy! Nothing of the kind has ever come from my Master's lips. If anything has been spoken in secret, I have been there. I have been with John and James in the most select circle of all His disciples and thus, too, I can bear witness that He is innocent." But, no, Peter is silent and instead of witnessing he denies his Master!

It is the duty of every Christian to be witnessing for Christ. Jesus is still on trial every day. He stands before the world, as it were, at this very hour, and the question is—Is He the Son of God or not? Witnesses are being examined every day for Him and against Him. "What do you think of Christ?" is a question which is stirring this entire city and all lands, more or less! And now shall He who claims to be the Savior of men and the head of the church—shall He, while so many speak against Him, lack the evidence of anyone who knows Him, who has been with Him and loves Him? There are some of us who find it sweet to witness for Him that He is the very Christ of God—and we do not take any honor to ourselves for so doing—for flesh and blood have not revealed it to us!

But is anyone keeping back his testimony? "Why," asks one "what would *my* testimony be worth?" You do not know what it would be worth. "Nobody would notice me. I am only a humble woman in my family." What? Have you no desire that your family should know the truth of God? Have you one little child on your knee, and have you never put your arms about that little one's neck and prayed that she might belong to Jesus, or that the boy might be the Savior's? Have you never told those darlings of yours what Christ has done for you? You could not do it, do you say? Not talk to your own child of what is written in your own heart concerning your own Lord? Ah, if you cannot, cry to God against such a disability and be not satisfied till you have conquered your unholy

shame, for unholy it is! If you are also one of His disciples, bear your witness to Him, even if it is but one who can hear it! If that one is all the congregation that God sends you, you have done your part. I am not accountable for the people that hear me, but only for the witness that I bear! And you shall not be accountable for the largeness or smallness of your sphere, but for the faithfulness of your testimony for Christ. Tell all with whom you come in contact that He is your Savior, a precious Savior, a true promiser, a promise keeper, a faithful friend, a helper in life and in death! And I say again you know not what may be the value of your testimony, for if it is borne but to a child, that child may grow up to bear testimony to tens of thousands! You know not what may come of a spark of fire. Do but let it drop and you may set half a continent on a blaze! "Are not you also one of His disciples?" If you are, then bear your witness as well as take up your cross!

Now, diverging a little from what some of you will think most practical, let me ask, "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?" *Then why are you not enjoying the privileges which belong to His disciples?* You have not been baptized! Yet He who said, "Believe," also said, "be baptized." It is written of some, "These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes." I ask you, did not the Lamb go down into the Jordan? Was He not baptized? Have you followed Him wherever He goes? If You have not done so, in being disobedient to His will you have lost a great privilege! There is His supper, too. 'Tis but an outward form, as the other ordinance is. Both are but emblems, but still the Lord has been pleased to say, "This do in remembrance of Me," and He often gives to His people very sweet manifestations of Himself in the breaking of bread. You are one of His disciples, or at least I suspect you are—but You have never been to the Lord's table!

"There are others that can observe those things," you say. Stop! Suppose it is right for any one Christian to neglect the ordinances of God's house? Clearly there can be no exceptional privileges—it would, therefore, be right for all Christians to neglect these two ordinances! You are not a member of any Christian church, but you think you are right in standing alone. If you are, so would all be! And clearly, the visible church would become extinct—but it could never have been the Lord's intention that it should be so! He has not ordained that His people should live as individuals alone. He calls Himself a shepherd, because sheep are sociable. They gather together and they make a flock in a fold, and He would have His people so. If He had called them by the name of some other creature, it might be supposed that they would go to heaven separately and alone—but He calls them His *flock* and that signifies fellowship—union.

If you are right, then we should all be right in doing as you do. And where and how could the means of grace be maintained? Would not almost the very preaching of the gospel become extinct? For the church of God "is the pillar and ground of the truth," by which is meant, I suppose, that, as in the Roman forum there were certain pillars upon which the

decrees of the Senate were put up, so the church is a pillar upon which God hangs up the gospel—and its proclamation of the gospel to the sons of men is the pillar and ground upon which God exhibits the gospel to all onlookers. And truly it must be so. It is the church's business to evangelize the world and to maintain Christ's ordinances. But where would the church be to do this if all Christians were to be allowed to remain separate from the church? Your business is to find some company of believers, unite yourself with them and enjoy the privileges which Christ has given, such as His two ordinances of baptism, and the Lord's supper—and all the other blessings which belong to the Church as constituted in His name. "You are not also one of His disciples?" His disciples meet to remember Him and some of you turn your backs! They gather around His table and feed upon the bread and wine which are emblems of Him, but you go away and seem to say, "We do not need these emblems. Christ has instituted an ordinance which we do not require, we can do without it. We are so spiritual that we do not need it." O sirs, say not so! If you are one of His disciples, do as He bids you!

But now a more cheering thought with which to close. "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?" *Then why are you not resting in His love, in His grace and in His power*? You came in here tonight with a burden upon your spirit which is crushing you into the very dust. You are low and depressed and miserable, and people in the house where you live know it—and yet they know that you are a professed Christian! "Are not you also one of His disciples?" and did not He say, "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them…Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these…Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink?" You also are one of His disciples and yet you are vexing yourself with cares and troubles just like a heathen and a publican! Oh, but you have lost a friend, a child, a husband, or a father—and you are crushed into the very dust! You now have no hope and you are angry with your God—and yet Christ said, "Not as I will, but as You will." "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?" Is this like your Master? He drank the gall cup and you put it away and fight against your God!

"But I am afraid of a trial that is coming upon me," you say. Yet Paul said, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things! And you, one of His disciples, are fearing for the future? O friend, O friend, does this become you? Is this right? I have come, just now, from the bedside of a dearly beloved friend to whom I have already referred. Strange as it is, he has been unconscious two days to everybody else, but the moment he hears my voice, he opens his eyes and says, "Oh, how happy I am to see your face once again, my dear pastor!" And then he begins to pour

out a blessed torrent of adoration and praise to his God! Barely alive and yet he says he is the happiest man alive and Christ is more precious to him than ever! He is gently sinking away rejoicing. He says he is as happy as ever he was in his life and, he thinks, more happy, though the death gurgle is in his throat and he can scarcely breathe.

And you are afraid to die, are you? You are a disciple of that blessed Lord who is helping our dear brother to die, but you think He will not help you, too? Why, thousands of His people have closed their eyes on earth, only to open them in heaven! Thousands have died triumphantly! Thousands have passed through the river of death calmly rejoicing in Jesus! And you also are one of the disciples of the same Master, the same Master who can—

"Make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are"—

the same Master who has said, "Fear you not, for I am with you: be not dismayed, for I am your God." Yet you cannot trust Him who has been so faithful to others—yes, and let me also say, who has been so faithful to you up till now! Oh, if you are, indeed, His disciple, go and put that aching head of yours right on the bosom of your Lord, for within that bosom palpitates a heart that never changes and that never fails one of His disciples! Go and rest there. You may rest, for it is well—it will be well with you for the present, for the future, for time, for eternity! If you are one of His disciples, take His yoke upon you and learn of Him! Like He, be meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest unto your soul. Remember that it is not your place to question what God does, nor to arraign Him at your bar. Your duty is not to say, "My will be done," but to remember that "it is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord."

I trust the questions I have put to you, my hearers, will not be lost upon you. It may strike you that it is not necessary to answer at once whether you are Christ's disciple or not, but it will be very necessary to answer that question soon. I have lately been struck beyond measure with the fact of our mortality and the suddenness with which many of our friends depart out of this world. I heard, only this last week, "Brother so and so walked into my shop on Thursday. On the Sunday I heard that he was dead." "Sister so and so was at the communion service, and within 48 hours she died." This is the world of the dying! You seem to be passing before me in a procession and I, too, am part of the procession, myself! Oh, make sure work for eternity! Run no risk concerning your souls—not even this night's risk, for this night, at midnight, without a knock at your door there may come the messenger saying, "Prepare to meet your God." And then—*and then*, it *will* matter if you are Christ's disciple, or not! It will *not* matter, then, whether you have been rich or not, educated or not—but it will matter for all eternity whether you are His or not, for remember the division—"These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." God grant that you then may be with the company of the disciples of Jesus for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 18:12-27.

Verses 12, 13. *Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus and bound Him, and led Him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, who was the high priest that same year.* [See Sermons #2820, Volume 49—CHRIST BEFORE ANNAS and #2822, Volume 49—CHRIST IN BONDS—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Annas had been high priest before, and he seems to have been still regarded as high priest and to have been a leading spirit among the adversaries of Christ. The old sinner would not go to bed that night until he had seen the man whom he hated brought bound before him. Sometimes hatred becomes a more powerful passion than even love, and here, while the disciples of Jesus all fled in terror, Annas, the Savior's bitter foe, was wide awake and awaiting His arrival with those who had taken Him captive.

14. *Now Caiaphas was he who gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.* Therein uttering a prophecy which he did not fully understand, speaking like another Balaam through whom God spoke His truth, as once He did through the ass that Balaam rode! Sometimes God makes the basest men the unconscious utterers of His truth which they do not, themselves, comprehend.

15. *And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple.* Here is John's usual modesty—he will not mention his own name, but simply speaks of "another disciple."

15, 16. *That disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door outside.* John boldly followed Jesus and so was safe. Peter stood at a distance from his Lord and so was in danger.

16-18. *Then went out that other disciple who was known unto the high priest and spoke unto those whom kept the door and brought in Peter. Then said the damsel that kept the door, unto Peter, You are not also one of this Man's disciples, are you? He said, I am not. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals, for it was cold: and they warmed themselves; and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.* Peter was in bad company. While he was warming his body, his soul was growing cold to his Master. Men cannot go into bad company without getting some hurt. It is said by a quaint old writer that if men go to Ethiopia, they may not become Ethiopians, but by the scorching of the sun they will grow blacker than they were before. It is always better to keep out of harm's way if we can. He that would not fall into a ditch should take care not to walk near the edge of it. So, if Peter wanted to stand fast, he should not have gone where he would be sure to be tempted.

19. *The high priest then asked Jesus of His disciples, and of His doctrine.* This was a sort of preliminary examination before the Sanhedrin should try Him officially.

20-22. *Jesus answered him, I spoke openly to the world; I taught in the synagogue and in the temple, where the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why do you ask Me? Ask them who heard Me what I have said to them: behold they know what I said. And when He had thus spoken one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand saying, Answer You the high priest so?* Here we get an exposition of one of Christ's own sayings. You know that He said, "Whoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other, also." Of course Christ would carry out His own precept, so we see that He did not mean that His disciples were literally to turn the other cheek to those who struck them, but that they were to bear such treatment patiently, and not to give a railing answer. See how Jesus Himself turned the other cheek.

23. *Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why do you strike Me?* Nothing could have been more calm or more dignified and, at the same time, more full of the spirit of forgiveness.

24-27. *Now Annas had Him sent bound to Caiaphas the high priest. And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, You are not also one of His disciples, are you? He denied it, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, said, Did not I see you in the garden with Him?* [See Sermon #2106, Volume 35—"IN THE GARDEN WITH HIM"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.* We know that the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. He did not speak a word, perhaps lest Peter should fall into the hands of those who were round about him—but His look was sufficient to kindle in Peter the fires of repentance—and he went out to weep bitterly over his shameful denial of his Lord.

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"The trees once went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign over us. But the olive tree said to them, Should I cease giving my oil, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?"
Judges 9:8, 9.

HERE then, in parable, a temptation was set before the olive tree. It was urged to become ambitious and aspire to reign over the rest of the trees. We gather from Jotham's parable, at the outset, that we, also, are all liable to temptation. Though you may think yourself to be as firmly rooted and as useful as the olive tree, yet may the fascinating whisper be heard by you, "Come and reign over us," and though you should be as sweet and gentle as the fig tree, yet there may come to you the wily invitation, "Come and reign over us." And though you should be as fruitful as the vine, yet to you in the Lord's own vineyard there may come the serpent voice, "Come and reign over us." We shall never be out of the way of temptation so long as we grow in this earthly garden! Our Lord Himself had a stern conflict with the adversary at the commencement of His ministry, for He came up from the waters of baptism to be tempted of the devil, and at the close of that ministry, "His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground" in the agony of His spirit when the powers of darkness assailed Him in Gethsemane. We must expect, in our measure, to be conformed to His likeness in this respect. The serpent will bruise our heel as well as our Lord's. Even into quiet like that of an olive garden, there will come the tempter and the temptation! It is not possible for us to be located anywhere in this world where our surroundings will be clear from danger, for if the serpent comes not into the olive groves, yet the other trees may tempt us. What, therefore, I say unto you, I say unto all, "Watch," for we are not ignorant of the devices of evil and those devices will surely be exercised upon us. Therefore let us cry unto the strong for strength and set a double watch against the world, the flesh and the devil—

"Christian! Seek not yet repose.

Cast your dreams of ease away!
You are in the midst of foes—
Watch and pray!
Principalities and powers
Mustering their unseen array,
Wait for your unguarded hours—
Watch and pray!
Watch, as if on that alone
Hung the issue of the day!
Pray, that help may be sent down—
Watch and pray!"

Temptations frequently come in the form of very pleasing baits. Satan gilds the pill that he offers us. He very seldom presents to any of us a bare hook, though that may be done with those who become habituated in sin. It is almost a bare hook when persons continue in drunkenness after they have ruined their health and brought themselves to beggars' rags. Satan hardly has to tempt them at all, for they go willingly after their idols and dote upon them. But with God's own people, Satan generally takes care to bait his hook and cover it so that it is scarcely seen.

In this parable, the temptation to the olive tree is a throne, a crown, a kingdom, a sovereignty over the trees. The trees of the field said unto the olive tree, "Reign over us." Now there is always a sort of glitter about a kingdom. There are few persons who can resist the fascinations of a diadem. To reign over the trees might seem, even to the olive tree, to be a very strong temptation—a brilliant offer indeed! Take heed, dear friends, lest you be carried away by the deceitfulness of the pleasures, the profits, the honors which Satan puts in your way. When we are likely to be gainers by any proposal, we ought always to look well at it before deciding. When a day is too bright, we fear that it will finish with a thunderstorm—and when a man's prospects in life seem altogether extraordinary and excessive in their brilliance—he ought to pause awhile and see where he is going. We have always been taught that when there is very large interest to be had, there is something rotten about the security and very great risk to those who invest in it! And it is also so in all things. Whenever there comes to you, all of a sudden, some very alluring offer, something very grand and very unusual, like this request, "Reign over us," then doubly be on your guard, for it is after this fashion that Satan baits his hook and catches his fish! It is after this manner that he goes forth to hunt for his prey and many have been entangled in the meshes of a golden net who seemed in other ways to have escaped the corruptions of the world.

Many, to obtain a higher wage, have left holy companionships and sacred opportunities for hearing the Word of God and growing in grace. They have lost their Sabbaths, left a soul feeding ministry and fallen among worldlings to their own sorrowful loss. Such persons are as fool-

ish as the poor Indians who gave the Spaniards gold in exchange for paltry beads. Riches procured by impoverishing the soul are always a curse! To increase your business so that you cannot attend weeknight services is to become really poorer—to give up heavenly pleasure—and receive earthly cares in exchange, is a sorry sort of barter!

Let me call your attention to something rather singular about this parable. The trees represented in the parable were acting unwisely in desiring a king, for the trees which the Lord has planted need no king and He had not set a king over them. He makes them to be full of sap and waters them out of His treasure houses. And it is for the trees of the forest to sing before the Lord and to clap their hands in His name. Let the trees of the forest rejoice before Him that made them! But, according to this parable or fable, they conspired together to deliver themselves from the theocracy—the government of God—and to come under the government of one of their own order. The trees desired a king and so fitly pictured that fond desire of the Israelite nation to have a king when God was their king and they had no need of any other king! They were constantly crying, "Make us like the nations that are round about us, and set a king over us." But this desire for a king was a wrong desire altogether.

Yet notice that when the trees went to choose a king, they did it very wisely—their choice was an admirable one. They did not say to the spreading cedar, "Reign over us," nor to the pine with its foul-smelling shade, "Reign over us." But they said to the fruitful olive, respectable in character and in every way a right royal tree, "Reign over us." And when they were disappointed of the first election, they went to another worthy tree, the fig, and said to it, "Come and reign over us." Then they went to the vine—that fruitful tree—and said to it, "Come and reign over us." And they only went to the bramble when they were hard pushed and feared that none of the trees would accept the candidature for royalty. They made a good choice at first and I have noticed that even when men are themselves bad and foolish, they generally have sense enough left to pick out somebody better than themselves to be the instrument of their designs. How frequently have I seen an ungodly man act thus when looking for a wife! She must be a Christian—he has sense enough to see her sterling worth, her solid character, her meekness and her gentleness—so he wants her as his wife. Often have I known that a man in business, albeit he despised religion, has wanted to have his confidential servant not simply a professor, but really a *possessor* of the grace of God!

This is one of the dangers to which Christian people are exposed. It is not because you are a bramble that you will be the first to be tempted to reign over the trees. They will not want the bramble just yet—they will

come to that as the fourth in the list. But if you are the good olive tree, they will want you first. They will want you for a bad purpose because there is something about you that will make their purpose look respectable—and so you will serve their purposes. They will not care for the best part of you, that part for which your Lord cares most. That part they will openly despise and trample on one day, but just now, that is the charm to them and they say to the olive tree, "Come and reign over us." Be on your guard! Some of our bankrupt companies would not have taken so many people in if they had not the names of certain men of repute as directors. Their power for evil dies there. We must have a king, contrary to God's will, so we must try to get the olive tree to reign over us if we possibly can so as to make our new kingdom seem respectable. O believers, be on the watch! Take heed unto yourselves lest you enter into unholy alliances, or put yourselves into positions out of which you may be unable to escape, but may have to mourn to your dying day that you ever entered into that evil confederacy! You must say, "Our Master bids us come out from the world and be separate from sinners. He bids Christians walk with Him and be choice in their company, and not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for that would be dishonoring to God and ruinous to their souls!"

You see, therefore, that this parable of Jotham can afford instruction to us and I ask the Lord, while I further open it up, to give me the right words to all to whom it applies.

I. My first head is this—APPARENT PROMOTIONS ARE NOT TO BE SNATCHED AT HURRIEDLY.

"The trees once went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign over us. But"—there is a pause there. It was all very well for them to say to the olive tree, "Reign over us. Come at once. Do not give it a second thought. Come along. You never had such a fine opportunity as this. Here is a brilliant opening for you. Come and reign over us." "But the olive tree said to them, Should I cease giving my oil, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?" Notice how the olive tree speaks. It says, "Should I? You say, 'Come along,' but I answer, Should I? This is a matter that needs consideration. Ought it to be so? Would it be right? Is it wise? Is it prudent? Is it just? Is it God's will? *Should I*?"

I speak to younger and old this word of caution. Be not in a hurry to make changes! Hasten not to run into evil thinking it to be good, but always look before you leap. Stop a while and ask, "Should I? Should I do this or that?" I meet constantly with persons who are in terrible trouble and who I know came into that trouble and will probably remain in that trouble for years—perhaps all their lives—because they once, unthinkingly, did an act which they ought not to have done if they had only

paused, then, and asked, as the olive tree did, "Should I? Should I? Should I?" A few minutes spent in serious consideration and especially in prayerful waiting upon God would have kept their pathway smooth and themselves in peace. You have almost done a certain deed, but I beseech you to pull up, now, and stop a minute, and say to yourself, "Should I do it?"

I will throw the emphasis on the letter I. The olive tree said, "Should *I*? Should *I*? I am not a bramble. The bramble may be king of the trees if he likes. It may be a question which the fig tree, or the cedar, or the vine, or the oak might entertain, but should *I*? Should *I* cease giving my oil and go to be promoted over the trees? Should *I* do this?" Now, there are a thousand things which may be right in worldlings which are wrong in Christians. There is a very high law for all men and I will not depreciate the true standard of common morality, but set it as high as it can be set! But over and above that there is a law of consecration—there is a rule, not merely of morality, but of something more—of holiness. There is a law of disinterestedness which is binding upon a Christian, which imposes upon him a restraint that causes him often to say, "I might do this if I were other than I am. But, being what I am, I cannot do it." When Nehemiah was governor of Judah, he had a right to take his daily portion. It was the proper provision for the governor's support, and all the previous governors had taken it. But Nehemiah said, "So I did not because of the fear of God." It would have been quite right for Nehemiah to take it, but he would not take it because there was something still better which led him to say, "God will be somewhat compromised if I do this. These people are poor, so I will not impose a tax upon them. I will not take that which is lawfully mine." "All things," said Paul, "are lawful to me, but all things are not expedient." And often, out of that blessed rule of loving expediency for the good of others and the glory of God, we may be made to keep back from things which we would allow in others but cannot allow in ourselves. I invite any dear Christian friend here who may be asked to take an important step—concerning which, if he were to consult a friend, he would certainly say, "Oh yes, that is a fine thing for you! Do it," to put to himself the question, "Will it be, all round, the best thing that I can do for the glory of God? Should *I*? Should I do this?"

Sir Edward Cole, Chief Justice of England in the time of James I, was a man of noble spirit and often incurred the displeasure of the king by his patriotism. On one occasion when an unworthy attempt was made to influence his conduct, he replied, "When the case happens, I shall do that which shall be fit for a judge to do." Oh, that all Christians, in trying moments, would act as shall be fit for followers of Christ to do!

Sometimes the new course of life that may be proposed to us may seem very desirable. It was not a small thing for the olive tree to be asked to be king over the trees, to lord it over all the forests, to have loyal homage from oak, cedar and all the fruitful trees. It did seem an exceedingly desirable thing, yet the olive tree said, "Should I cease giving my oil, and go to be promoted over the trees?" So, dear friend, be not deceived by the glitter of prosperity, nor moved away from the steadfastness of your faith and your love to Christ by the appearance of something which looks to you exceedingly advantageous! First stop where you are and ask yourself, "Should I?" For there is this fact to be considered: If this olive tree had taken the kingdom, it would have involved many cares and troubles. In the original, the word runs as though it might be translated thus, "Should I leave my oil to go up and down among the trees?" You know that a king, when he takes a kingdom, has much work to do. He has to watch over his subjects and to visit different parts of his dominions. He cannot keep still and be quiet. So this olive tree says, "I have stood here for centuries, and many have enjoyed my oil, but if I become a king, I must go up and down among the trees." So, I ask you, whenever you have an opening in providence to rise in the world—to consider the duties that will be involved in it rather than the profits that will come of it—because it is selfish to say, "Oh, yes! I would like the compensation," but it is righteous to ask, "Am I equal to the duties? Can I perform them? Can I expect to be enabled to discharge them as a Christian should do in the sight of God?" For the very best work of every sort ought always to come from us Christians. A Christian servant should be the best of all servants. A Christian artist should try to have the clearest eye and the deftest hand. Whatever is done by those of us who are Christians, we ought to do as unto the Lord and I am sure that we ought not to do anything in a second rate way "unto the Lord." Up to the utmost of our ability, we should do our very best for Him. Well then, if there is an opening set before you, look not so much at the glitter of it, but, like this olive tree, look at the work of it, look at the duty attached to it and ask, "Can I do it? Am I equal to it?" Do not occupy the position unless you have a reasonable expectation of filling it well and performing its duties acceptably.

Then remember that every time a man moves, he gets fresh cares, fresh temptations, fresh troubles. I somewhat admire the principle of the coachmen I have seen in Switzerland when the flies settle on their horses and suck their blood. I have been very anxious to knock the creatures off, but the men have said to me, "You had better not do so, for if you kill those flies, there will be some fresh ones come that will be greedier and suck more." So, when you have a set of troubles, you had better let them stay, for if you get rid of them, you may get others that will be worse! My

burden that I have to carry, I would be glad to be rid of—yet I should not like to take yours, my sister, nor yours, my brother, because I do not know where your load might chafe my shoulders. I know where mine galls me, when it galls at all, and I can carry my own burden better than anybody else's burden. So I am content to keep it and I think you should be content to keep yours. By divine grace, you have been excellent as a servant, but how would you be as a mistress? Yes, you have been a very good *employee*— you have done your work very well—but, as a master you might be a complete failure. Look well at the thing, turn it around all ways. Many a man has done exceedingly well in one sphere of life, but has not done so well in another sphere. Solomon truly says, "As a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place." There is a niche in which each statue stands and you see its proportions, for the niche was prepared for the statue, and the statue for the niche. But if you set it up higher, it loses its due proportions. It is seen from another point of view and its beauty is gone. Let us, therefore, whenever there is something new set before us as a great attraction, stop and ask, "Should I take it?"—adding this one to all our other reflections—that wherever we may go, we shall have a change of trouble and care—but we shall still have trouble and care.

The most weighty consideration in connection with the question, "Should I?" is this—"*Can I expect the divine blessing on what I am about to do*? Dare I venture to lay this case before the Lord in all its details?" I know some of you who are quite willing to bring a case to your minister for his advice. And sometimes he sees, by the very look of your face, that your coming to him is all a sham! You had made up your mind before you came and you only needed him to say, "Yes," to your, "Yes," so as to have some kind of sanction in doing something about which your conscience is not quite easy. Has it not been so? And sometimes in your family, when you have needed counsel, have you not stayed away from the one person who would have honestly told you the truth? You have thought like Ahab, "There is one prophet of the Lord in Israel, but he always speaks evil and not good of me. Let all the prophets speak except Micah—I do not want to hear him. He does not ever seem to soften his message, but he lets out the plain blunt truth, so I won't go to him." It is not wise, dear Christian friends, if you talk as that wicked king did! If you are about to change your state of life, or your position in anyway whatever, let the change be such that you can look at it yourself from top to bottom, and can invite Christian friends to look at it most carefully and yet say of it, "It is good." Let it be such that you can look at it on a dying bed, in the light of eternity, and say, "In this thing I really sought to glorify God." If not—it will be better by far to say, with the olive tree,

"Should I? Should I?" and to come to the olive's decision, "I will do nothing of the kind. Any tree that likes may have the crown—it is not for me."

II. Now, secondly, ACTUAL ADVANTAGES ARE NOT TO BE TRIFLED WITH, for the olive says, "Should I cease giving my oil and go to be promoted over the trees?"

The greatest advantage in life is to be useful to God and man. The olive says, "Should I cease giving my oil, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?" It was the olive's glory that it yielded oil which was used in various offerings to the *honor of God* and which was also used for the honor of men in the most sacred ceremonies at the anointing of kings and priests. And the highest glory of any man's life is that he is honorable to God and useful to men. The first considerations of a saved soul should be, "How can I best magnify Him who has saved me? How can I be most useful to my fellow men in promoting the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ?" Anything, then, which robs us of that desire—the power to honor God and to do good to men—anything which takes away in even the smallest degree our power to do this, is a dead loss! If the olive tree shall be made king over the trees, but lose its oil whereby it honors God and man, the olive tree is a loser. So if, by changing from a cottage to a palace, yes, and from a prison to a throne, the believer in Christ would lose any atom of his power to serve God and bless the sons of men, he would be a loser thereby! We must always hold this before us as a test when an offer comes to us—will it really be for the glory of God and the good of men?

Sometime I think, beloved brothers and sisters, it is *our sense of having that oil of divine grace*—by which we honor God and help men—which *makes temptation powerless,* for in the Hebrew, the text runs thus, "Have I then lost my oil that I should go to be promoted over the trees?" So may you say to yourself, "Have I then lost my joy in Christ, or lost my peace of mind, or lost the blessed privilege of glorifying God that I should go and look after this world's gain or this world's honors? If I had not Christ as my Savior—if I had not love to Him in my heart—if I had not the love of God shed abroad in my soul, this or that might, indeed, be a temptation to me. But as I have not lost those great blessings, you tempt me with bait that has no fascination for me, for I have something better—

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

"and while He is mine, I cannot leave Him—not even to be promoted over my fellow men, nor to roll in wealth, for He is infinitely superior to any bait or bribe which you can present to me!"—

"Begone, unworthy of my cares,
You specious baits of sense!

Inestimable worth appears,
The pearl of price immense!"

Let the joy of the Lord, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, be your protection against temptation. I feel persuaded that when you have full assurance of faith and your heart is filled with joy in Christ, you are able to repel the fiery darts of the enemy, for if he comes and offers you gold, you can say to him, "I have diamonds and pearls that are worth far more than all your gold." "I offer you honor," he says, but you reply, "I have the love of Christ, which is my greatest honor. Is it not written, 'Unto you who believe He is an honor'? That honor which I derive from Him is greater than any honor which you can give me." Thus you checkmate your great adversary! You can prove to him that in Christ you possess far more than he can possibly offer to you—

"Jesus, to multitudes unknown,
Oh name divinely sweet!
Jesus in You, in You alone,
Health, honor, pleasure, meet!
Should both the Indies at my call,
Their boasted stores resign,
With joy I would renounce them all,
For leave to call You mine.
Should earth's vain treasures all depart,
Of this dear gift possessed,
I'd clasp it to my joyful heart,
And be forever blessed!"

Oh, that our hearts may be kept in this blessed condition! So shall temptation be powerless to overcome us.

To help you in this matter, let me remind you of two or three things on which you may reflect with profit.

First, beloved, suppose it should be your prospect in life that from this day forward you should not be as useful as you now are but that you should be much better off? Suppose it were proposed to you that you should not glorify God as you have done in the past, but that you should be much more respectable? Suppose it were laid upon you as an obligation that from this time forward you should not do half the good you have done in the past, but that you should receive a title of nobility and move in a higher circle of society than you have ever done? *Would not these proposals startle you*? If you are a true Christian, I know they would! You would say, with the olive tree, "Shall I cease giving my oil, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?" You would instantly recoil from such a prospect when it was set before you and you would say, "No, let me be as a servant of Christ wherever I can serve my Master best. And let me be kept where I can bring most glory to His holy name."

If this prospect startles you, let me invite you to consider *what the retrospect would be*. Suppose that lying on a dying bed, you, as a child of God, should have to say, "I was very happy and very useful during the first part of my life, but I took a step which apparently promised me comfort—and ever afterwards there was a blight upon my whole life. God never again favored me by making me useful in His service. I did little or nothing for Him and now I have come to the end of my life like a withered fruitless vine branch." Do you not think that even with a faint hope of heaven to sustain you, your dying pillow would be stuffed with thorns? I am sure it would be a far more joyous experience to lie there waiting to be translated and feeling, with Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." Do not, therefore, O olive tree or Christian, be tempted to turn aside to gain a fading crown, but stay where you are and enjoy the joy which divine grace gives you, whereby you shall honor God and be a blessing to men!

I will also venture to say that, if a Christian were to leave the enjoyment of communion with Christ and usefulness among his fellows even for a day, to be through that day made into a king, it would be a day that he would ever afterwards wish to have crossed out of his diary. A day without Christ, who is my life? Without His love for a day? Without His smile for a day? Let the day perish wherein such a calamity could happen! What if the thrones of all the Caesars could be occupied for that one day by a chaste heart that loves Jesus? It would be a wretched heart and it would say, "I had better be in a prison and find my Lord there and live in His love, rather than be exalted here to sit upon a throne without Him." Now if it would be so sad *for a single day*, what would it be if you could make such a choice as that for the whole of your life?

Ah, beloved, and let me add that when any do choose worldly gain and worldly honor and let their usefulness suffer in consequence, *it is almost certain to end in disappointment.* Not if they are hypocrites, for they will probably get what they seek after. They mostly prosper in this world and increase in riches when they give up their profession for it, but if you are a child of God and you get out of God's way, the hand of the Lord will be lifted up against you. As surely as you are God's children, you will be driven back to Him—He will fetch you home with a rod behind you. You shall not prosper if you err from His ways. Look at Lot. He pitches his tent toward Sodom because he sees that the well-watered plain of Jordan is just the place for his flocks and herds. Then he lives in Sodom because it is so comfortable to live in a town and give up living in tents and wandering about as Abraham does. But did he make a good thing of it in the long run? Ah, let the flames that devoured his house and the brine that turned his wife into a pillar of salt, and the horrible sin that depraved

both him and his daughters tell that it is an awful thing for a child of God to get away from God! But if he walks with God, it shall be well with him. The Philistines could not hurt Abraham, neither could famine come near his tents—but every evil thing came to Lot when he gave up the separated life and began to live like the rest of the world! Then, dear Christian friends, when the greatest honor or gain is offered to you, say with the faithful olive tree, "Should I cease giving my oil, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?"—

"I would not change my blest estate
For all that earth calls good or great!
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner's gold."

Do not forget that *it was only the bramble that accepted that proffered crown*. He had nothing to lose, so he was glad to take it. Now, if anybody goes to the races, frequents the theater and enjoys all the gaieties and frivolities of this world, I do not find fault with him—why should I do so? Whenever I see hogs greedily devouring their slop, I say, Let them enjoy it—it suits them, it is their sort of food." But if I saw a child of God doing what the ungodly do, I should feel just as if I saw one of you going to the swine trough and kneeling down there to find your food! Of course it was a fine thing for the bramble to be made into a king over the trees. He had always been hidden away, despised and hated, but now that he was made king, he could lord it over the rest of the trees. He could pierce them with his thorns and the flames could burn up his foes. But the bramble's position would not suit the olive tree, or the vine, or the fir tree! And, dear Christian friend, can you be content with that which satisfies the very meanest of men—those who are dead in trespasses and sins? I trust you cannot. Rather aspire to follow in the footsteps of the saints who flung away this world that they might gain the next! Think of the martyrs who counted not their lives dear to them, that they might win Christ and be found in Him. Their persecutors offered them wealth. They offered them position and power! They offered them what was still dearer—that they should live in peace and enjoy the love of wife and children—and as the alternative, they must stand at the stake and be burnt to death! They did not hesitate to choose the dread alternative, for they could die for Christ, but they could not deny Him! They could be burnt to death, but they could not violate their conscience! They could not leave their oil, wherewith they honored God and blessed man, for anything that their persecutors could offer them.

Remember, also, how your Master and Lord acted. All the kingdoms of this world lie at His feet and the archfiend says to Him, "All these things will I give You if you will fall down and worship me." And His reply is, "Get you hence, Satan." He may have life, liberty, power and an earthly

kingdom if He will but speak before Pilate, or will but command the eager crowds to make Him king, but He remains silent and He dies. He saved others, Himself He will not save because His heart is set *upon our salvation*. So, beloved, often deny yourselves what you might have—what might lawfully be yours. Put away every alluring bait if in any wise you would injure your usefulness or mar your character by taking it. The Lord help you to do this by His good Spirit!

III. My time has almost gone, so I can only give you the third division in outline. It is this—TEMPTATION SHOULD BE TURNED TO ACCOUNT.

First, *let us take deeper root*. The mere proposal to leave our oil should make us hold the faster to it.

Next, *let us be on the watch that we lose not our joy*, which is our oil. If we would not leave it, neither can we bear that it should leave us.

Then *let us yield more oil and bear more fruit*. He who gains largely is all the further removed from loss. The more we increase in divine grace, the less we are likely to leave it.

Lastly, let us feel the more content and speak the more lovingly of our gracious state, that none may dare to entice us. When Satan sees us happily established, he will have the less hope of overthrowing us.

I have been preaching some practical truths of God which may not be quite as sweet to you as if I were preaching the precious doctrines of the gospel, but these truths are needed for the strengthening of the soul in times of trial. I pray the Lord to help you to be strong in Him and to stand fast in the faith. Do not go away from the truths of God that make you spiritually fat and flourishing. Do not turn aside from the Christ who makes you strong. Do not depart from the fellowship with Him that makes you holy and useful. Abound in prayer, abide in communion with Christ and let not the prospect of the most glittering life tempt you to turn away even an inch from your Lord and Master, but may His divine Spirit keep you true to Him throughout the whole of your life—and to Him shall be the praise and glory forever and ever! Amen.

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"That I may win Christ."
Philippians 3:8.

THE very high value that the Apostle Paul set upon the Savior is most palpable when he speaks of *winning* Him. This shows that the Savior held the same place in Paul's esteem as the crown did in the esteem of the runner at the Olympic games. To gain that crown, the competitor strained every nerve and sinew, feeling as though he were content to drop down dead at the goal if he might but win it. Paul felt that were he to run with all his might, if that were the way of winning Christ—were he to strain soul and body to win Him, He would be well worth the effort. He shows his value of Christ by speaking of Him as the prize he panted to win. He uses the very same words which the soldier would use concerning the victory when, with garments rolled in blood, amidst confused noise and clouds of smoke, he counts all things but little if he may but hear the shout of triumph. So, Paul, regarding Christ as more glorious and excellent than mountains of prey, considered such a prize to be worth all the fighting, even though he should agonize and sweat with blood! He would be well worth dying to win. I take it that he speaks of Christ here as though he felt that He was the very climax of his desire, the summit of his ambition. If he might but get Christ, he would be perfectly satisfied—but if he could not get Him—whatever else he might have, he would still remain unblessed.

I would to God that you all felt the same. I wish that the ambition of every one of my fellow creatures here assembled—and, indeed, the wide world over—were this, that they might win Christ! Oh, if they did but know His preciousness, if they did but understand how happy and how blessed He makes those to be who gain Him, they, too, would give up everything else for this one desire—that they may win Christ! I hope that, perhaps, a few words of mine may be blessed of God the Spirit to stir up such a desire in the hearts of the congregation now assembled. How, then, shall I begin?

I. WHILE YOU HAVE NOT CHRIST, YOU ARE IN A VERY BAD CONDITION—SHOULD NOT THIS MAKE YOU LONG FOR HIM?

Consider, my dear hearer, you who are Christless tonight, *what you are and where you are*. You are a sinner—that you know. Without Christ

you are an unpardoned sinner, a condemned sinner and, before long you will be a sinner judged, sentenced and cast into hell! Do you not know that? You are a diseased sinner. Sin is the leprosy which is in you and, without Christ, you are sick without a physician. For you there is no balm in Gilead, no physician there. Your sickness is mortal! It will certainly be your ruin, for you have no Savior. You are a mortal—you cannot doubt it. You will soon die and can you tell what it will be to die without Christ? Have you ever formed an idea of what it will be to pass into the realm of separate spirits with no rod to lean on and no staff to comfort you in the dark valley? Man, you are an *immortal* being! You know that, too! You will not cease to be when you die. You will live again—and what will it be to live again without Christ? It will be to live the life of a condemned spirit, withered by the wrath of God, scathed by the lightning of divine justice! Can you think of that without dismay?—

"Sinner, is your heart at rest?
Is your bosom void of fear?
Are you not by guilt oppressed?
Speaks not conscience in your ear?
Can this world afford you bliss?
Can it chase away your gloom?
Flattering, false, and vain it is—
Tremble at the worldling's doom!"

Why, even now, I think I can see you. You are like the ship upon the lake of Gennesaret, tempest tossed. The winds howl about her, every timber creaks, the sail is torn to pieces and the mast is going by the board! And for you there is no Savior to come and walk the billows, and to say, "It is I, be not afraid!" At the helm of your ship there sleeps no Savior who can arise and say to the waves, "Peace, be still!" You are a ship in a storm, with none to rescue you, seeing that you have no Savior. The devil has scuttled you. There are holes bored through and through your spirit's hope and confidence—and it will go down, before long, in depths of unutterable woe!

I think I see you again. You are like Lazarus in the grave, and by this time you are foul and noxious, for you have been dead these 30 or 40 years and that death has festered into putrid corruption. Yes, there you are, and you have no Christ to say, "Roll away the stone." You have no Christ to say, "Lazarus, come forth!" No Savior to bid your friends loosen you and let you go! I think I see you yet again. You have been singing of the dying thief. We often sing of him. And you will die as the thief died, *only*—only there will be no Christ hanging on the cross from whom you shall hear the words—"This day shall you be with Me in Paradise."

Unto what shall I liken you and with what shall I compare you? A soul without Christ! Why, it were better for you that you had never been born if you continue so! You would be better off with the millstone about your neck and cast into the sea, if that would make an end of you! You would

be far happier, then, than you now are without Christ, for without Christ you are without God and without hope in the world! You are a sheep lost on the mountains and no shepherd to find you—a soul wandering in the blackness of darkness, and no lamp to guide your wandering footsteps! And soon you will be a desolate spirit, without a ray of comfort, without a home, shut out in the blackness of darkness forever! Does not that make you long for Christ? It would if I could make you feel what I can only say! I can only deal with your outward ears—my Master must deal with your hearts—and I do pray Him, by His Almighty Spirit, to make you feel so wretched without Christ that you will not dare to sleep tonight until you have sought Him, laid hold upon Him and said to Him, "I will not let You go, except You bless me."

O you souls out of Christ, I could, with half a moment's thought, stop and burst into tears and say no more! But I must command myself, for I must speak to you—and I do pray you, by the living God, unless you are beside yourselves, if you have any love to your own souls, fly to Christ! Seek the Lord! Try to lay hold upon Him, for as you now are, your position is perilous in the extreme!—

"Come, guilty souls, and flee away
Like doves to Jesus' wounds!
This is the welcome gospel day,
Wherein free grace abounds!
God loved the church and gave His Son
To drink the cup of wrath.
And Jesus says He'll cast out none
That come to Him by faith."

II. We will now change the strain, but not the objective. Remember that ALL THE THINGS IN THE WORLD ARE VAIN WITHOUT CHRIST.

The world's goods, its substance, its riches, its pleasures, its pomp, its fame—what are all these without Christ? They are a painted pageantry to go to hell in! They are a mockery to an immortal spirit! They are a mirage of the wilderness, deluding the traveler, but not yielding to his desires one substantial drop of joy! There have been those in this world who have tried it, and they say, "It sounds, it sounds, it sounds, because it is empty and hollow as a drum." It is—

"False as the smooth, deceitful sea,
And empty as the whistling wind."

There is nothing in it all—

"Honor's a puff of noisy breath,
And gain a heap of yellow clay."

And what is even power itself, but anxiety and care? Solomon knew the world at its best and his verdict upon her was, "Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Without Christ, sinner, you will find the world to be unsatisfactory. When you have tried it at its best, you will turn from it and say, "I have been deceived! I have eaten

the wind and I am not satisfied. I am like one that feasts in a dream, and wakes and, lo—he is hungry!" Without Christ you will not even find this world to be comfortable. Perhaps there are none so unhappy as those who are surrounded with what we think to be the means of happiness. I know this—if I had to find the extreme of wretchedness, I should not go to the dens of poverty, but I should go among men surrounded with the trappings of wealth and find you hearts broken with anguish and spirits wrung with griefs which they could not tell! Oh, yes, the world is a heap of chaff! The only solid treasure is to be found in Christ! But if you neglect Him, you neglect all that is worth having!

Besides, *this entire world must soon pass away*. See how it melts! Or, if it melts not from you, you must melt from it. Down goes the ship! She floated gaily but an hour before, but she foundered and she is gone! And now, merchant, what will you do? Your vessel has gone down with all your treasure on board and you are left penniless! Oh, happy are they who lay up their treasure in Christ, for no shipwreck need they fear! But, oh!—

"This world's a dream, an empty show"—

which cannot satisfy an immortal soul!

Further than this, let me remind you, my dear hearer, that if you have not Christ, nothing else will be of use for you. A profession of religion will only be a sort of respectable pall to throw over the corpse of your dead soul! No, a profession of religion, if you have not Christ in it, will be a swift witness against you to condemn you! What right have you to profess to be a follower of Christ unless Christ is, in you, the hope of glory? And to have listened to the ministry of the Word of God will be of no use to you if you do not get Christ. Alas, alas, what can our poor sermons do? Our prayers, our hymns—what are they? Ah, and what will your baptism be—and what will the Lord's supper be unless by faith you grasp a Savior? These ordinances, though ordained by God, Himself, are wells without water and clouds without rain unless they get us Christ, who is the sum and substance of them all! It will be of no use to you that you were regular in your private prayers; that you were good to the poor; that you were generous to the church; that you were constantly in attendance upon the outward means of grace. I say, as I said before, that all these are but a painted pageantry for your soul to go to hell in, unless you have Christ! You may as surely go down to the pit by the religious road as by the irreligious. If you have not Christ, you have not salvation, whatever else you may have—

"Give me Christ, or else I die"—

should be your daily and nightly prayer, for all else will destroy you if you have not the Savior!

And let me tell you, dear hearer, that your repentance, if it does not lead you to Christ, will need to be repented of! And your faith, if it is not based upon His atoning sacrifice, is a faith that is not the faith of God's

elect! And all your convictions of sin—all the visions that have scared you, all the fears that have haunted you—will only be a prelude to something worse unless you get Christ! There is one door and if you go not through that, climbing up some other way, though it is never so tedious, will not answer your turn. You must go down to hell after all your efforts, all your repentings, all your believing, unless your soul can say—

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

Oh, how this ought to make you long for Christ, when you think that everything else is but a bauble when compared with Him! And think what a state you are in as long as you are destitute of Him!

III. I must not tarry, so let me remind you, my dear hearer, though you cannot possibly know how anxious I am to speak so that you may feel what I say, that NOTHING CAN MAKE AMENDS TO YOU FOR LOSING CHRIST.

I know how it is with some of you. *You say you cannot afford to follow Christ*. Your trade—your wicked trade—you would have to give that up, for it happens to be an ungodly calling. Well now, friend, let me take you by the buttonhole a minute. Which had you better be—a beggar and go to heaven, or a duke—and go to hell? Come, now, which had you better do—go to heaven with an empty pocket or go down to the pit with a full one? All you who worship mammon, I know how you will answer, but you who have souls above earth, I hope you will reply, "Nothing in the form of wealth will compensate us for losing our souls." Men have been known, on their dying beds, to have their moneybags brought to them—and they have put them to their hearts and have said, "This won't do," and they have taken up another and put it to their palpitating hearts, and said again, "This won't do." Ah, no, it cannot cure a heartache! What can it do for a soul in eternity? Is it not a painful thing to attend upon some men who die rich in ill-gotten gain? What are they the better for their wealth? They only have it said of them, "He died worth so much." That is all, but they sleep in the same earth and the same worms devour them! There is more fighting over their graves among the heirs who divide the plunder *and* more joy because they are gone! While oftentimes the poor man has the honest tears of his children shed upon a coffin which they have had to contribute to purchase out of their little savings and the grave, itself, has been prepared by the charity of some who found in their father's character the only patrimony which he had to bequeath. Oh, may God grant you grace to perceive that all the riches you can ever get would never make up for losing Christ!

Some lose Christ for the sake of fame. It is not a fashionable thing to be a Christian. To be a Christian after the world's sort, I grant you—is but after the sort of the New Testament, it is not! And many say, "Well, it is not fashionable," and they bend to the fashion. And many do the same in another way, for young men are laughed out of going to the house of God and young women are decoyed from attending the means of grace by the laughter, jeers and jokes of their companions. Remember that they can laugh you into hell, but they can never laugh you out again! And that though their jokes may shut the door, their jokes can never open that door again. Oh, is this all? Will you sell your souls to escape from a fool's laughter? Then, what a fool you must be! What? Are you so thin skinned that you cannot bear to be questioned, or to be asked whether you are a follower of the Lord Jesus? Ah, sir, you shall have that thin skin of yours tormented more than enough in the world to come, when *shame*, which you dread so much, shall be your everlasting portion! O soul, how can you sell Christ for the applause of men? How can you give Him up for the laughter of fools?

Some give Jesus Christ up for the pleasures of the world, but can the giddy dance for a few minutes of this life be worth the torments of the world to come? Oh, weigh, like wise men—as merchants weigh their goods against the gold—I pray you, weigh your souls against the pleasures of this world! Oh, where is the pleasure? Even Tiberius, in his desert island, when he had ransacked the world to find a new joy, could not, if he could give us all the mirth he knew, tell us of anything that would be worth the casting away of the soul! This pearl is too priceless for the world to attempt to purchase! I pray you, be wise enough to feel that nothing can compensate you for this loss! Seek Jesus and may you find Him tonight!

IV. A fourth observation upon which I shall not enlarge is this—DEPEND UPON IT, THAT WHATEVER YOU LOSE FOR CHRIST'S SAKE WILL BE A BLESSED LOSS FOR YOU!

Gregory Nazianzen, a foremost father of the Christian church, rejoiced that he was well versed in the Athenian philosophy—and why do you think he rejoiced in that? Because he had to give it all up when he became a Christian! And he said, "I thank God that I had a philosophy to throw away." He counted it no loss, but a gain, to be a loser of such learned lumber when he found a Savior! An old divine said, "Who would refuse to give up a whole sky full of stars if he could buy a sun with them? And who would refuse to give up all the comforts of this life if he could have Christ at so goodly a price?" That grand old Ignatius, one of the earliest of the church fathers, said, "Give me burning, give me hanging, give me all the torments of hell if I may but get my Savior! I would gladly be content to bear them all as a price." And so might we! Did I not tell you of the martyrs sitting and singing in old Bonner's damp coal

hole, and one of them writing, "There are six brave companions with me in this paradise, and we do sit and sing in the dark all day"? Ah, yes, they were no losers! Did not Rutherford say when he declared that he had but one eye and his enemies had put that out—for that one eye was the preaching of the gospel, an eye to the glory of God—and his enemies had made him silent in Aberdeen, so that he used to weep over his dumb and silent Sabbaths? Yet did he not say, "But how mistaken they are! They thought they sent me to a dungeon, but Christ has been so precious to me that I thought it to be the king's parlor and the very Paradise of God"?

And did not Renwick say that oftentimes, when he had been out among the bogs on the Scotch mountains, hunted over the mosses, with the stars of God looking down upon the little congregation, that they had far more of God's fellowship than bishops had ever had in cathedrals, or than they, themselves, had ever had in their circles when, in brighter days, they had worshiped God in peace? The dragoons of Claverhouse and the uniformity of Charles II were incapable of quenching the joy of our Puritan and Covenanting forefathers! Their piety drew its mirth from deeper springs than kings could stop, or persecution could dry up. The saints of Christ have given Christ their all—and when they have given all, they have felt that they were the richer for their poverty and the happier for their sorrows! And when they have been in solitude for Christ, they have felt that they have had good company, for He has been with them to be their strength and their joy. You may have Christ at whatever price you will, but you will make a good bargain of it! I charge you, my dear hearer, if it should come to this—that if you should have to sell your house and your home, if the wife of your bosom should become your enemy, if your children should refuse to know their own father or to look him in the face, if you should be banished from your country, if there should be a halter for your neck, and no grave for your body—you would make a good bargain in taking up my Lord and Master, for oh, He will claim you in the day when men disown you—and in the day when He comes, there shall be none so bright as those who have suffered for Him—

"And they who, with their leader,
Have conquered in the fight,
Forever and forever
Are clad in robes of white!"

Yes, if you suffer with Him, you shall also be glorified together! God grant you grace to feel this to be true and to make any sacrifice as long as you can but "win Christ, and be found in Him."

V. IF EVER YOU GET CHRIST, YOU WILL FIND HIM ALL GAIN AND NO LOSS!

The apostle says, "That I may *win Christ*." It is all winning and no losing. Why, *if you get Christ, you will get life!* Does He not give life and immortality to those that have Him? Yes, for He says, "he that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." *If you get Christ, you will get light*. He said, "I am the light of the world: he that follows Me shall not walk in darkness." The Sun of Righteousness shall arise upon you! *Get Christ and you shall get health*—your soul shall leave her sicknesses with Him who bore her sickness in the days of His flesh. *Get Christ and you shall get riches*, "the unsearchable riches of Christ." You may be poor, perhaps, outwardly, but you shall be rich, yourselves, and be able to make many others rich—rich in faith, giving glory to God! Get Christ and prosperity shall not hurt you—your feet shall be like hinds' feet, to stand upon your high places. Get Christ and He will turn your bitter Marahs into sweet Elims. He is the tree which, when put into the brackish water, makes it sweet to the taste. Affliction is no longer affliction when Christ is with us! Then the furnace glows, not with heat, alone, but with a golden radiance, a present glory when Christ treads the burning coals!

Get Christ, beloved, and you have got all your soul can wish for. Now may you stretch your capacious powers to the utmost and, with a holy covetousness and a sacred greediness, desire all you can! You may open your mouth wide, for Christ will fill it. You may enlarge your desires, but the infinite riches of Christ will satisfy them at their largest and widest stretch. Get Christ and you have heaven on earth, and shall have heaven forever! Get Christ, and angels shall be your servitors! The wheels of providence shall grind for your good, the chariot of God, which brings on the events prophesied in apocalyptic vision, shall bring only joy and peace to you—and you shall hear it said, both in time and in eternity—

"'Tis with the righteous well."

Get Christ and you have nothing to fear, and everything to hope for. Get Christ and sin is buried in the Red Sea of Jesus' blood, while you are arrayed in the spotless righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ—Jehovah Tsidkenu, Himself! Get Christ and—what more shall I say? Then may you swim in seas of bliss! Then may you walk Elysian fields of holy joy even here on earth! Get Christ and you need not envy the angels! Get Christ and you may count yourselves to be raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places with Him!

Surely all this ought to make the sinner's mouth water to get Christ! It ought to make his heart ache till he gets Christ! It ought to set his soul a hungering and a thirsting till he gets Jesus! It ought to make him resolve that he will not be kept back till at last he gets a firm hold upon the crucified!

VI. My last remark shall be this—WE SHALL UNDERSTAND ALL THIS A GREAT DEAL BETTER VERY SOON.

There is a curtain, but it is lifting, it is lifting, it is lifting—and when it is lifted, what do I see? The spirit world! 'Tis death that lifts the curtain and when it is lifted, these present things will vanish, for they are but shadows. The world of eternity and reality will then be seen. I would summon a jury of the spirits that have passed that curtain and they would not be long debating about the question whether Christ is worth the winning! I care not where you select them from—whether from among the condemned in hell, or from among the beatified in heaven. Let them sit, let *even those who are in hell* sit and judge upon the matter. And if they could for once speak honestly, they would tell you that it is a dreadful thing to despise Christ, now that they have come to see things in a true light—now that they are lost forever, forever, forever—now that they are crushed with knowledge and feeling which have come too late to be profitable—now they wish that they had listened to the ministrations of the truth of God, to the proclamations of the gospel! If they could have a sane mind back again, they would shriek, "Oh, for one more Sabbath! Oh, to listen once more to an honest preacher, though his words might be clumsy and uncouth! Oh, to hear a voice once more say, 'Come to Jesus while the day of mercy lasts!' Oh, to be once more pressed to come to the marriage feast—once more bid to look to Jesus and to live!" I tell you sirs, some of you who make so light of Sundays and think preaching is but a pastime, so that you come here to hear us as you would go to hear some fiddler on a weeknight—I tell you, sirs, the lost in hell reckon these things at a very different rate! And so will you before long, when another preacher, with skeleton fingers, shall talk to you upon your deathbed. Ah, then you will see that we were in earnest and you were the players—then you will comprehend that what we said to you demanded earnest, immediate attention, though, alas, you would not give it—and so played false to your own soul, committed spiritual suicide and went your way like a bullock to the slaughter—to be the murderers of your own spirits!

But suppose I summoned a jury of bright spirits from heaven? Ah, they would not need to consider, but I am sure they would unanimously say to you, if they might, "Seek you the Lord while He may be found! Seek the Lord and His strength. Seek the Lord and His face always—put your trust in Jesus, for He is sweet beyond all sweetness." May you do this and may you sing—

"Oh, spread Your savor on my frame,
No sweetness is so sweet!
Till I get up to sing Your name
Where all Your singers meet."

Pray that prayer. Ask Him to save you, and may the Lord bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

PHILIPPIANS 3.

Verse 1. *Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.* Let this be the end of everything, before you get to the end of it. And when you do get to the end of it, "rejoice in the Lord." It is incumbent upon us, as Christians, to rise out of our despondencies. Joy should be the normal state of the Christian. What a happy religion is ours in which it is a duty to be happy! "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord."

1. *To write the same things to you, to me, indeed, is not grievous, but for you it is safe.* To go over the same old truths again and again, to proclaim the same precepts and teach the same doctrines is not grievous to us, and it is safe for you to hear these things again and again. If they have not made their due impression upon you, already, perhaps they will do so when they are repeated in your hearing. At any rate, it is safe for you to hear or read over and over again the old, old story with which you are already familiar.

2. *Beware of dogs.* Contentious persons—persons of coarse and corrupt habits. "Beware of dogs."

2. *Beware of evil workers.* However prettily they may talk, if they are workers of evil, beware of them. "By their fruits you shall know them." Their speech may be clever, but if their lips are unclean, beware of them.

2. *Beware of the concision.* Beware of the cutters off, those who excommunicate and cut off others because they do not happen to agree with them in certain rites and ceremonies.

3. *For we are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.* This is the real circumcision which is of the spirit and not of the flesh. The men who have abandoned all confidence in themselves. The men who have come to rely upon Christ, alone. The men who "rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh," those who care not for outward rites and ceremonies, but who worship God in the spirit—these are the true circumcision!

4. *Though I might also have confidence in the flesh.* "If any man might trust in outward religion, I might," said Paul, yet he was the very man who would not do so, and who warned others against doing it!

4-6. *If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eight day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.* So that if anybody could have boasted of what he was by birth, what he was by profession, what he was by the display of religious zeal—Paul could have boasted as boldly as anyone could, for in all those respects he was second to nobody! You know that it is a very easy thing, or it ought to be a very easy thing, for some people to be humble, for they

have nothing to be proud of—but here is a man who had much of which he might have been proud! According to the letter of the law, he was a diamond of the first water, yet see what a different verdict he gives after divine grace has opened his eyes!

7-9. *But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yes, indeed, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, 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.* [See Sermon #1357, Volume 23—A BUSINESS-LIKE ACCOUNT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Everything else must go in order to secure that. Paul thinks that to be righteous by faith is infinitely better than all the righteousness that can come by works and ceremonies. He therefore utterly despises that which he once thought to be more precious that gold! And he takes possession of, as his greatest treasure, that which he once trampled in the mire. Now his great desire is—

10-12. *That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made comfortable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.* You, perhaps, suppose that Paul's present satisfaction arises out of a consciousness of personal perfection, but it is not so. He has not won the race yet—his joy arises from the fact that he is on the right course and that he is running in the right direction! "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect."

12. *But I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.* [See Sermon #2315, Volume 39—PAUL APPREHENDED AND APPREHENDING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "I want to lay hold of that for which Christ has laid hold of me. He has grasped me in order to make me perfect and I want to grasp that perfection. He has laid hold of me to rid me of my sin and I want to lay hold of a clean riddance of sin, apprehending that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

13-15. *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are mature, be thus minded: and if in anything you are otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.* If you are a true believer in Jesus, be of this mind—always to be pressing forward to something higher and better. If God has given you one form of maturity, press onward to a much higher form. Seek continually to rise. The eagle's motto is, "Higher, Higher!"

Let it be your motto, too. Many of God's people do not believe that He can make them what He means to make them, or, at least, they act as if they did not believe that He can. They apparently are not conscious of what their privileges really are and are living far below where they might live in the happy enjoyment of peace and power and usefulness! May God help us, by His gracious Spirit, to know all of Christ that we can and to be as much like Christ as we can.

16-18. *Nevertheless, to the degree we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as you have us for an example. (For many walk)*—I suppose Paul is referring to many even in the church of his day. "For many walk"—

18. *Of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.* [See Sermons #102, Volume 2—FALSE PROFESSORS SOLEMNLY WARNED and #2553, Volume 44—THE ENEMIES OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The worst enemies that the cross of Christ has are the enemies inside the professing church of Christ!

19. *Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.* They call themselves spiritual, yet they live for earthly things, indulging their appetites, living for self, yet pretending to be Christians, whereas selfishness is the very reverse of Christianity.

20, 21. *For our conversation is in heaven; from where also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.* [See Sermon #973, Volume 17—THE POWER OF CHRIST ILLUSTRATED BY THE RESURRECTION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

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CLINGING TO CHRIST
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A SERMON
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"Then Jesus said unto the twelve, Will you also go away? Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." John 6:67, 68.

[See Sermons #2914, Volume 50—A MOURNFUL DEFECTION and #1646, Volume 28—A HOME QUESTION AND A RIGHT ANSWER—
Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

I. WITHOUT any preface, we will proceed at once to consider the first division of our subject, which is that THE PREACHING OF THE DOCTRINES OF TRUTH IS OFTEN THE MEANS OF SEPARATING THE PRECIOUS FROM THE VILE.

In the case before us, we see that the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ acted like a great winnowing machine. His nominal disciples were like a heap of wheat and chaff all mingled together on the threshing floor. His words were like a mighty wind passing through the whole mass, separating the chaff from the wheat and driving it away—leaving only the good corn lying all around Him. This leads me to say that apart from afflictions, temptations and persecutions, the preaching of the gospel is, in itself, a means of dividing the true followers of Christ from those who are only His disciples in name and, wherever there is a faithful, Christ like ministry, you will find many going away from it for the very same reasons that those nominal disciples went away from Christ. "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him."

Some went away from Christ *because His doctrine was too mysterious*. They heard His wondrous words only with their outward ears and, judging them in the letter and not comprehending the spirit of them, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" They misunderstood and misrepresented what intelligent Sunday school children nowadays easily comprehend! And as they did not know what the Savior really meant, they argued that this was a reason why they should not listen to Him any longer. We must, therefore, not be surprised if when we are speaking to our congregations upon the deep things of God, there are some who do not comprehend the spiritual meaning of what we are saying, and who, instead of patiently waiting until they can understand it, or coming to us for an explanation of their difficulties, turn away from us, crying, "We will

hear no more of these mysteries! We cannot at once understand them and, therefore, we will not take the trouble to learn what the preacher intends to teach us by them."

Others went away from Christ *because His teaching was too spiritual for them*. He said to them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you." They gave only a carnal interpretation to Christ's words and altogether missed their spiritual meaning. If He had talked to them as the Pharisees did, they would have understood Him and enjoyed His message. If Christ had spoken to them about phylacteries, making broad the borders of their garments, the tithing of mint and anise and cummin, fasting two or three days in a week and washing their hands before they ate bread, they would have comprehended such talk as that and would have exceedingly liked it! And there are still many, even in England, who would listen gladly to the praise of mere outward rites and ceremonies and who would find intense satisfaction in millinery, wax candles, crosses and anything that is externally ornamental or attractive—but they have no love for that which is spiritual! Our Lord's teaching was too spiritual for those nominal followers of His. He did not give them husks such as swine might relish, but He gave them the very kernels of the truth of God and, therefore, they turned away from Him. He gave them not chaff, but the very finest of the wheat—but they, being unrenewed by divine grace and, therefore, having no appetite for such food, "went back, and walked no more with Him." And every ministry that is truly spiritual will drive away some who come for a while under its influence, for there are still many to be found who will say, "If the preacher would confine himself to moral duties, or even to Scripture *histories*, we would not mind listening to him. But when he talks about feeding upon Christ, and about communion with Jesus, and about the spiritual separated life, these are things of which we know nothing and of which we do not wish to know anything." And so they go their way.

Others there were, no doubt, who were offended with Christ *because what He said glorified Himself*. He contrasted Himself with the manna that their fathers ate in the wilderness and of which they naturally thought very highly, for man then "ate angels' food." But Jesus said, "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead…I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever." He proclaimed Himself the Son of man who came down from heaven and who would go back to heaven—and this offended them—and there are still many to whom the glorifying of Christ is obnoxious. If the doctrine that is preached glorifies the Creator and abases the creature, there are some of our hearers who at once get angry! They cannot endure the extolling of our glorious Lord and Master. Our praise of Him makes discord in their ears. If we would chatter about the dignity of human nature; if we would extol that poor foolish creature, the son of

Adam, they would be pleased enough! But to put all crowns upon Jesus Christ's head, to ascribe all honor and glory to Him and to Him alone—to preach up nothing but a full Christ for empty sinners—there are many who will be annoyed by such preaching as this and straightway they will turn back and walk no more with us.

Chiefly, however, Christ's nominal disciples left Him because His preaching was too personal for them. He proclaimed what was in their hearts and, therefore, He spoke to them with the utmost directness. And this plainness of speech offended them, so they turned away from Him. How many sermons have been preached before people and how few have been preached *at* them! Yet the sermons that are preached *before* us are good for nothing, but the sermons that are preached at us are the only ones that are likely to be blessed to us! We have known some hearers who have winced considerably when the preaching has been plain and personal. The description of their case has been so graphic and the cap fitted them so well that, rather than wear it, they have taken themselves to a preacher with a smoother tongue, who—

"To soothe the unholy throng"—

has laid aside the boldness of speech which it is both his privilege and his duty to exercise! There are some of our hearers who suspect that somebody has told the minister all about them—but what has happened is that God has guided the preacher unconsciously to picture them so accurately that they cannot help recognizing their own portrait! One says, "I do not like the preacher because he tells me so much about my sins." Another, who is a drunk, says, "I do not like him because, after listening to him, I cannot enjoy my cups as I did before." Another, who is the slave of some other form of sin, says, "I do not like him because he lays the axe to the very root of the tree of my sin. His blows come too closely home to please me." There are others who are not honest enough to confess that it is so with them, also, but though they may not admit it, this is really the fact—they do not like the truth of God because the truth of God does not like them!

We have in all our congregations a certain number of hearers who make great professions for a time, but afterwards go back and leave us. The reason very often being that the preaching has sifted them out from the wheat, and proved that they are only chaff. I know that some of you feel very uncomfortable when I am preaching the doctrine of election or any of the other great doctrines of sovereign grace. I am very sorry for any of you who cannot appreciate those glorious truths of God in which my soul delights itself to the fullest—and I would earnestly and solemnly urge you to examine yourselves to see whether you have ever had divine grace in your hearts at all if you do not love to hear the doctrines of grace preached! There are others, though not many in this congregation, who are not pleased when I begin preaching concerning human responsibility

and the duty of sinners to repent and believe the gospel. They do not like to hear me proclaim that part of the truth of God, though they revel in divine sovereignty, predestination, election and such great truths! So it comes to pass that there is, occasionally, a small stream of hearers trickling away towards antinomianism, and another stream flowing in the opposite direction towards legalism! I hope that at least in the case of some of them, though they leave us, they do not, at the same time, leave Christ! A man may turn away from sound doctrine and yet may not have left a personal Savior. Though he may have rejected some part of the truth of God, he may still have his finger upon the hem of Christ's garment, and so may remain in contact with Him. But I am greatly afraid that there are some who leave us, who go away to hell! Some who, when they forsake the Lord's house, also forsake the Lord of the house. Some who, when they leave the congregation of the saints, also leave the King of saints and turn aside unto crooked ways.

II. Well now, suppose that they do leave Christ when they leave us? That suggests a second topic of consideration in our text, which is that WHEN SOME PEOPLE GO AWAY, WE MUST NOT BE SURPRISED, NOR UNDULY ALARMED.

You notice that in the narrative there is no mention of any remark by Christ concerning those who had turned back, nor any expression of a desire for their return. He could read their hearts and knew the motives that had caused them to reject His teaching and cease to be even nominally His followers, so He turned to His 12 apostles and put to them the pathetic question which we will presently examine—"Will you also go away?" This silence of our Savior concerning those who were driven away from Him by His preaching of the truth of God suggests that they were not plants of His Father's right hand planting, but only weeds that had to be pulled up by the roots and thrown away!

Among Christ's nominal disciples, there were *some who followed Him for the loaves and fishes*. They enjoyed His discourses, especially those that finished up with the feeding of the multitude! They were greatly gratified by being in His society, especially when they shared in the distribution that was made to the poor out of the bag that Judas carried as treasurer to the company. They always profited under Christ's ministry, but if they did not profit in spirituals, they took good care to profit in temporals! These were the people who went away from Christ when He set before them the spiritual meat and drink which had no attraction for them. "No," they said, "we did not bargain for that kind of fare. Let those have it who like it. As for us, we need something more substantial than that" and, therefore, from that time they "went back, and walked no more with Him." There are a few people of this sort in most congregations even now. They always have an eye to anything material that can be gained by mingling with the disciples of Christ. But as soon as there are no more loaves and fishes to be had, no more doles or grants or gifts—away they

go— and we see them no more in our midst! Now, when such people as these take offense at the truth of God and leave us, we really need not regret their going except for their own sakes. While they remain with us, there is always a faint hope that some higher motive may cause them to stay and that the nominal follower of Christ may become one of His true disciples. But, apart from that view of the case, we cannot greatly mourn when He, whose fan is in His hand, drives away the chaff which has been all too long reckoned as wheat!

Then, among the apparent disciples of Christ, were *some who followed Him because they were charmed by His oratory*. Even the officers who were sent by the chief priests and Pharisees to arrest Christ returned without Him and gave as their excuse for not taking Him, "Never man spoke like this man." He was, indeed, unrivaled in His eloquence. His parables were so interesting that they won the attention of the multitude—"the common people heard Him gladly." There is a great power of attraction in real natural oratory—and in our Lord's case there was a divine power far beyond anything to which the loftiest human eloquence has ever attained. So there were many who said, "We never heard such a preacher as this before. Wherever He preaches, there is sure to be a crowd. The multitudes throng around Him and press upon Him! Let us also go and hear Him." As they listened to Him, their ears were charmed, but their hearts were not changed and, by and by, they "went back, and walked no more with Him." We also have had nominal adherents of this sort. We are always glad to see all who come to hear the Word of God, but if they unite with the disciples of Christ simply because of some excellence of speech which they admire in the preacher and are not, themselves, truly converted, the sooner such dross is scrummed from the surface of the molten gold, the better will it be for the gold!

Others, no doubt, followed Christ for a time *because they liked anything new, curious and singular*. Here was a strange preacher who had not even a house to live in. The foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, but He had nowhere to lay His head. He was also a preacher who said and did unusual things. He saw some lilies growing and He said, "Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." He pointed to some ravens flying overhead, and said, "Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them: how much more are you better than the fowls?" He was a preacher who used simple language, so that even children could comprehend it! Yet, at the same time, He talked so wondrously that the people were astonished at His doctrine, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." Yet, when the novelty of His teaching had worn off, they "went back, and walked no more with Him." There are some people of this sort still living—they go to hear every

fresh preacher who attracts a crowd and they may be sufficiently fascinated to gain admission to the church. But they vanish as soon as there is a new attraction! And any church that has had them on its roll need not sorrow greatly when the chaff is winnowed from the wheat.

So I might go on describing those who go away from us even as Christ's nominal followers went away from Him, but I will just say to any minister here who has lost any of his hearers through his faithful preaching of the truth, "Do not fret, my dear brother, on their account, and do not abate a single jot or tittle of anything that you believe to be the truth of God." I would not alter my preaching in order to retain any individual, however eminent or influential he might be. Others may fish for him if they like, but I shall not. My business is to declare my Master's message exactly as He has revealed it to me in His word and by His Spirit! I am responsible to Him for the faithful discharge of the duties to which He has called me—and when I have, in His name, fully and fearlessly proclaimed all the truth that He has taught me, I am not to be blamed if some refuse to receive the word, and so it becomes a savor of death unto death to them. It was so with the preaching of our Lord Himself, for there were many who "went back, and walked no more with Him," when He uttered truths of God which were unpalatable to them.

III. Now I come to the very important matter upon which I want to especially speak to you, as it particularly concerns you who are now present. Some have gone out from us because they were not of us, for if they had really been of us they would doubtless have continued with us. And this fact suggests the need of putting to you THE SOLEMN QUESTION WHICH OUR LORD PUT TO HIS DISCIPLES—"Will you also go away?"

Every word in this question is important. Let us first consider the little pronoun, "you." "Will *you* also go away?" "You, the 12 who have been with Me from the beginning. You who have been with Me in my tribulation and have shared My reproach. You who were, some of you with Me on the mount of transfiguration and in the room where the little maid was bid to rise—will *you* go away from Me? To you," Christ seemed to say, "I have expounded the parables as I never explained them to the mixed multitude. To you I have unlocked the mysteries of the kingdom of God. To you My heart has been opened as it has been to no one else—I have not kept back from you anything that was good for you to know—you are My chosen ones, My favorites, My much loved ones. To deliver you from peril, I walked upon the stormy waves. To preserve you in the time of temptation, I spent whole nights in prayer. Upon you I have poured a plenitude of blessings—will you go away from Me after all this?" Now Christ seems to me to put this solemn, personal question to you, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ! Will you go away from Him after all that He has done for you? You believe that you have been called by His grace, for you have enjoyed the sweetness of His love and you have been admitted into close personal fellowship with Him. The secret of the Lord

is with you who fear Him. He has delivered you in six troubles, and in seven no evil has touched you. You bear your willing witness that He is a gracious Lord and Master, and that He has been a precious Christ to you! Indeed, you say that He is your all in all and that words fail you to tell all that you think of Him! Then *can* you, *will* you go away from Him after all this? I think I know what your answer must be, but I will not speak of that just now.

Now put the emphasis upon the first word in the question—"*Will* you also go away?" Matthew Henry says that our Lord left the disciples to make the choice whether they would go or stay—and then he observes that, "Christ will detain none with Him against their wills. His soldiers are volunteers, not pressed men." Christ also says to us who profess to be His disciples, *"Will* you go away from Me?" Remember this, beloved friends, although the Spirit of God keeps us following Christ, yet He never does this against our wills. He makes us willing in the day of His power, but still, it is quite true that Christ has no unwilling followers. If you are willing to leave Him; if your will would permit you to be a deserter from the army of Christ, you have already deserted! So I put the question to you as though the whole matter rested with you, "Will you go away from your Lord and Master? Do you really wish to leave your Savior? Do you, in your heart, say, "I will never again endure suffering and reproach for His name's sake. I will never again put my trust in Him who died upon the cross. I will go back to the world and be content with the world's joys and pleasures"? Will you thus go away from Christ and walk no more with Him?

Then take the next word in the question: "Will you *also* go away?" There is often a disposition in us to do what others do. Young man, you know that your father, who once professed to be a follower of Christ, afterwards apostatized. Will you, also, go back because he turned traitor to Christ? When some great monarch among the trees of the forest feels the woodman's axe and quivers and, at last, falls with a tremendous crash, many a shrub and plant that grew securely near it are crushed to death by its fall. And so, sometimes, when some great professor falls and goes down to destruction, there are many young believers, growing, as it were, under his shadow, who are in imminent peril of being dragged down with him! Now, my young friends, you have heard that so and so and so and so have turned back, like Pliable, to the City of Destruction—"will you also go away?" Will the tide also sweep you away, or will you, by the grace of God, swim against it? There it goes, broad and deep! Upon its surface is the foam of pleasure, but in its depths is the damnation of hell—will you also float down it as multitudes of others are doing, or will you stem the current—

"Strong in the strength which God supplies
Through His eternal Son"?

We must, all of us know some of these reprobates who once were numbered among the people of God. There is one who used to partake of the communion cup at the Lord's table, but now he is drinking of the cup of devils at the bar of the gin palace—"will you also go away" as he has gone? There is another who used to go up to the house of prayer and his voice was often heard at the prayer meetings. But the greed of gold sized him and now he is a sordid money grabber and he would grind an orphan's bones if they would make him bread! "Will you also go away" as he has gone? Saddest of all, there is one who used to preach the gospel and many were charmed by his brilliant oratory. But now he is blaspheming God with his fellow infidels! "Will you also go away" as he has gone? Young men and women, and old ones, too, you see what the apostates have become! You see what has happened to some who apparently did run well, but who never really started in the right course—or they would have continued in it till they reached the goal. You see how some who left the harbor with a fair wind and all sails set have made shipwreck of faith because they never knew the grace of God in truth—are you willing to be like they? "Will you also go away?" I know I shall not be alone in giving the answer that John Newton puts into his well-known hymn—

"When any turn from Zion's way
(Alas, what numbers do)!
I think I hear my Savior say,
'Will you forsake Me too?'
Ah, Lord, with such a heart as mine,
Unless You hold me fast
I feel I will! I shall decline,
And prove like they at last.
What anguish has that question stirred,
If I will also go?
Yet, Lord, relying on Your word,
I humbly answer, 'No.'"

IV. Now, as briefly as we can, let us consider PETER'S REPLY TO OUR LORD'S QUESTION, and I hope that many a heart here will make that reply its own. It was a grand answer! There is a magnificence about it which I cannot expect to bring out to the fullest—"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

"Lord, to whom shall we go?" When I was meditating upon this subject yesterday, I turned that question over and over again in my mind and I asked myself, "Where could I go if I were to forsake my Lord?" Earth has no place where I could hide my guilty head if I, after preaching the gospel to others, should desert the cross of Christ! Not even across the ocean could I find a harbor of refuge or a hermit's cave where I could secure seclusion if I tried to run away from my Lord. I would be hounded and denounced everywhere by those who know my name, even if they do not know me, as one who has preached the gospel to tens of thousands. And

I should be pointed at by the finger of scorn and all who have desired my fall would gloat over it—and think me only fit to be a football for Satan and his hosts to kick. I can indeed adopt John Newton's lines and say with him to my dear Lord and Savior—

"To whom or where could I go
If I should turn from You?"

That is how I personally feel with regard to Peter's reply to our Lord's question. Will each one of you put the matter before yourself from your own standpoint as I have put it from mine? Let me take the case of any avowed follower of Christ here. Where could you go to find comfort if you should forsake your Lord? Suppose you turn from Christ—*perhaps you might try to find peace and comfort in ceremonies.* Can you imagine yourself sitting or kneeling in a Popish place of worship? Can you think of yourself as trying to get comfort by watching those boys in white swinging the smoking censers, or those men in blue and purple and scarlet and fine linen bowing before their images and chanting in a language that you probably do not understand? Can you imagine yourself deriving comfort from those wax candles, those crucifixes or that little wafer god of which the idolaters think so much? Could you get comfort out of the gorgeous architecture, the dim religious light, the pealing organ and all the paraphernalia inseparably associated with the Romish ritual? If you should ever spend a few minutes in one of those places, I think you would say, "Well, whatever becomes of me, I could not come here! I know too much to ever put any trust in such childish ceremonies and superstitious observances. I cannot *imagine* my soul ever being satisfied with such husks as these."

Next, *let us suppose that you go to Moses and try to be saved by the law.* As you have given up Christ, you try whether you cannot find comfort in your own good works. You become eminently religious, devout, charitable, moral and upright. You try, from morning till night, to live a perfect life. You are wanting to see if you can, by any means, build a road to heaven for yourself, or construct a ladder out of your own good works by which you can reach God's presence in glory. Now, my brothers and sisters in Christ, what do you think of such a scheme as this? "Oh, sir!" says one friend, "I once tried to go round by Mount Sinai, but there were such lightning and thunder—and the mountain was so full of terror to me that I dare not go that way again! Whatever else I might do, I could not go back again to the beggarly elements of the old law! I did once think that I could be saved by my own good works, but I found that I had launched my boat upon such a stormy sea that I was glad to get back to land again—and I shall never again venture out upon those perilous waters." I expect this friend says just what many more of you feel—that you could no more go back to Moses, and seek to be saved by the law—than you could hope to be saved by Popish rites and ceremonies!

We will suppose, next, that you try to live an utterly careless life. Let us imagine, if we can, that you give up all thoughts of religion, that you do not attend any place of worship, that you abandon your present habit of prayer, Bible reading and so on, and that you just settle down to attend to your earthly business and have no care about the business of the world to come! Can you manage to do that? There are many, all around us, who are constantly acting thus—and some of them are quite used to it by this time, for they have never cared for anything but the things of time and sense. But I am quite sure there is no true child of God who could live such a life as that! If some of you were to stay away from the house of God for a month, you know that you would be utterly miserable! You could not help thinking about divine things—they would force themselves upon you, for you have a conscience which is neither dead nor seared. It is like that Mr. Conscience, of whom John Bunyan says in his *Holy War*—"The old gentleman, too, the Recorder, who was so before Diabolus took Mansoul—he also began to talk aloud. And his words were now to the town of Mansoul as if they were great claps of thunder." It is so with you, and that enlightened and awakened conscience of yours would make you, of all men, most miserable if you tried to live a careless, godless life! Why, you know that even when you are dull and heavy with regard to spiritual things, you are most unhappy, and you cry out in your agony—

"Dear Lord, and shall we always live
At this poor dying rate?"

Well, if you cannot endure that state of things even in a small degree, it is quite certain that you could not endure it altogether! So, if you think of leaving your Lord, it is evident that you could not live in utter carelessness.

Suppose that you turn aside to the pleasures of the world. Suppose you take a ticket tomorrow evening for the theater and go there? The moment you had taken your seat, you would say to yourself, "I wish I had never come in this place." And as soon as the performance began, you would be so nervous and unhappy that at every creaking noise, or the slamming of a door, you would fear that the building was about to tumble down upon you! Such amusements as these are not for us who profess to be followers of the crucified! Let others do as they please—we do not interfere with their liberty. We believe that husks are the proper food for swine, but we have no desire to share the feast with them! And we leave the world's pleasures to the men of the world who have their portion in this life. If we have really received a new life, and been made partakers of the divine nature, it would be no use for us to seek satisfaction in the world's pleasures—we would be obliged to cry out, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity!"

Now just once more, *suppose we leave Christ and turn to the lower and grosser forms of vice.* Why, the mere suggestion seems to make our blood

run cold and then to make us blush with shame at the very thought of such degradation! Some of us tremble every time we hear a profane oath or a blasphemous or obscene expression—and we would rather be tied up and whipped with a cat o'nine tails, than live among those who are continually cursing God! And as for doing it, ourselves, we would rather that our tongue should cleave to the roof of our mouth, or that we should be dumb for the rest of our lives! If one has ever known the woe, sorrow and redness of eyes of the drunk—and been saved from such sin and wretchedness by sovereign grace—how can he or she ever go back to their cups again? If one has been the companion of a harlot and has tasted the bitterness of life (or rather, death) in the house of the strange woman—and yet has been delivered by Almighty grace—how can you ever again wallow in such filth? The very thought of such a thing makes us shudder and it is well that it does! God has made all sin to be full of vinegar and gall to a Christian! And there is nothing sweet to him, the wide world over, but that which appertains to Christ! No, my brothers and sisters, we cannot go back to the world and to sin! We must cling to Christ, for there is nowhere else for us to go if we should ever leave Him. Respectable carelessness refuses us and disreputable sin rejects us after we are once united to Christ! Even the world could not endure us when once we have lost our taste for its follies and its sins. We cannot go back, we have burnt our boats and destroyed our bridges—the only course left to us is to follow our glorious leader wherever He goes before us here and then to follow Him forever in that blest state where it shall be impossible for us to go away from Him!

My time has almost gone, but I must remind you of the last words of Peter's reply to his Lord—"*You have the words of eternal life*." I hope that you, also, dear brothers and sisters, feel that you cannot turn back from Christ because He has saved you by His grace. What He has done for us must bind us forever to Him! He has loved us with an everlasting love. He has given Himself for us on Calvary's cross. He has given us His Spirit and word—a new heart and a right spirit has He put within us—we *cannot* and we *will not* desert Him after all this! Besides, He is our hope for the eternity of bliss that we expect to share with Him. All our hopes of life beyond the grave center in Him. Apart from Him, there would be nothing for us but the blackness of darkness forever! So it is impossible for us to turn away from Him. No, we must cling to Him whatever happens, for there is nothing or no one that can ever take His place—

"None among the sons of men,
None among the heavenly train,
Can with Jesus Christ compare,
None so sweet, and none so fair!"

I wish that some who have never yet been followers of the Lord Jesus Christ would become His disciples right now. But remember that if you

enlist beneath His banner, it is for life. The captain of our salvation has not six months' soldiers—He grants no discharge from His army till the fight is fought, the victory won and the crown is bestowed upon those who have been faithful even unto death! Those are the conditions of His service. Will you accept them and enlist in His army tonight? There is nothing for you to pay, but everything for you to receive! Open your empty hand, bring your empty heart and receive Christ—and so shall you be enlisted into His service! And more than that, you shall become members of the great family of the redeemed, for "as many as received Him, to them He gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." Believe on Him now and you, too, shall become the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus! And then if He says to you, when others turn back and walk no more with Him, "Will *you* also go away?" you will answer, as Peter did, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." The Lord bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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"He said unto him, Feed My sheep."
John 21:16.

THOSE whom the Lord addressed, and especially Simon, had become fishermen. "Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land, full of great fishes." In the early part of your career most of you were fishermen, or men catchers and, truly, to be fishers of men should be your ambition all your lives. But you have now become something more—the fisher has developed into a shepherd. The fisherman represents the evangelist who casts the net into the waters and draws the fish to land, but it is not to him that Christ says, "Feed My sheep"—that is reserved for those of greater maturity and experience. Many of you have now for years been settled in one sphere and while you will continue to fish, I trust that more and more you will remember that you now have other duties to perform—you have to feed as well as to fish, to handle the crook as well as the net. We now leave the sea wherein we were drifted to and fro, and we abide among our own flocks, standing and feeding in the strength of the Lord. We cease not to do the work of an evangelist, but we pay special attention to the duties of the pastor, for He who once said, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship," now says to us, "Feed My sheep." I am addressing disciples to whom the Lord has shown Himself—may He now at this happy season commission us anew and send us home with the word which He spoke to Peter resting in our hearts!

I. This was a sort of ordination of Peter to the pastorate. He needed to be publicly recognized, for he had publicly offended. And his ordination commenced with AN EXAMINATION BEARING ON THE WORK. "Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" Our Lord does not admit any to the oversight of His flock without first of all questioning them as to their inner condition. Neither should any man dare to accept such an office without great self-examination and searching of heart. Many questions should be put to our hearts and answered as in the sight of God, for no man rightly takes this honor upon himself but he that is called thereunto—neither is every man fitted for the work but he, alone, who is anointed of the Lord. You will observe that the examination was directed to the state of Peter's heart—and so *it touched the innermost*

spring of all his religion—for if love is absent, all is vain—the heart of godliness is missing where love is lacking.

Love is the chief endowment for a pastor. You *must* love Christ if you mean to serve Him in the capacity of pastors. Our Lord deals with the most vital point. The question is not, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you *know* Me?" though that would not have been an unreasonable question, since Peter had said, "I know not the man." He might have asked, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you know the deep mysteries of God?" He did know them, for his Lord had called him blessed for knowing that which flesh and blood had not revealed to him. Our great bishop of souls did not examine him with regard to his mental endowments, nor upon his other spiritual qualifications, but only upon this one, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" If so, then, "Feed My sheep." Does not this plainly show us that the chief endowment of the pastor is to love Christ supremely? Only such a man as that is fit to look after Christ's sheep. You will fulfill that office well if you love Jesus—your love will keep you in your Lord's company, it will hold you under His immediate supervision and will secure you His help. Love to Him will breed a love for all His sheep and your love for them will give you power over them. Experience testifies that we never gain a particle of power for good over our people by angry words, but we obtain an almost absolute power over them by all enduring love—indeed, the only power which is desirable for us to have must come in that way! I have had the high pleasure of loving some of the most objectionable people till they loved me. And some of the most bitter I have altogether won by refusing to be displeased, and by persisting in believing that they could be better. By practical kindnesses I have so won some men that I believe it would take a martyrdom to make them speak evil of me. This has also been the experience of all who have tried the sacred power of love!

My brothers, learn the art of loving men to Christ! We are drawn towards those who love us and when the most callous feel "that man loves us," they are drawn to you at once—and as you are nearer to the Savior than they are—you are drawing them in the right direction. You cannot look after God's people and properly care for them in all their sins, temptations, trials and difficulties, unless you love them. You will grow sick and weary of pastoral work unless there is a fresh spring of love in your heart welling up towards them. A mother tires not of watching by the bedside of her sick child because love sustains her—she will outlast the paid nurse by many an hour! Love props her drooping eyelids. Even so, "the hireling flees because he is an hireling and cares not for the sheep," but, "the good shepherd gives His life for the sheep." If you really love the sheep, you will be ready to spend your life for them or even to lay it down for their sakes. Love, then, I take to be the chief endowment of the pastor—although having that, I trust you will not fall short in any other respect but be thoroughly furnished unto every good work. Do not forget what you have been told about study and culture, but remember at the

same time that the heart has more power in pastoral work than the head. In this ministry, a humble, godly, ill-educated man with a great, warm, heart will be blessed far more than the large headed man whose heart is a little diamond of rock ice which could not be discovered without a microscope even if he were dissected!

The Lord Jesus Christ connected His examination upon the matter of love with the commission, "Feed My sheep," because our work in *feeding the flock of God is the proof of love to the Lord*. Do we not tell our people that love must be not in word, only, but also in deed? We judge whether any man has love to Christ by testing what he will do for Christ. What suffering or reproach will he endure for Him? What of his substance will he consecrate to His service? What of himself will he use for the Lord? We can tell which of us, as a minister, is proving his love to Christ by ascertaining who is really shepherding Christ's flock and laying out himself for the benefit of the Lord's redeemed. The man to whom Jesus said, "Do you love Me?" was the same who before had said "Lord, if it is You, bid me come unto You on the water." Some among us would readily venture upon that water walking, for it would be something extraordinary and brief, and this would suit us, for we are not given to plodding perseverance. Our zeal is great and we dash off as Peter did, though soon, like he, we begin to sink! Note well that Christ does not say, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me? Go and walk the water." The Master seems to say, "You have done enough of that in your young days, now go and quietly feed My sheep. It is hard, tiring, quiet work—and if you have no love to Me, you will soon weary of it. 'Feed My sheep,' 'Feed My sheep,' 'Feed My sheep.' Three times I bid you do it, that you may continue in the work as long as you live, for thus will you have given proof of the reality of your affection for Me." Brothers, go back to your flocks and feed them well, and so give fresh evidences of your love to your Lord!

This pastoral work for Christ is the craving of love in every heart that is set apart for the Lord. Every soul that truly loves Him longs to do something for Him. It cannot do otherwise—love must serve its Beloved—it yearns to go and lay its offering at His feet! No pressure was needed to make the forgiven sinner wash Christ's feet with her tears, wipe them with the hairs of her head and anoint them with precious ointment. Her heart suggested it and she hastened to obey. And if you, my brothers, are true pastors, you cannot help looking after the wandering sheep. You naturally care for your people. You have a sacred instinct which compels you to be lovers of men's souls. You see how little girls, as if it were naturally in them to act as nurses, will kiss their dolls and fondle, caress, dress and care for them as mothers do for their children—and just so we have seen mere lads converted to Christ and intended by the Lord to become pastors, who, before they have been out of their teens, have begun to speak of Jesus to their little friends and companions. The Lord has caused them even from their new birth to feel a shepherd's propensities

strong within them! It was so with some of us—we could not have helped preaching even if we could—we were born to preach when we were born again! Let us, then, indulge the sacred passion to the fullest!

Brothers, since we have been at this work, it has been to us *the stimulus of love*. The way to love another more is to do more for Him. When a man has done a kindness to you, he will love you—the receiver may be unmindful of the favor, but the giver has a better memory! There is no fear of our Lord's ceasing to love us, since for us He has suffered even unto death! The supreme sacrifice made once for all renders it impossible that He should do otherwise than rest in His love. Even so, if we labor and pray, and practice self-denial for others, we are sure to love them all the more. Then, too, as you go on feeding Christ's sheep, building up His people and cheering His discouraged ones, you will love your Master more—and your love for Him will act again upon you and cause increased love to the people—and so on evermore! Those over whom you have most agonized have delighted you most when at last they have been converted. Your joy has been increased as you have waited for the realization of your hope!

This feeding of the sheep is to the love which is the matter in question, *a sphere of communion*. "Feed My sheep" unites us in service with Jesus. Love longs to be with Jesus and in fellowship with Him. The Lord was about to ascend to heaven when He said to Simon, "Feed My sheep," and Simon could not as yet go with Him. But if he would accompany his Lord while abiding here, he must follow on his Lord's work and abide with his Lord's flocks. If we will undertake labors of love for those whom He has redeemed. If we will go wherever His sheep are lost, seeking—

"With cries, entreaties, tears, to save,
To snatch them from the fiery wave"—

we shall soon find ourselves where Jesus is! He is always at that business. He still seeks poor sinners and if we are engaged in the same search, we shall be with Him—we shall enter into His feelings, we shall share His desires and feel His sympathies! When thus with Him, we shall witness His heartbreaking throes and almost see His bloody sweat streaming down when He was agonizing for souls, for we shall in some feeble measure feel the same! You cannot understand your Lord till you have wept over your congregations! You will understand *Him* then, as you see Him weeping over Jerusalem. If you feel towards your hearers that you could die to save their souls, you will then have fellowship with the death of your Lord. In grief over backsliders and joy over penitents you will commune with the Redeemer in the most practical manner. You must feel a shepherd's feelings and give practical proof of it by daily feeding the flock—otherwise your fellowship with the great shepherd be will mere sentiment and not fact.

So much about the previous examination of the candidate for the pastorate. But it is worth noting that the examination is often needed in later life, for we need to be *kept* right as well as to be *made* so. Our Lord

comes to us, this morning, with the old question. He pauses at each man and questions Him just as at the first. He seems to say, "You have read many men's books, do you still *love* Me? You have heard many conflicting opinions, do you still *love* Me? You have been very poor and worked, do you still *love* Me? Your people have treated some of you very badly, you have had to go from place to place, you have been slandered, reviled, maligned—do you still *love* Me? You have been sorely put to it to find sermons. I have sometimes left you, as you thought, to make you acknowledge your weakness—do you still *love* Me?"

Imagine that He changes His tone and says, "Simon, son of Jonas, you have not been all that you promised. You thought you would go to prison and to death with Me, and you never dreamed that you could have been so cold hearted in My service as you have been—and have lived at so great a distance from Me as you have done. But do you still love Me? If so, remember that in going back to your ministry, you must gather renewed strength from renewed love! Love Me more and then feed My sheep." We rejoice as we listen to His gracious voice! And each one of us answers, "Lord, You know all things—You know that I love You—and by Your grace, I *will* feed Your sheep."

II. Secondly, let us LOOK AT THE PERSON EXAMINED IN RELATION TO THE WORK. Perhaps he may bear the same relation to you as he does to me. Painfully do I know myself to be a successor of one of the apostles—not of Judas, I hope, but certainly of Peter. I could have wished that it had been John whom I had succeeded, but although it is only Peter, it is some consolation to know that he was also "an apostle of Jesus Christ" notwithstanding his terrible fall.

Why did the Savior examine Peter rather than any other? *Because Peter was in peculiar need of a re-ordination*. Had he not received it from his Lord, some would have asked in later days, "Was he really an apostle?" And others would have replied, "He thrice denied his Master, surely he is not one of the twelve." We cannot help feeling that blindness has seized the Church of Rome when she boasts of the commission to feed Christ's sheep having been given to the Apostle Peter, when, with half an eye anyone can see that our Lord addressed these words to Peter because at that time he was the *least* of the twelve! He had denied his Master. The others had not and, therefore, he was the one concerning whose apostleship distrust was most likely to arise! The sheep would in all probability have refused to recognize him—they might have said, "We cannot receive food at your hands, for we remember how you were frightened by a silly maid, how you denied your Lord and supported your denial with oaths and curses." Therefore, came the voice to Peter, *who needed it*. If there is one with us now who feels like conscience stricken Peter, let him hear the text! Dear friend, if you have any doubt about your call, and even if there should be as grave cause for that doubt as there was in Peter's case, yet still, if you feel that you love the Lord, hear

Him again commission you with, "Feed My sheep." In your present condition, which is rather that of the weeping penitent than of the assured believer, it will be well to go to your work very steadily, for it will comfort you, deepen your piety and increase your faith.

Our Lord called Peter to this work because it would be peculiarly beneficial to him. He knew how sincere his repentance was and how hearty was his grief on account of his great sin and, therefore, lest he should be overtaken with too much sorrow, He said to him, "Feed My sheep." If nothing had been spoken personally and especially to Peter, he might have mourned heavily, saying, "Alas, I denied my Master, I swore that I never knew Him." And when the Lord was gone up again into glory, instead of standing up as he did on the day of Pentecost to preach that memorable sermon, he might have been found at home weeping. Instead of going up to the temple with John at the hour of prayer, he might have stayed in his chamber and there mourned all day. Grief is best expelled by other thoughts. When you have been cast down, it is well when some important engagement has called off your attention from your trouble. And I think the compassionate Master raised Peter out of what might have grown into a morbid condition of continual grief by bidding him feed His sheep. He seemed to say, "Come here, My dear disciple. I know you are sincerely penitent, and I have fully forgiven you for denying Me as you did. Mourn no longer, but go and feed My sheep." Then, as the Lord fed the sheep by him and blessed him to the conversion of others, he would feel certain that his Lord did not remember his faults—and thus he would learn how perfect was the pardon he had received! I do not know that there is a brother with us, this morning, who is in the condition of Peter, but if I did know such an one and could read his heart, I would go out to him and say, "Come, brother, we are not going to cast you out—we consider ourselves lest we, also, be tempted. You have been converted, once, as a sinner—you must now be converted as a minister. And when you are converted, strengthen your brothers. Yes, my brother, go back to your Lord and Master and then, with all your soul inflamed with love for Him, feed His sheep and the Lord bless you in so doing!"

Dear brothers, in Peter's case we see a man zealous for his Lord, but of imperfect character. And we see how *his failure had been overruled by God to prepare him for his lifework* of feeding Christ's sheep. John did not need such preparation and the other nine did not require it. It was only Peter who needed to be thus rebuked by a display of his own weakness. This man was too great, too self-confident, too much Peter and too little a disciple—and he must, therefore, come down. Probably nothing could have brought him to his true bearings like his being left to see what was in his heart. We speak with bated breath when we say that to some men, a painful breakdown has been the making of them. They became, from that time, free from their former self-esteem and were as cleansed and emptied vessels—fit for the Master's use! A deep sense of our weakness and a humbling consciousness of unworthiness form a considerable part

of our qualification for dealing with Christ's sheep. Because you are a sinner, you will deal lovingly with sinners. Because you know what backsliding means, you will be very gentle and forbearing with backsliders. Because you have broken your own bones, you will be very careful how you handle those who have broken theirs.

You see, then, that this feeding of the sheep, as I have already shown you, would benefit Peter in the particular condition in which he then was. And it is not hard to see that *it would benefit him by keeping his rashness in check*. I know some beloved brothers who are impetuous and, God bless them, I love them none the less for that, especially when they know how to bridle their impetuous spirits and only allow them to dash out against evil! But some are rashly impetuous and strong headed—and it will need considerable discipline to make them into useful, workable men. But when the Lord has done this, they will become those determined, independent, resolute men of mark and mind who are so valuable to the church of God! Such brothers need the education of a pastorate to curb and to develop them. You did not know how foolish you were till you had to deal with fools and found that you could not suffer them gladly. You did not know how passionate you could be till you had to meet with quick tempered people like yourself! You did not know how rash you could be till you fell into the society of a dozen rash men like yourself who egged you on in your foolhardiness. You have now discovered that where you fancied there was a great deal of strength, there was a vast amount of weakness! I believe that the Peter of the epistles grew out of the Peter of the Sea of Tiberias and the Peter of the denial, by means of the grace given him while feeding the flock of God. Peter was a bigoted, narrow minded Jew—he could not readily believe that any others beyond the chosen nation were to be saved! But when he mixed with mankind and was sent to the house of Cornelius, his heart grew larger, although it was not as large as it should have been till Paul boldly withstood him to his face because he was to be blamed! "Feed My sheep" is, therefore, Beloved, a commission intended for your own good as well as theirs.

It touched me very much to find our Lord addressing Peter by his old name of Simon, son of Jonas. I do not know why He should not have said, "Peter, do you love Me?" John writes, "Jesus said to Simon Peter." Why did not our Lord call him so? Was it not, in the first place, to remind him of his natural weakness? He is not called Petros, the stone, the rock—but the son of Jonas, the son of a timid dove—and it is under that name that he is commissioned to feed the sheep. Brothers, if this morning you are filled with a consciousness of your own weakness and unworthiness, the Master says to you, "Still go and feed My sheep." If you are not, in your own opinion, fit for the work, still let the sheep be fed! Do not let them suffer because you are not in a right state of mind and heart. These sheep—what have they done? Why should they starve? It is

only too true that you have sinned, but let not that sad fact rob the people of a full display of the gospel next Lord's day. "Feed My sheep." Go as Peter, if you can, but when you cannot do so, go as, "Simon, son of Jonas."

But I think there was a deeper reason and one which touched me more, why our Lord said, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" This was his old name before he was converted, for when Jesus first saw him, He said, 'You are Simon, the son of Jonas.' Nothing will help you to feed the flock of God, brothers, like recollecting the time and circumstances when you were first brought to Jesus. If it were possible, which it is not, I would like to be converted every Sunday morning before preaching. At any rate, I would like to feel that tenderness of heart, that admiration for my Savior, that all absorbing love to my Lord—and that wonderment at the grace of God toward me which I felt when I was converted!

There may have been another reason why Jesus said, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" Perhaps it was because when Simon had discovered that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, his Master said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah; for flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you, but My Father which is in heaven." By repeating that name, our Lord made Peter remember, in addition to his conversion, the many happy seasons which he had enjoyed in which the Lord had manifested Himself to him as He does not unto the world. We are bound to preach of the things which we have tasted and handled. If, like John, we have been in Patmos, let us not cease to talk of Him that walks among the golden candlesticks. Come down from the mountain to tell of what you have seen there. Be filled with recollections of all the blessed communion you have enjoyed with Christ and then speak about Him to others—thus the joy of the Lord shall be your strength. You will then have no doubt of your call to the ministry, but you will say, "that which was from the beginning, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life, declare we unto you." "We speak what we know and testify what we have seen."

III. In the third place, I must confine myself to giving you a mere outline of THE WORK ITSELF, as our time is flying so fast. What have we to do, then? "Feed My sheep." In the English, you have the command three times over, "*Feed My sheep*." What are we to do with the sheep? *Feed! Feed! Feed*! That seems to be the whole of our business, "*Feed My sheep*." Truth to tell, the middle Greek word properly means shepherd them, guide them, lead them, go before them as a shepherd does. The first and last words are the same, *feed*. In each of the three sentences there is a minute difference, but twice out of three times in the original, the word is *feed.* If I mention nothing else but feeding as the pastor's duty, it will be the very best lesson I could have given you, even if other valuable duties are cast into the shade. Wherever you are weak, be strong in the pulpit! Give the people a good hearty meal whenever you preach!

They will put up with a great many defects if you will only feed them. An Englishman is in a good condition if he is fed. Feed him and he will be all right. But if you dress him and do not feed him, he will not care for the clothes you put on him, however fine they are. You may wash him if you like, but you must feed him! There is an inward, powerful persuader which convinces a man that to be happy and healthy, he must be fed!

Now, God's people are the hungriest people in the world—they never seem to be satisfied! If you watch a flock of sheep feeding in a clover field, you will be surprised to see how they will eat. They eat, and eat, and eat—and so God's people are a hungering, craving people. It is written, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." They, "shall be filled." It does not say they shall have a nip and a bite, and then be driven away and, therefore, we are to treat them as God would have them treated—feed them, feed them to the fullest! Never be afraid of being too free with the food, or of giving them too much sound doctrine and gospel food!

Some want to drive the flock, but that will never do. We must feed, not drive. We will *lead* them, you say—that is very good but do not lead lean sheep—feed and fatten them, and then they will gladly follow! Perhaps you wish to govern them. Well, the middle word does mean govern after the gospel fashion, but if you somewhat govern, yet give two supplies of feeding for one of ruling! You will be sure to succeed if you keep to the feeding. Blessed be God, you have not to invent a new food for His sheep! It is written, "Feed them," but it is not written, "invent food for them." God has appointed the proper food for His sheep—hand that out to them—and nothing else. The Pope of Rome, who claims to be the lineal successor of the apostle of whom we are speaking, attempts to feed in a strange manner. I wonder how many of the sheep are able to feed on his formal pronouncement and other specimens of cursing. He seems to be mainly engaged in uttering maledictions upon the wolves! I see no food for the sheep. How is it that he has founded no Bible Societies in Rome for the circulation of the pure Word of God? One of his predecessors has called the Protestant version, "poisonous pastures." Very well, then, why not circulate a pure version? Why not spend a part of Peter's pence in distributing the Epistle to the Romans? Why not exhort priests, cardinals and bishops to be instant in season and out of season, preaching the gospel according to the commission of the Lord? Verily, Peter at this day is crucified head downwards at Rome! The tradition is symbolic of the fact, for the apostle is placed in a wrong position and exalted to honors which are a crucifixion to him.

Brethren, you have to *feed* Christ's sheep. Our Lord says, "Feed! Feed! Feed!" He begins with, "Feed *My lambs*." My little lambkins, or young believers—these need plenty of instruction. "Feed My sheep" comes next. Feed the middle aged, the strong, the vigorous—these do not require only feeding—they also need to be directed in their Christian course and to be

guided to some field of earnest service for Christ—therefore shepherd them. Then in the last, "Feed My sheep," you have the gray headed believers in Christ. Do not try to govern these, but feed them! They may have far more prudence and they certainly have more experience than you have and, therefore, do not rule them, but remind them of the deep things of God and deal out to them an abundance of consoling truths. There is that good old man. He is a father in Christ. He knew the Lord 50 years before you were born—he has some peculiarities and in them you must let him take his own course—but still feed him. His taste will appreciate solid meat. He knows a field of tender grass when he gets into it. Feed him, then, for his infirmities require it. Feed all classes my brothers—that is your main work—mind that you not only get good food for the sheep, but feed them with it!

A farmer one day, after he had listened to a simple sermon which was the very opposite of what he generally heard, exclaimed, "O Lord, we bless you that the food was put into a low crib today, so that Your sheep could reach it!" Some brothers put the food up so high that the poor sheep cannot possibly feed upon it. I have thought, as I have listened to our eloquent friends, that they imagined that our Lord had said, "Feed my giraffes." None but giraffes could reach the food when placed in so lofty a rack! Christ says, "Feed My sheep"—place the food among them. Put it close to them.

Take care, also, that you *feed yourselves*. "Who rules over freemen should himself be free." We will alter the line into "Who feeds Christ's sheep should himself feed on Christ,." A preacher who is starved in soul will be likely to starve his hearers. Oh, fatten yourselves on Christ, dear brothers! Ask to have the promise fulfilled, "I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, says the Lord." May the Holy Spirit work this in you!

Having fed them, your work should also comprehend all the rest that a shepherd does for his flock. Neglect none of these things. Go before them! Set them an example, encourage them and direct them in difficulty. Let your voice always be familiar to them. Carry the lamb in your bosom, gently lead those that are in circumstances of pain and peril, care for all the flock—be tender with any that may wander, seek after them—and bring them back!

Now what does all this involve? *Knowledge*. You must "feed them with knowledge and understanding." *Watchfulness*. No shepherd can afford to slumber and at one part of the year he must be up all night, for the lambs are being born. When you have a lambing time on, or, in other words, a blessed revival, you will need to be especially watchful! And, as the wolf comes not only at lambing time, but at all other seasons, you should be always vigilant against him.

One of the chief qualifications of a true pastor, and one that is not very common, is a great deal of *patience*. Perhaps you say, "These people are so sinful, and erring, and foolish." Yes, they are like sheep! And if

they were not so, they would not need you or any other shepherd! Your calling would be abolished if all Christ's people were strong and able to instruct others. Be very patient with them, as a nurse is with the child committed to her to watch, and love, and teach. What an honor this office puts upon you! To belong to the college of fishermen with Peter, James and John is a great honor. But the work of the pastor is still nobler. Well did they speak of old of shepherd kings, for the shepherd's business is such as is worthy of a king! Indeed, amid his flock he is the truest of kings. What a line of shepherds can be traced right through the Word of God! Your business is one which the first martyr followed, for Abel was a keeper of sheep. Stand like he in the midst of your flock, ready to sacrifice life, itself, at God's altar! You are following the business of Jacob, who said to Laban, "In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from my eyes." Yours is the calling of Joseph, who even when exalted to a throne, was still "the shepherd and stone of Israel." Whatever your position may be, brothers, be shepherds! You are following the trade of that noblest of woman born, I mean Moses, who kept the flock of Jethro, his father in law, in the desert and there beheld the bush on fire out of which God spoke with him. He who led the people like a flock all through the wilderness was ready like a true shepherd to lay down his life for the flock, even asking to have his name blotted out of God's book if by that means they might live! You are following the occupation of the men after God's own heart! If a man in these days is after God's heart, let him be a shepherd of the flock. "He chose David, also, His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: from following the ewes great with young He brought him to feed Jacob, His people, and Israel His inheritance."

I hope, my brothers, that like David, that in your youth you have slain both the lion and the bear, and that if an uncircumcised Philistine comes in your path, you will defy and destroy him in the name of the Lord! You are following the trade of God's only begotten Son! The Lord had but one Son and He made a shepherd of Him! Imitate that *good* shepherd of the sheep who loved them and laid down His life for them. Trust that *great* shepherd of the sheep, whom "the God of peace has brought again from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant" and, by and by you shall see the *chief* shepherd and "shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away."

Never forget that it is *Christ's sheep* that you have to feed! Jesus said, "Feed My sheep." Many find fault with the churches of the present day—but the easiest work in the world is to find fault! My dear brothers, bad as I know some of the churches to be, I know no better people than God's people—and with all their faults I still love them! I find my choicest companions and my bosom friends among them! I love the gates of Zion, for—

"There my best friends, my kindred dwell,

There God my Savior reigns."

I always feel, in reference to my own people, that if they can put up with me, I can very well put up with them. They are Christ's people—therefore love them and feel it to be an honor to do anything for those who belong to Jesus!

Much honor lies in the fact that our Lord says to each of us personally, "Feed My sheep." I think that I see Him here among us. He of the pierced hands and the marred countenance, with the crown of thorns about His brow stands in this hall and speaks to us. Or, if you will, with all His glories on, He comes among us! He looks on us all and even on me, my dear brothers—and He says to each of us, "Do you see those poor tempted people? They are My sheep. I have loved them from before the foundation of the world. Will you feed them for Me? I have called them out of the world by victorious grace, will you feed them for Me? I have provided abundant pasture for them, will you feed them for Me? I have bought them with My blood—behold the memorials of My purchase in My hands and My feet, My head and My side—will you feed them for Me? I have also loved you, and you love Me—will you feed My sheep for Me? I will feed *you*, will you feed *them*? Your bread shall be given you and your water shall be sure—will you feed My beloved ones for Me? I have gone to prepare a place for them in My own sweet pastures on the hilltops of glory. Will you feed them till I come again? I will feed them through you by the Holy Spirit—will you be My instruments?"

Do we not all reply, "Beloved Master, we think it our highest honor to be privileged thus and, cost us what it may, we will spend our lives in feeding Your sheep"? Brothers, say not much by way of a vow, but say much by way of prayer! Lord, help us all henceforth to feed Your sheep! 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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A COMMAND AND A PROMISE
NO. 3212

A SERMON
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 19, 1863.

"Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you."
James 4:8.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon, upon the same text, is #2795, Volume 48—
THE DOUBLE DRAWING NEAR—
Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

NOTICE the sentences immediately preceding our text—"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." Wherever we are, we must come into contact with the unseen powers either for good or evil. Go where we may, we cannot shut ourselves away from them. If we could take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth, spiritual beings would still be all around us there. Doubtless there are many invisible spirits, good or evil, in our midst at this moment, and when we go forth to our homes, or tomorrow go to our business or other duties, they will still attend us—the evil spirits seeking to lead our souls astray and the holy angels carrying out their sacred commission—"to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."

These spiritual beings are divided into two bands. One band is under the leadership of that great fallen spirit—great, though fallen—who, by his masterly genius, has secured control over multitudes of other spirits who do his bidding and yield to his will with unquestioning obedience. You also may surrender yourself to him if you will—he is the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air—and you may, if you will, be his slave. You may be girded with his chains, you may serve in his servitude and you may earn the wage which he will pay you at the last, for, "the wages of sin is death." But, surely, the admonition of the practical Apostle James is a wise one and we shall do well to take heed to it and revolt from our old master! Let us break his bonds asunder and cast away his cords from us! In the name of Jesus let us resist the devil and he will flee from us. Jesus has a far greater host of spirits under his leadership than Satan has and, at His command, they shall keep us in all our ways, and bear us up in their hands lest we dash our feet against a stone. His legions are far mightier than those of the black prince of darkness and their services shall all be at our disposal, whenever we need them—as soon as we have renounced all allegiance to our former tyrant lord!

Now, having noted the connection of our text, I am going to apply it to three classes of persons. First, *to the believer.* Secondly, *to the backslider.* And then, last of all, *to the unconverted.*

I. First, then, we have here, A MESSAGE TO THE BELIEVER. "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you."

In Scripture, drawing near has various meanings. First, it means, *draw near to God in worship, in prayer and in praise.* When the hen sees a hawk in the air hovering over her brood, she gives a peculiar warning cluck, calling her little ones to come to her while, at the same moment she, herself, draws near to them. In a far higher fashion, the voice of God calls you to Him, warning you of the danger that lurks all round you. And while you run to hide from peril beneath the shadow of His wings, He, on His part, runs to meet you as the forgiving father ran to meet his prodigal son. You draw near to Him in the fearfulness and feebleness of your supplication and He draws near to you in the faithfulness and almightiness of His everlasting love! I am afraid that we often pray as if our God were at a distance from us—this can never be prevailing prayer. I do not despise that prayer which is like shooting an arrow up to the throne of God, but I love still better the prayer that grips the angel of the covenant, the prayer that stands foot to foot with Him and wrestles with Him until the breaking of the day, and even then cries, "I will not let You go, except You bless me." If you can draw near to your Lord in prayer like that, He will certainly draw near to you and you will be like a prince who has power to prevail with God and with men.

Let me encourage you, dear friends, who have been backward in your private prayer, or who have cried to Him as though He were a long way off—"Draw near to Him." There are no bounds set around this mount of grace as there were around Mount Sinai. You may climb up to the place called Calvary and clasp to your bosom the Christ who there died upon the accursed tree, for He is your brother, your friend, your Savior, your all in all, if you are truly trusting Him! So to you I say, as Paul wrote to the Hebrews, "Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." Come near to Him and you shall soon have an answer to your prayers!

It is the same with praise, but I am afraid that often we do not really draw near to God when we are professing to praise Him. I know that, sometimes, when we are singing God's praises in our great assemblies here, we are drawn very near to the gates of heaven. At such times I have felt as though I were swimming in an ocean of sacred delight! It should be so with *every* act of worship—it should all draw us nearer to our God. There are times when we feel more closely drawn to Him in the closet of private prayer than in the public services of the sanctuary, but still, there is a special blessing attending united prayer and praise which is not to be realized elsewhere. I remember reading of a Jew who would not open a business in a certain town because there was no synagogue in it.

I wish that Christians would always be as careful to settle down, if possible, in a place where they would not lack religious privileges, for prayer and praise, like the two wheels of the chariot which carried Jacob down to Joseph, bring us near to our Beloved Lord and Master! And He, at the same time, comes to meet us and draws near to us.

But I find that in Scripture, the term, "Draw near to God," is often used in the sense of *asking counsel of God*. Thus the Israelites, when they were in perplexity or difficulty, consulted the priest and he, wearing the ephod and the breastplate with the mysterious Urim and Thummim, was able to interpret the will of God as it had been revealed to him. And now, though no sacred ephod or breastplate is worn by mortal man, though the ancient oracles are dumb and though no earthly prophet speaks infallibly according to the will of God, you may still draw near to God, Himself, in the name of Jesus Christ, His Son, and seek the guidance of His ever blessed Spirit! I hope you will do so at every step of your life, for what step is there that is not important? Those that seem to us to be of the least significance may be the very ones that will the soonest lead us into mischief. But there are certain periods in our history when it is absolutely necessary that we should say to ourselves, "Let us consult the Lord about this matter." Many of you would never have been in the trouble in which you now are if you had but waited upon God before you took a certain course which has brought you nothing but sorrow. We heedlessly run before the fiery cloudy pillar moves—and when we find that we have rushed into the waste howling wilderness, we lay the blame for our own folly at the door of God's providence! Let it not be so with any of you, dear friends. Let every morning's plans be spread out before the Lord to see whether they meet with His approval. And let every evening's joys and sorrows be brought to Him that He may show you how to glorify Him in all that happens to you! Solomon truly said, "He that trusts in his own heart is a fool." And David just as truly said, "But he that trusts in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about." You need never lack divine guidance, for you can have it by asking for it! God is willing to guide you if you will only seek His guidance. See to it, then, that you practice the text in the sense of asking counsel of God—"Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you."

There is a third meaning to the phrase, "Draw near to God." It is used in the sense of *enjoying communion with God*. There are some here who do not understand what I mean by communion with God. They are completely puzzled by the very simple language of the Apostle John, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ." There are hundreds and thousands of people constantly attending church or chapel who do not know the meaning of the word, "communion." If you were to ask them what they understand by it, they would probably say that it means eating a piece of bread and drinking a little wine at the Lord's supper. And more than that, if they were to ask me to explain to

them what true spiritual communion with God means, I would probably fail to make them comprehend it. Yet you who, by grace, have been enabled to drink of these cooling streams, know well what that communion means! Some of you who have been the most deeply taught of the Spirit could sing through the whole Song of Solomon and see your Beloved in it all—while to others it is only an Eastern love song which is to them quite incomprehensible. You know Christ, not only by faith, but by a sort of second sense which makes Him very real to you. You have drawn near to Christ and talked with Him—and He has drawn near to you and talked with you—and He has been nearer to you and dearer to you than any earthly friend has ever been! Oh, what joy believers know when they realize Christ's presence! When His left hand is under their heads and His right hand embraces them! Talk of heaven—such communion is heaven begun below! When heaven's gates are opened wide and the celestial sunshine comes streaming through, it falls upon the eyes that have been illuminated by the Holy Spirit—that is true spiritual communion—and the glorified spirits above do but know that bliss to the full in knowing God and rejoicing in the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps, my dear brother, you have been reading Rutherford's letters and you have said to yourself. "Alas, I cannot hope to enjoy such communion with Christ as Rutherford enjoyed!" But why shouldn't you? Read our text again. "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." You, my dear sister, may have read the life of Madame Guyon and you have said, "What an angel in human form that woman must have been!" But if you draw near to God, you may have as much love to Christ as she had! And you may enjoy as much fellowship with Christ as she had, for, "He will draw near to *you*." You have envied Mary because she sat at Jesus' feet, or you have wished that you had been John, to lean your head upon your Master's bosom. Well, you may do both these things in a spiritual sense—and that is better than the carnal! "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." To you, even to *you*, the very feeblest of those who resist the devil, will God draw near if you draw near to Him!

I think, however, that there is another meaning in our text, and that is, "draw near to God" *in the general strain and tenor of your life*. We all know that the sun, the great center of the solar system has several planets revolving around him. Some of them comparatively near, others at a greater distance, and some still more remote. And Jesus Christ, the great Sun of Righteousness, has His people revolving around Him as the planets circle round the sun! Some of them are very near the great central luminary. Others are far away, at a vast distance from Him, and others are neither very near nor very far off, but somewhere between the two. There are some believers who are like the planet Mercury. You do not often see that fast revolving planet because it keeps so near the sun that it is usually lost in his bright rays. So is it with some Christians—the world knows little of them—they make no noise as they move along in their appointed orbit and they keep so near to Christ that they seem to be ab-

sorbed into His radiance! Their thoughts are so much occupied with Christ, their heart's affection is so fully given to Him, that they do not talk much about earthly things. Their great desire is to live in close and hallowed fellowship with their Lord. There are others who are like the planets that are far away from the sun, yet some rays of light and heat reach even them. And those believers who are living at a distance from Christ have some of the divine light and heat within them, but oh, so little compared with what they might have! Oh, that you who are so far off from God, would leave your distant orbits and draw near to Him—for then He would also draw near to you!

You know, dear friends, that there is almost as much difference between some Christians and others as there is between Christians and worldlings—I said, almost, for there is not quite the same difference, though there is nearly the same. There are heights of lofty consecration and of intimate communion with Christ to which some believers have attained, but of which others have not yet even dreamed. There is an inner circle of fellowship into which only a few privileged saints have ever entered—these are the elect out of the elect who have been distinguished above all the rest of Christ's disciples by the loftier grace which has been their peculiar characteristic. Oh, that we had many more such Christians in all our churches! There are a few of them scattered about Christendom, like grains of salt, but we need many more of them—men who, like Moses, have their faces made to shine with a supernatural brightness because they have dwelt with God upon the mount of secret communion—men who are not afraid to die because they have looked without alarm into the face of God, through Jesus Christ their Lord—and men who have learned how to live as becomes the gospel of Christ—and there is no higher life than that!

Brothers and sisters in Christ, "draw near to God!" Press towards the highest degree of godliness that is possible for you to obtain! Seek to have the closest communion with Christ that mortals can ever know while here on earth. Do not be content to be in the outer courts, the lobbies, the antechambers of religion—strive to gain admission to the very Holy of Holies, itself, for that is where your Lord would have you to be! You know that there is a sort of borderland where many professors live, where a man is thought to be a Christian, but all the while he is not even half a Christian. He is counted among the saved, yet he lives on the very borders of damnation! And if at the last he *is* saved, we shall sorrowfully have to add, "yet so as by fire." In some respects he is a righteous man, as Lot was, yet, like Lot, he dwells in Sodom. He is in some ways a good man, as Noah was, yet, like he, he falls into shameful sin. Oh, that we could all rise above this wretched condition and live continually so close to Christ that men would take knowledge of us that we had been with Jesus, and had caught something of His spirit—and had been so changed by grace that we were far more like He is than we now are!

There I leave my text with the believer. I would gladly draw you near to God, beloved, by my words, if I could. But I know that He must, Himself, draw you by His grace if the drawing is to be effectual. So let this be your prayer and resolve this very moment, "Draw us, and we will run after You."

II. Now, in the second place, we have in our text AN ENTREATY TO THE BACKSLIDER. "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." I must speak but briefly on this point, but I need to be as earnest as I am brief.

So, backslider, you have come in here, tonight. A friend who is up from the country persuaded you to accompany him, or you would probably not have been here, for you have almost given up going to a place of worship—you think there is no hope for you. *Friend, do you know what your doom will be if you continue as you are now?* Have you ever read the story of Judas? Do you know what became of Demas, Simon Magus, Alexander the coppersmith and others who turned aside from the faith in the days of the apostles? Remember those terrible, yet inspired words, "If we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries." It would have been better for you never to have had any knowledge of the truth of God than to have known it and then sinned willfully against it, and so, after all, to be a castaway! If you are a true child of God, though a wanderer from His ways, you will be brought back to Him and I pray that you may be brought back to Him this very hour! But if you are an apostate, a backslider in heart, you will be filled with your own ways! Having filled up the measure of your iniquity, you will be driven from God's presence into the place of woe where hope and mercy can never come!

Yet listen to me, backslider, *this terrible sentence has not yet been pronounced on you.* The voice of God still cries to you, "Draw near unto Me." Where are you flying, my brother? Are you seeking to escape from God's righteous judgments? That is impossible, for His thunderbolts will soon overtake you and seal your eternal doom! Run not away from Him, but draw near to Him! Cast down your weapons of rebellion and fall prostrate before Him, seeking the forgiveness which He is willing and waiting to bestow upon you. Let me take you by the hand and try to encourage you to come near to the Lord this very moment. Do you ask, "How can I come near to Him?" Come just as you came to Him at the first! Perhaps you reply, "But I never really came to Him aright." Then come to Him aright right now! I came to Him as a sinner and He gave me a hearty welcome—and He will receive you just as graciously if you only come to Him with wholehearted repentance for your sin and true faith in Jesus Christ as your only Savior!

But here is one who did run well, yet she has been hindered. Backsliding woman, remember that your God is married to you and that He bids

you return to Him! Backsliding man, you have turned aside from your God, yet He still loves you and cries out to you, "Return, return, return!" The Lord still says, as He did in Jeremiah's day, "Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." Oh, that you would reply even as they did—"Behold, we come unto You, for You are the Lord our God"! I am sure that you are not happy in your present condition. On the contrary, you are as sad and miserable as you can possibly be. This very house of prayer reminds you of your former privileges and joys, of the days when you delighted in God and felt that you were, indeed, on your way to heaven. You cannot be content to live in the far country among the swine that are not fit companions for you! Leave the husks to the pigs—they can never satisfy your hunger! Come back to your Father, poor prodigal! Though your clothes are in rags, though you are steeped in filth, though you have sinned most grievously, come back to your Father and He will receive you with open arms and open heart! I will not act towards you as the elder brother did to the prodigal, but I will welcome you as a brother if you are, indeed, a brother. But if you are not a brother, you are a sinner—and "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the very chief! So, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Put your soul's affairs into His hands! ask Him to be your advocate to plead your cause before the King! He never yet lost a case that was entrusted to Him—and He will not lose yours!

III. I have almost anticipated the last division of my discourse, but I must close by giving from my text AN INVITATION TO THE UNCONVERTED. "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you."

The great gospel rings out again and the same note sounds to the sinner as to the saint—not that there is any implication in this text that the sinner can draw near to God by his own unaided power, or that he comes first, and God comes next, or that there is any natural willingness in the sinner to come to God. The text seems to me *to show the difference between the law and the gospel*. God even said to Moses, the chosen leader of His ancient people, "Draw not near here: take off your shoes, for the place where you stand is holy ground." But under the gospel, God says to the sinner, "Draw near here. It is true that this is holy ground, but it is sprinkled with blood—the blood of My only begotten and well beloved Son. And if the blood is also sprinkled upon you, you may draw near and you cannot come too near, so come and welcome, sinner, come!" If it were a question of merit, or of justification by the works of the law, the sinner might well try to flee from the avenging hands of divine justice. But on the ground of divine love, and pity, and mercy, and free and sovereign grace, the sinner may draw near to God though he has nothing to recommend him! He may come just as he is and God, in mercy, will draw near to Him! Should there be here a swearer, a drunk, or one who has committed the foulest of sins—the text says to him in the sense in which

I have explained it—"Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." Sinner, if you repent of your sins and trust in Jesus as your Savior, God will not spurn you and drive you from Him, but He will draw near to you as you draw near to Him!

Then, next, the text *shows the sinner what God means to do for him*. He means to draw the sinner near to Himself and then Himself to draw near to the sinner! This is done in two ways. It is done, first, by what Jesus did for us when He split the veil that separated us from God. And it is done, next, by what the Holy Spirit does in us when He splits the veil that hides God from us! There are, or were, these two veils—the veil that concealed the visible manifestation of God from men, which was torn asunder at the moment of Christ's death—and the veil that is over our own hearts which conceals God from us until the Holy Spirit takes it away and we see God in Christ Jesus reconciled to us by the death of His Son. I fear that there are even some in this congregation who are living just as if there were no God at all. If there really were no God, you would probably not be any different from what you are now. God is not in all your thoughts or if you ever do think of Him, you say, with the fool of whom the Psalmist tells us, "No God. No God for me. I need no God and, as far as I am concerned, there is no God." Well then, if you are ever to be saved, you will have to be brought near to God by a power altogether outside yourself! You will have to be made to feel that God is one whom you must love. You will be reconciled to Him by the death of His Son and your heart will be filled with love to Christ through the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit!

The text further shows what *God will lead the sinner to do for himself*. Ungodly man, if you are ever to be saved, you must draw near to God in prayer! Go to Him at this moment, just where you are sitting, and confess all your sin to Him. There is no need for you to utter a word that any of us can hear, for God can read the language of your heart. Then you must draw near to Christ by faith. Just as that poor woman in the crowd touched the hem of His garment and was immediately made whole, so must you, by faith, get into contact with Christ! Trust in Him as your one and only Savior, and He will certainly save you! And this shall be the grand result of it all—you will draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Oh, that you would now cry to Him, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." That will be drawing near to God in penitence and contrition and supplication—and He will draw near to you in gracious acceptance and blessing. And then one day He will call you to draw near to Him in heaven, itself, to sit at His table in glory, to feast with Him in His kingdom! Then shall you, even you, wear a crown, and wave a palm and forever adore that matchless grace which first drew you near to Him—and then draw near to you!

If there is one here who will go home to pray, "Draw me near, O God!" Or better still, if there is one anywhere in this vast throng, whose heart is praying, "Lord, save me! Draw me with the cords of a man, (even the

man, Christ Jesus, the friend of sinful man), with the bands of love. O God, draw near to me, for I would gladly draw near to You!" If there is one here whose eyes have in them the tears of penitence, I point that one to Jesus, hanging on the cross, and say—

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

Remember that the Son of God, the Lord of life and glory, suffered indescribable shame and ignominy and, at last, death, itself, for sinners—for every sinner who trusts in His great atoning sacrifice! If you are trusting in Him, that is proof positive that He dried for you, died in your place, died that you should never die, for He bore all the punishment that your sin deserved, so there is none left for you to bear! He drank to the last dregs the cup of wrath that was your due, so there is not one drop left for you to drink! He suffered all that could ever have been your portion even in hell, itself, for being infinite, there was no limit to His agonies. And now, for you, there is no hell, no torment, no condemnation! You may know assuredly whether Christ died for you or not—do you trust Him? Will you trust Him now? Will you say—

"Just as I am—and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot.
To You, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come"?

If You have said that from your heart, you are now a saved soul and you may go to your home rejoicing in the Lord, for your sins, which were many, are all forgiven and you are on your way to heaven! God grant that it may be so, for Jesus Christ's sake!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JAMES 1.

Verse 1. *James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greetings.* The Apostle James evidently believed in no lost ten tribes, as some, nowadays, do. They were never lost—the Israelites whom we see nearly every day belong to some of all the 12 tribes, so James addressed his epistle, "to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greetings."

2. *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations.* Or, *trials.* [See Sermon #1074, Volume 29—ALL JOY IN ALL TRIALS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

3-5. *Knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom.* That is just what most of us lack—"If any of you lack wisdom"—

5. *Let him ask of God.* That is the short road to true knowledge—to pray. Study is good, no doubt, for the acquisition of knowledge. But praying is the best way to obtain true wisdom!

5, 6. *Who gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing unwavering.* For the very essence of prayer lies in believing that God can and will give us the things which we seek at His hands.

6. *For he that wavers.* The man who does not know whether prayer will succeed or not—

6. *Is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.* [See Sermon #2537, Volume 43—A WARNING TO WAVERERS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] You can never tell what will become of the wave. It goes just where it is driven—and there are many men who can be good, after a certain fashion, if they are in good company—but they can be just as bad if the wind blows from another quarter! But if we have true faith in God and true faith in prayer, we shall not be "like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed."

7. *For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.* What the wild waves are saying, we know not. So is it with a man who is "like a wave of the sea." He utters words without meaning and his prayer dies away like the roar of the billows upon the shore when the fury of the storm has abated. "Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."

8. *A double-minded man.* A man with two minds—a mind to the religious and another mind to enjoy the pleasures of the world—such a man—

8. *Is unstable in all his ways.* There is nothing solid or substantial about him, nothing enduring. You cannot rely on him, for he is blown here and there, as chaff flies before the wind.

9. *Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted.* For the gospel lifts him up out of his poverty and makes him a child of God who is spiritually rich, even though he is poor in temporal things.

10. *But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass, he shall pass away.* Let him not, therefore, rely upon his wealth as though it were anything but a trust and a burden laid upon him, for he will have to leave it and he, himself, "as the flower of the grass, shall pass away" Let him rejoice to get down to the Rock of Ages! Let him lay hold of eternal things as if he had nothing else in which he could trust!

11, 12. *For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withers the grass, and the flower falls and the beauty of the fashion of it perishes; so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways. Blessed is the man that endures temptation.* [See Sermon #1874, Volume 31—A DISCOURSE UPON TRUE BLESSEDNESS HERE AND HEREAFTER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Or, trial. The man that holds on and holds out under it and does not give way under it—blessed is the man that is tried—

12, 13. *For when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love Him. Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.* Here we must take the word, "tempted," in its dark meaning, for the Scriptural word, "temptation," means two very different things. When we are drawn towards evil, that is the black meaning of the word, "temptation." But when we are tested or tried in order that it may seen that the good in us is real—that is the bright meaning of the word, "temptation." In that sense, God did tempt (try or test) Abraham, but not in the other sense.

13-15. *For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts He any man: but every man is tempted when he is drawn of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.* There is the parentage and the progeny of sin. Sin comes of unbridled desire. A man feels that he must have a certain thing—right or wrong—he is determined to have it. Then there comes of that determination the overt act of sin! And what comes of that? Why, death—for every sin, in its measure, helps to kill us—to destroy that which is the real life of our manhood. Every sin is a drop of poison. There are sweets that are poisonous and the pleasures of sin are of this kind. And leave the poison of sin alone, let it work in its natural way and it will bring forth death! That man, therefore, who lives in sin and loves it, has nothing before him but everlasting death! He may well tremble!

16, 17. *Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above.* It never comes from within our own hearts! It does not even come by imitation of better men—it must come from God.

17. *And comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.* As every sunbeam comes from the sun, so all grace and virtue must come from God with whom there is neither parallax nor tropic, as there is with the natural sun. He never declines, He never varies—He is always the same. Now, in proof that everything in us comes from God, James says that our very spiritual life comes from God.

18. *Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures.* True believers have been twice created. The second time we were begotten, again, by the Word of God that became the living seed within our spirits—out of which the new life grew—and now we are "a kind of first fruits of His creatures." Just as the first ears of ripe corn were brought into the sanctuary and dedicated to God, so are all true believers consecrated persons, the "first fruits of His creatures."

19, 20. *Therefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, for the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God.* We never do much for the truth of God or goodness by getting angry about it. Whenever a man debates about the truth of God and loses his temper, he has also lost his cause! I have heard of one who

knew little of true religion, who watched a missionary and a Brahmin disputing. And he decided that the missionary was in the right. When he was asked why he thought so, he said, "Because he kept his cool, and the other man flew into a passion." Although that may not always be a good test of the truth of the matter in question, it certainly is a good test of how the dispute is going!

21. *Therefore, lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.* [See Sermon #1847, Volume 31—BEFORE SERMON, AT SERMON AND AFTER SERMON—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] That evil branch is cut away—now be ready to have a branch of a better kind inserted into you, even "the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls"—that you may bring forth better fruit than the old crabbed stock of nature can possibly yield!

22-26. *But be you doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if any is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he beholds himself, and goes his way, and straightway forgets what manner of man he was. But whoever looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.* [See Sermons #1467-B, Volume 25—TWO SORTS OF HEARERS, and #1848, Volume 31—THE LOOKING GLASS—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] If any man among you seems to be religious, but bridles not his tongue and deceives his own heart, this man's religion is vain. That which is in the well will come up in the bucket, and that which is in the heart will come up on the tongue. An unbridled tongue denotes an unrenewed heart. Oh, that God would always give us grace in our heart to move our tongue aright! Then, as the water guides the whole ship, our tongue will guide our whole body and the whole of our manhood will be under holy government and control.

27. *Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.* [See Sermon #2313, Volume 39—CHARITY AND PURITY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Oh, how much this means—tenderness to others and tenderness of conscience in ourselves! How much divine grace we need in order that these two virtues may shine brightly within us!

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BLESSINGS TRACED TO THEIR SOURCE
NO. 3213

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"All my springs are in You."
Psalm 87:7.

IT DOES one good to think that there are such things in the world as springs bubbling up in the shady nooks. Places of sweet refreshment in this dusty earth. The mouth waters at the very thought of the palms of Elim and the wells there. If even to us fresh springs are a blessing, much more must they have been so to the psalmist who lived in a dry and thirsty land which owed almost all its fertility to irrigation. Nothing is more precious to the Oriental than a well. And he who finds a spring of water counts himself a much happier man than he who has found a vein of precious metal. We must, therefore, transfer the thought of precious water springing up copiously, bubbling up with living force, to our spiritual condition—and then say with David, "All my springs are in You." That is to say, we trace all the mercies we receive to their fountainhead! The psalmist was grateful for the blessings that were conferred upon him. He did not receive them with selfish inattention but, considering them well, he found that every good gift and every perfect gift came from his God. He had learned that not only everything good around him, but everything that was within him that was good came from the same source! And discovering within himself a living power, a living well of water within his own nature, he traced that, also, to the grace of God—and said, "All my springs are in You."

Did he not mean, first, "*All the springs I drink of are in You"*? Secondly, did he not mean, "*All the springs within myself come from You"*? I do not know that those two heads comprise even one-tenth of the thoughts that might arise out of our text, but then we have not time to take such a great text as this and consider it in full. We shall, therefore, just take the two series of thoughts that will spring up under those heads.

I. The first thought is, ALL THE SPRINGS I DRINK OF ARE IN YOU.

To begin, he may have remembered *the deep which lies under*. In the benediction upon Joseph, Moses said that he was to have the blessing of the deep which couches beneath. Deep down in the earth are vast reservoirs of water and when these are tapped, they spring up and we are refreshed by them. These are symbolical of the mighty fountains of eternal

love, the electing grace of God, the infinite fullness of the heart of God in His own nature, for, "His nature and His name are love." When we get to the great fountains of the infinite, eternal, immutable love of the Father towards His chosen people, then, indeed, we come to the fountainhead of all the streams which make the people of God glad! There is not a blessing we receive but it may be traced to the eternal purpose of God! We may see, on every single benediction of the covenant, the stamp of the eternal purpose and decree—

"The streams of love I trace
Up to the fountain, God.
And in His mighty breast I see
Eternal thoughts of love to me."

Every Christian who is rightly taught, who understands the Word of God and is not afraid of the fullness of the truth of God, will ascribe all the springs of grace that he ever drinks of, to the eternal fountain. God said to Job, "Have you entered into the springs of the sea? Or have you walked in the search of the depth?" This is a mysterious subject and we cannot find these secret springs, but yet we know that they are there. We rejoice in them and bless the Lord for them!

But, using only illustrations from Scripture, when the psalmist said, "All my fresh springs are in You"—for that is the force of the expression he uses—may he not have thought of *that Rock from which the living water leaped in the wilderness,* so that all the multitude that were in the desert drank of the stream? Those who had true knowledge of God also drank of that spiritual Rock which followed them and we know that, "that Rock was Christ." That Rock, too, was struck and, straightway it became a spring of water for all the tribes, even as our smitten Savior has now become the spring from which all of us drink. So I may say—

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
You my sacred fount shall be."

We find, leaping from the cleft in His side, the cleansing blood and the refreshing water, too. As I said at first, that we may trace all our blessings to *electing* love, I may now say with equal truthfulness, that we may trace them all to *redeeming* love. There is a crimson mark on every blessing of the covenant!—

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

That is a most sure and precious truth of God! As we look to our dear Lord upon the cross and see Him also exalted in His glory, remembering that "it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell," and that of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace," we can truly say to Him, "Emmanuel, all my springs are in You."

We meet, in Holy Scripture, with another illustration. In the times of Abraham there were certain wells which he dug, the possession of which were disputed by the Philistines. And when Isaac afterwards had to go

into Philistia, he found that the wells which Abraham had dug had been filled up by the Philistines. He therefore dug others and when the Philistines began to argue with his herdsmen, he moved on further and dug another well—and the Philistines strove again for that. He moved again, for he was a peaceful man, and found they strove for that—it seemed as if he could have no water without having to contend for it.

Sometimes the wells of which we drink are *springs concerning which there is grave contention*. There are some that deny the most precious doctrines of the gospel. There is a sound of the shooting of archers at the place of the drawing of water. And when a poor, simple child of God would come and let down his bucket and take a draught, he finds the bowman's shaft flying past his ears! Somebody has discovered that one doctrine is not Scriptural, and that another doctrine is not rational, so the thirsty soul becomes afraid to drink of that well! What is worse, if there should not be any controversy about the truth, itself, he will find a controversy in his own soul as to his right to appropriate it. Satan, the accuser of the brethren, will remind him of his faults, will tell him he can have no part or lot in the matter, or else he would not be what he is. They who are delivered from the noise of the archers in the place, of drawing water shall, bless the name of the Lord as they drink!

And truly, brothers and sisters, if we did but always remember that all our mercies come from God—that whatever logic may insist upon, it must be true that salvation is of the Lord—that whichever *ism* may be right, whichever side of controversy may have made an accurate statement, it must be correct that every good gift comes from "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning"—then we would find that, let the enemy contest as he will, we have access to the refreshing stream! Since all the springs worth drinking are in God our Father and Christ our Redeemer, we can come to these and drink without fear, for God is ours, Christ is ours and, therefore, every covenant blessing is ours, too! Therefore, laying aside all disputing and contention, we come and drink of these wells because they are in God and in Christ our Savior!

We read, in the Book of Judges, of two springs of water. You often mention them in prayer. Indeed, they are a kind of proverb in the Christian church. There were *the upper springs and the nether springs*. Now every child of God who judges rightly knows that the nether springs are in his God. I mean his lower comforts, his temporal mercies. What would we have of earthly good worth enjoying if God did not give it to us? If you get wealth, who gives you power to get it? And if you have health, who is it that preserves your strength of limb and the blood that still leaps within your veins? He has but to will it and you would be a paralytic, or a consumptive like so many others. Your children are spared to you—bless

God for each of them, for it is He that spares them! Your husband or your wife, your brother or your sister, the joys that cluster around the hearth—all these come to you through Him. They are common mercies, we say, but we would not think them so common if we had to miss them for a while! Let us bless God and see His hand in them all, and say, "Great Father, even my nether springs are in You."

But when we come to the thought of the upper springs, we have no question connecting them. If we possess eternal life, God gave it to us. If we believe in Jesus, faith is not a flower that ever springs from the natural soil of man's heart. If we have repentance unto life, it is the work of the Spirit of God. If we have been kept until now, faithful to our profession, we have nothing of which we can glory—we would have gone back from it if God had not preserved us. We have not had one single jot of anything from the first day until now, but we have derived it from the Lord's infinite mercy! All our upper springs are in Him—shall we not bless His name? And while we say, "Spring up, O well," shall we not also add, "Sing you unto it," and bless and magnify that perennial fountain of mercy which perpetually flows to us? The old classical poets went to Helicon for their inspiration—they drank of that spring upon Mount Parnassus. But as for us, we will say, with that poetess of the sanctuary—

"Come, You fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Your grace,
Streams of mercy, never ceasing
Call for songs of loudest praise."

We have no Parnassus, but we have a better mountain—

"Teach me some melodious sonnet,
Sung by flaming tongues above!
Praise the mount—oh, fix me on it,
Mount of God's unchanging love!"

From this source will we derive the inspiration of our muse. Here shall we find the burden of our song. The upper and the nether springs come alike from God—yes, "All my springs are in You."

You may read, if you turn to the 104th Psalm, *of the springs that flow into the valleys*. They are the places for springs where the wild beasts come to drink, and each of them does quench his thirst. And where the birds sing among the branches. You and I have had our valley mercies. We have been humiliated, perhaps, and we have sung with the shepherd's boy in the Valley of Humiliation—

"He that is down needs fear no fall.
He that is low, no pride.
He that is humble, ever shall
Have God to be his guide."

We have been in the valley of Baca and made it a well—and the rain has filled the pools. We have been in the valley of fellowship with Christ, walking along the cool vale of communion with our Father who is in

heaven—and behold, it has been a place of springs—of springs full of water! There is not one joy in our best and happiest time but comes from God. In our choicest moments, when we are most like our Lord and most free from the encumbrances of the earth, never, even then, have we anything good that is to be ascribed to ourselves! If it be good, it all comes from God!

Then, we read in Isaiah, and in some other passages which I need not quote, of *the streams in the desert*. "In the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert…I will open rivers in high places." That is an odd place for rivers! "Rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." Do you, beloved, remember your dry land springs? Can you not remember when you ate of treasures hidden in the sand—when it was dark, and yet was never so much light? When you were in the land of barrenness, and yet were never so filled with plenty? When you had abounding troubles and yet never had such super abounding comforts? Oh, let us bless the Lord that our desert springs were in Him! They were in Him, or we would not have had them! Had not the Lord been with us, we would have fallen and died in the wilderness like those who came out of Egypt, whose carcasses strewed the plain!

If you turn to the 4th chapter of Deuteronomy, verse 49, you will read about springs that some of God's saints drink of that are not often mentioned—*the springs of Pisgah*. Moses there speaks of the springs that came from the foot of Pisgah. And believe me, they are cool streams, indeed, and supply drink that goes down sweetly and makes the lips of them that sleep to speak! He who knows what heaven is and has, by faith, viewed it—who has seen its security, its purity, its nearness to God, its revelation of the face of Christ, its communion of saints, its joy of the Lord—such an one has found the Pisgah springs to be very precious and very soul reviving! Oh, for a draught of them now! I think some of us had such a draught at our last prayer meeting when we talked together, and sang the hymn that ends—

"A scrip on my back, and a staff in my hand,
I march on in haste through an enemy's land.
The road may be rough, but it cannot be long,
And I'll smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song."

The prospect of the coming glory makes the Pisgah springs well up—and all of them are in our God, for there is no true hope of heaven without Him! There would be banishment into eternal woe if it were not for His infinite grace!

Thus I might continue to use the similes of Scripture, and show that whatever sort of springs there may be, they all come from the great deep of the infinite love of God and that all our springs are in Him.

II. But now we come to our second point, namely, that ALL THE SPRINGS THAT ARE WITHIN US COME FROM THE SAME SOURCE.

You know that our Savior says, concerning the man who drinks of the water that He gives, that it "shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." A Christian is not a cistern that is filled and emptied, but, by God's grace, he becomes a living well! He is not a puppet moved with strings. He is not a machine that is wound up and goes by wheels mechanically worked—there is a living power in him! He is a new creature in Christ Jesus, instinct with the highest form of life and that life possessed in the highest degree of freedom, for while a man is naturally a free agent, yet he is in a far superior sense a free agent when he becomes a converted soul! "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed."

Our text, then, may mean this—that *all the springs of our inner life lie in God*. "For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." "And you has He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." Christ is your life. All the springs of life are in Him.

And hence, next, *all the springs of our secret thought and of our devotion are in Him*. You cannot always think of God and worship God alike. At least if you can, and it is real devotion, I greatly envy you. I find that in my soul, there are times when I have the wings of an eagle and can mount up and, with unblinking eyes, look into the infinite glory and I can soar on and on in strange ecstasy and delight. At another time, I cannot rise from the ground. The chariot wheels are taken off, as in Pharaoh's case, so that we drag heavily. Then Dr. Watts' words seem appropriate—

"Our souls can neither fly nor go,
To reach eternal joys."

The preacher, too, is sometimes fertile enough and, at another time barren. Truly, the Christian's experience is not unlike Pharaoh's dreams. He has lean and fat cattle, withered ears, and ears rank and good come up. This is doubtless to show him that when he has sacred thoughts and devotion, they come from God. In order that he may see that, he is sometimes left to prove his own emptiness. To show that the strength of Sampson does not lie in muscle and sinew and bone, alone, his hair is shorn and when he goes forth as before, he performs no feat of strength—he is as weak as any other man. Yes, beloved, if we have any power of thought, or sweetness of devotion in drawing near to God, all the springs lie in Him.

So is it, most certainly, with *the springs of our emotions*. Do you not find yourselves sometimes sweetly melted down by the power of God's word? Could you not, at such times, sit and weep under the thought of the death of Jesus and His unspeakable love to you? Sometimes do you not feel stirred with sacred joy, so that you could burst out with an im-

promptu hallelujah, or begin to sing a new song to the praise of His great love wherewith He has loved you? At other times you think about the same theme, but your heart feels no power—the same song is sung, but though your lips join in it, your heart does not go with the melody. You know it is so.

You cannot command your own spirit—the Lord must help you. The springs of your emotions lie in His hands. If He leaves you, you are like the Arctic sea, frost bound. But when He comes and smiles upon you, all the icebergs melt in a moment and your heart feels the warm gulf stream of eternal love flowing right through it! Then there comes the time of the blossoming of Spring and the singing of the birds—the whole heart is alive unto the Most High! The springs of your emotions, as well as of your sacred thought and devotion all lie in Him!

And I am sure it is so with regard to *the springs of all true actions*. Christians are not all thought and all emotion—they are practical men and women—and seek to work for God. But did any of us ever do a good work in our own strength? We have done many works in our own strength, but were they good for anything? The Savior shall decide that question. "Without Me you can do nothing," He says. You can bring forth fruit without Him, but your fruits are as the vines of Sodom and of the fields of Gomorrah. Only that is right which comes from Him. When He blesses us, our actions done for Him are accepted through Him.

Well, beloved, it will always be so, that our springs of holy zeal, our springs of joy, our springs of fellowship, our springs of every kind that are worth the having, all lie in Him! And it will be good if the whole church recognizes that fact. We cannot get up a revival—it is a great pity that we should ever try to do so—for such a revival, if we seem to get it, will be very mischievous. But the Lord can send us a true revival! All our springs are in Him. We must not depend upon ministers and pray, "If so and so shall preach, good results will follow." Our springs are not in these poor cisterns, they are in our God! When will the church try to look away from the creature to the Creator? When will she purge herself of that hereditary fault of hewing out for herself, broken cisterns, and forgetting the fountain of living waters? I am persuaded, from my own experience, that the more I live upon God, alone, the more I truly live and the less I know of anything like power, or wisdom, or anything of the sort pertaining to myself, the better! The more I decrease and He increases, the more do I grow up in the Lord in all things. May we, then, each one of us, adopt this sweet motto and always say, "All my springs which are within me, as well as those of which I drink, are in my God."

I shall only keep you long enough to say three more things—

The first of which is, *let us look to these springs*. If you do not feel up to the mark, if you are dull and heavy and have no springs in yourself,

remember that they never were there! "All my springs are in You." Do you feel empty? Well, you only feel just as you are! You feel as though there was death written upon you. Quite so, there is! Your life is in Christ! Your fullness is in Christ! Your strength is in Christ! Has it been reported to you that Christ has lost His power, that His life has declined? If it were so, you would have great cause, indeed, for weeping, but while He is the same, the well of water is the same! I know, tonight that you are like Hagar—the water is spent in the bottle. Well, it never was much of a bottle, and it leaks. Now you think, "What shall I do? All my little store is gone." "What ails you, Hagar?" There is a well near you. Open your eyes, for God sees you and God provides for you! Christ is always the same.

"Oh, but I think I have forgotten Him," you say. Then remember Him. "But I fear I am not one of His people." Well, if you are not a saint, you are a sinner—and He came to save sinners. I always find the short cut to Christ to be the best one. "Oh," says Satan, "you are no child of God." "No," I say to him, "nor are you, either." "Ah," he says, "but you have no true experience." "No," I reply, "I have not, nor have you, either, but one thing I know—I am sinful and Christ has said that washing in His blood by faith, I shall be made clean. If I cannot go to Him as a saint, I will go even now as a sinner! Suppose I have been mistaken in the past, I will begin again." Child of God, that is the only way to end the controversy. Go and stand at the foot of the cross, again. Begin again, for all your springs are still there! Though you cannot find any springs in yourself, they are still in God!

The next thought is this. If all my springs are in God, then *let all my streams flow to God*. All the rivers run into the sea because they all came from the sea. It was from the sea that the sun drew up the clouds which fed the thousand rills which fall into the rivers—and so the rivers run back to the sea. Let us do the same. What we have had from God must go to God. Even in temporals we ought to do this. I remember a story of Martin Luther. When certain monks complained that the income of the monastery had got very slack, he said, "Yes, and no wonder, because once they used to entertain two strangers at the monastery, the one named *Date*, the other named *Dabitur*. *Give* was the name of one. *It shall be given* was the name of the other. Now," said Martin Luther, "you turned out, *Give*, and very soon God took away *It shall be given*, for they are brothers and they live together. If you would have *Dabitur* back, you must also have *Date*. If you would have back, *It shall be given*, you must also have back, *Give*."

When we are not serving God acceptably—consecrating everything to God—we lose supplies from God. In temporals, I have known men give to God by the shovelfuls—and God sent silent wagon loads by the back door—they could not send back their substance as fast as He sent it in! Jesus said, "Give, and it shall be given to you; good measure, pressed

down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom"—and many have found it so. Your mean skinflints have gone on flint skinning until they died and have left hardly enough to be buried with respectably; while others have scattered and yet increased. If our springs are in Him even in temporal things, let the streams run back to Him. Let us not rob God! And as to spiritual things, let us give back to God the more He gives us—the faith He gives us, the spiritual strength He gives us. Let us use for Him the experience He has given us, the instruction He has given us. Let us instruct and encourage others to His glory with what we have received! Let us lay out every talent and keep none buried in the earth. May the Lord grant to each of us divine grace to always say to Him, "As all my springs are in You, so all my streams shall be to You."

And, lastly, let us have a great deal of hope about other people, because if all the streams are in God, I have not to consider, when I go forth to do good to my fellow man, what is in *them*—I have to consider what is in God! When I address a sinner and say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," I do it because God tells me to do it—just as I would have said to the dry bones, "Live"—and if I do it in God's name, being perfectly sure they cannot believe of themselves, then I am doing right, for I am exercising my own faith! It is an act of faith on the preacher's part—and God will bless that act of faith—and many of the dry bones will live, sinners will repent and will, by His grace, believe the gospel!

We must not think that our hope lies in what is in the sinner. I heard a man preach about the adaptation of the sinner to the gospel and I thought he was very foolish, for what is there in the sinner but everything that is opposed to the gospel, everything uncongenial, everything that would put the gospel to death if it could?

All the power of the gospel lies in itself, not in the sinner—salvation comes from God, and God alone. Therefore there is no reason why I should not preach the gospel with a hope of success in Wandsworth Prison, or in the lowest slums in London! You may distribute tracts and give warnings to the harlot and the thief with good hope of success. In fact, there are often ridges in the lowest soils, like the clearings of the backwoods in the West, which are not plowed and tilled till the goodness has gone out, as it were—to them the gospel comes as a strange novelty. It was so in the Savior's day. The Pharisees, who knew so much, rejected His word, but the publicans and harlots entered into the kingdom of heaven before them.

Therefore, there is nothing about the sinner to make us hesitate to preach to him because if he is dead, God can lift him up. Yes, if he is like Lazarus, dead and buried, the voice of God can call him forth from the tomb! Yes, if he were as nothing, God makes the things that are not, to

be mightier than the things that are! He can bless where all was cursed. Out of the stones of the brook He can raise up children to Abraham. Let us have great comfort, next Sunday, in going to preach, or to teach in the Sunday school, or to engage in other forms of usefulness. All the springs lie in God and if we are going to work in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water, never mind! Our springs are in God—our faith is in Him and, according to our faith, so shall it be done to us. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 34

Verse 1 *I will bless the LORD at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth.* What a sweet resolve! Oh, that all of us who know the Lord would make that resolve and keep it all our days—"I will bless the Lord at all times." In dark times and bright times, as long as I live. "His praise shall continually be in my mouth"—that is the most delightful mouthful that a man can possibly have!

2. *My soul shall make her boast in the LORD.* We do not like boasters, but we would encourage every child of God to boast in the Lord as much as he pleases!

2. *The humble shall hear thereof and be glad.* There is nothing that humble people dislike more than to hear others boasting—yet there is nothing that they like more than to hear anyone boast in the Lord!

3. *O magnify the LORD with me.* There is a sweet contagion about the praise of God. We want others to help us to spread it everywhere, so we say with David, "O magnify the Lord with me"—

3-4. *And let us exalt His name together. I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.* There is nothing that is so effective as personal testimony to the Lord's saving power. How often is the skill of a physician commended by the grateful testimony of the patients who have been healed by him! So, shall not the prayer hearing God be commended by those of us who have had our prayers answered by Him? Let us not be slow to say, "I sought the Lord and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears."

5. *They looked unto Him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.* [See Sermon #195, Volume 4—LOOKING UNTO JESUS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "They looked unto Him"—a whole army of them, an innumerable company—"They looked unto Him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed." There never was a face that was ashamed of being turned Christward and Godward!

6. *This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.* [See Sermon #2193, Volume 27—A POOR MAN'S CRY—AND WHAT CAME OF IT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Here David speaks of himself again, but he refers to himself in the third person—"This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."

7. *The angel of the LORD encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them.* The great angel of the covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ, surrounds with His army the dwellings of the saints and takes care to have them in safe keeping.

8-10. *O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusts in Him. O fear the LORD, you His saints. For there is no need to them that fear Him. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger: 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.] We are often in need because we are not seeking the Lord, but are seeking what we think we need, whereas, if we sought Him and left the supply of our needs to Him, He would supply all our need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Christ's command is, "Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Men think that they will not get what they want except they seek it, but if they seek God, He will give them what they really need even if He does not give them all that they want!

11. *Come, you children, hearken unto me.* This man of God has made his confession to the saints and now he tells it to the children. There is nothing like working on material that will last—and those who are now children will, most of them, be alive when those who are now old men are dead and gone. So David says, "Come you children, hearken unto me"—

11-13. *I will teach you the fear of the LORD. 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.* There is life or death in the human tongue! There is life in the tongue that is under subjection to the will of God. There is death, there is mischief of all sorts in a wild ungoverned tongue!

14. *Depart from evil, and do good.* Get away from evil as far as you can—that is the negative side. Do good—that is the positive side of piety. He who obeys these two commands shall find happiness and blessing.

14. *Seek peace, and pursue it.* Do not be of an angry, irritable, quarrelsome frame of mind. If you do not at once find peace, seek it. And if it runs away from you, pursue it until you overtake it. Remember that it is the meek who shall inherit the earth—and that it is the peaceful spirit that is the happiest spirit.

15. *The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry.* He gives them His eyes and His ears—and this means that

He gives them Himself and that He is always ready to perceive their needs and to hear their cries.

16. *The face of the LORD is against them that do evil.* He sets His face against them—and this means that He is, Himself, eternally opposed to all their wicked ways.

16, 17. *To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry, and the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.* Not only out of some of them, but out of *all* of them. It is often a very long, "all." The list of their troubles is often difficult to read through but in due time there comes a "finis," to it written by the hand of divine mercy—"The Lord 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.* Not your proud spirits, not your hectoring ones, but your lowly, penitent souls are the ones that are dear to the heart of God. He is near to them and saves them.

19, 20. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the LORD delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones: not one of them is broken.* He will have many a flesh wound, but there shall be no permanent injury to him. And even though his body were diseased, his soul would be saved.

21, 22. *Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. The LORD redeems the soul of His servants.* Great as the price is, He pays it! They are so precious to Him that He minds not what price He pays so that He may redeem the souls of His servants.

22. *And none of them that trust in Him shall be desolate.* Blessed be His holy name!

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TWO WILDERNESS INCIDENTS
NO. 3214

A SERMON
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"And when king Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies; then he fought against Israel, and took some of them prisoners. And Israel vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If You will indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities. And the LORD hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities: and He called the name of the place Hormah. And they journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom; and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spoke against God, and against Moses, Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water and our soul loathes this light bread. And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many people of Israel died."
Numbers 21:1-6.

OUR text is a long one, but we must have it all in order to get the sense of the passage, so as to contrast the two wilderness incidents which are here mentioned and to learn how we may use them to our own spiritual profit.

I. So, in the first place, LET US CONTRAST THESE TWO WILDERNESS INCIDENTS.

First of all, let us examine the details of the first incident. We learn, from this part of the narrative, that *the children of Israel were in real danger*. They were attacked by a ferocious foe who, being probably aware that he was doomed to destruction, determined to anticipate the contest by fighting against the Israelites while they were unprepared, and so injuring them as much as he could. Arad appears to have been a king of some considerable power and his skill in warfare is proved by the fact that he was at least partially successful against the Israelites, for he, "took some of them prisoners." So that the people were in real danger. And have you not noticed, dear friends that God's people often behave best when they are in their worst case? Usually, when they are in imminent peril, they cry to their God to deliver them, and so they soon obtain relief—but when they make trouble for themselves by a willful fretfulness of spirit—then it is that they lose their confidence in God and, instead of playing the man, they play the fool!

You must have noticed how often accidents happen to people when they are engaged in play rather than when they are at work. I always

warn our friends to be especially careful when they are leaving for a holiday, for I have observed how frequently they come back with signs of having suffered injuries of one kind or another, though they have been perfectly well while occupied with their usual interests. It is very much the same in spiritual things. While we are hard at work for the Lord, watching against temptation, striving against sin, or bravely enduring trial, we behave ourselves well. But full often when we are engaged in what ought to be mere child's play, getting rid of self-inverted and unreasonable fears, we stumble and fall and bring disgrace upon ourselves and upon our Christian profession. I think that if a Christian is to grow to the full stature of a man in Christ, he must be subjected to the strong winds of trial and temptation. The dross must be separated from the gold by the fierce heat of the furnace. I have heard such a remark as this many a time, "I never knew what a Christian, so and so was until he lost his property, or his wife, or his children, or until he was stretched upon the bed of sickness and death." There is something in the keen wintry air that braces us and strengthens us for work—but the soft summer zephyrs make us feel faint and languid and unfit for vigorous exertion. So, in a spiritual sense, the summer zephyr of ease often weakens us, while the sharp, stern trials of our seasons of adversity make us strong to endure in the time of testing—

"Often the clouds of deepest woe
So sweet a message bear.
Dark though they seem, 'twere hard to find
A frown of anger there.
It needs our hearts be weaned from earth,
It needs that we be driven,
By loss of every earthly stay,
To seek our joys in heaven."

It was, therefore, for good rather than for evil that the Israelites were allowed by the Lord to be placed in circumstances of real danger. Notice what they did—*they resorted to their God by simple faith*. They did not depend upon their own prowess in war. God had enabled them to rout the Amalekites and to defeat many other adversaries. But when this new foe appeared, they did not rely upon their own swords, or spears, or bows—they went at once to the Lord and spread their case before Him. In humble, earnest prayer, they sought His aid and then *they registered their solemn vow* that if God would give them the victory over these Canaanites, they would execute His judgments upon them and utterly destroy their cities. This is still the right way for the believer to go to God in times of real peril and trial! And this is the way in which he does go *when the Spirit of God guides him*. He comes to God, no longer resting in any carnal confidence, or depending upon his own wit or strength, but realizing that, "blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." Like Hezekiah, when he spread Sennacherib's letter before the Lord, the believer pleads with God for His name's sake, for His Son's sake, for His promise's sake, to deliver him out of all his troubles. And it

may be that he is moved to add a solemn vow unto the Lord, for although vows are never to be made wantonly or wickedly, there are times when a vow may be incumbent upon us. Many an important step which I have taken, and which God has blessed, has been taken because of a vow that I have made to Him when my soul was in trouble. And I sometimes think that trouble is, in my own case, always a preparation for entering upon some new path of duty, or beginning some new enterprise for my dear Lord and Master. Should it not be so with all of us who are, indeed, children of God by faith in Jesus Christ? Let us, each one, say, "Lord, if You will deliver me out of this trial, then, whatever service I may have rendered to You in the past, I will add something more to it in the future. I will seek to add a few more acres to the fields which I have, up to now, attempted to plow, sow and reap for You. Or, if I cannot increase my sphere of service, I will try to serve You better in it than I have ever done before." You are not to make such vows as these as though they were a sort of bribe to the Most High, for you know that your best resolutions are only empty words unless His grace enables you to follow them with corresponding deeds. Still, if you do it in humble dependence upon Him and in sincere gratitude for anticipated favors which your faith causes to be present to you, you may make such vows and expect God's blessing upon them!

So you see, dear friends, that the Israelites were in real peril, but they took their case to the Lord and, therefore, *He gave them speedy and complete deliverance!* "The Lord hearkened to the voice of Israel and delivered up the Canaanites." They seem to have marched straight out to meet their foes and to have routed them at once. So, beloved, put your case in the hands of God and your difficulties will soon be over. Or if the trial is not removed, you will receive grace and strength to bear it. The word, "impossibility," seems to block your road, but there are no impossibilities with God! With Him all things are possible. A man left to himself would break his back under the crushing burden that rests upon him, but that would not have happened to him if he had cast his burden upon the Lord. Many have lost their reason because they tried to carry their cares, themselves, instead of casting all their care upon Him who could easily have carried them. Brother, sister, is it night with you? Then wait God's time to make the sun to rise again upon you. Is it ebb tide with you? Wait a little while and God will again bring the silver streams up from the sea till the mud and filth are covered by the rising waters. What is there that He cannot do? If there is anything that you can do, work as if everything depended upon you—and then trust in God remembering that everything *really* depends upon Him!

The action of the Israelites, in appealing to the Lord, not only brought them prompt deliverance, but it also advanced them in the path of duty. They were brought out of Egypt on purpose to smite and exterminate these Canaanites—a race upon which God's long suffering could no long-

er be exercised—and the Israelites, as the Lord's executioners, "utterly destroyed them and their cities." Ah, my dear friends, our troubles will help us to advance in the path of duty if we will but take those troubles to God! There is much to be learned in the furnace of affliction. There are some of God's writings that can only be read by light from a furnace. God has been pleased to write some of His promises in sympathetic ink which can only become visible as it is held close to the fire! You can see the stars in the daytime if you go to the bottom of a deep well—and you can see many a starry promise shining brightly when you are at the bottom of the well of trouble! The Lord sends trials to bring us to Himself, as Joseph sent the rumbling wagons to bring Jacob and all that he had to him in Egypt. And if we only know how to use them aright, we shall find that—

"Trials make the promise sweet,
Trials give new life to prayer!
Trials bring us to God's feet,
Lay us low, and keep us there."

This, then, is the first of the two wilderness incidents. Now, turning to the second, I want you to note that there was no real cause for distress whatever. "The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way," but there was nothing that need have discouraged them if they had looked upon the way with the eye of faith. It is true that God had led them a long way roundabout, but then that was because of their unbelief. And it is also true that God had "led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." It is true that the sun was hot, but then the cloudy pillar always shielded them in the daytime. It is true that they had to wander in the wilderness, but then God gave them bread from heaven to eat and water out of the rock to quench their thirst. It is true that they had no means of buying new clothes and new shoes, but then Moses was able to say to the whole nation before he left them, "Your raiment waxed not old upon you, neither did your feet swell, these forty years." It is true that many trials befell them in the wilderness, mostly through their own sin, yet were they the most highly favored people upon the face of the earth! As Balaam "saw Israel abiding in his tents, he took up his parable and said, How goodly are your tents, O Jacob, and your tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are, they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of aloes which the Lord has planted and as cedar trees beside the waters." Yet, with all these privileges, "the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way." It is true, dear friends, that there are many troubles in the world, but probably the worst are those that we make for ourselves—or that we only imagine when there really are none! Last week I saw my dear old grandfather who is about 87 years of age, and I said to him, "I suppose, Grandfather, you have had many troubles in your long life." And he replied "Well, I have had none too many, except those that I have made for myself." And I expect that is true of the most of us! We have a little (or big) trouble factory

somewhere in our home, or we carry it about with us wherever we go, and the suits we make there last as long as a suit in the tribunal—they seem as if they would never wear out! And those homemade suits fit us very badly and are most uncomfortable. But if we would only leave ourselves in God's hands, we would be much more free from anxiety and trouble—

"Eternal God, we look to You,
To You for help we fly.
Your eyes, alone, our needs can see,
Your hands, alone, supply."

When the Israelites became discouraged because of the way, did they take their trouble to God as they had done with the former one? Oh, no! It would have been a far happier thing for them if they had done so, but they, "*spoke against God, and against Moses*," saying, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water, and our soul loathes this light bread." Often, when professors of religion fancy they are in trouble, they begin to rail at God—and at what they imagine to be the second causes of their troubles, as the Israelites "spoke against God, and against Moses." They say, "If my father had been a more prudent man," or, "if so and so had given me wiser advice," or, "if my husband were not such a spendthrift, I would not have been in such trouble." These Israelites sinned doubly in speaking against God and against Moses, for the Lord had delivered them with a high hand and with a stretched out arm. And Moses, also, had done them real service. He had taken the iron yoke from their necks and led them out of the house of bondage. Yet they talked as if he had been their enemy, or had deceived them! They said, "We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely, the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic. But now our soul is dried away. There is nothing at all, but this manna before our eyes." Thus do men often murmur against their best friends and frequently the murmuring against man is only a covert way of murmuring against God! Some grumble at the minister when they really mean that they do not like the gospel that he preaches! Talking against Moses, it was not surprising that the Israelites also "spoke against God."

Further, these people were in such a sad state that *they ignored the mercies they were then enjoying*. They said, "There is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loathes this light bread." So there *was* bread, after all! That bread of which the Psalmist afterwards wrote, "Man did eat angels' food"—the best possible food for them in the wilderness! And there was water continually gushing out from the Rock that followed them. We, too, meet with many who can talk glibly enough of their miseries, but who are silent concerning their mercies! I daresay some of you know old Mrs. Complaint. If you ever go to see her, the moment you sit down she beams to tell you how she has been tormented all the week

with rheumatism and then she says troubles never come alone, for that son of hers gives her constant anxiety and her neighbors are continually slandering her—and so on, and so on! You give her some relief and others give her relief, but she is never satisfied. When I have visited such a person, I have usually thought it well to say to her, "Well, sister, you have told me about your troubles, now let us hear about your mercies! Surely you have some mercies for which you desire to praise the Lord." If you will talk thus to those who complain to you, it may be that after a little while, the conversation will take a more profitable turn. There are other grumblers beside that miserable old woman. There are other friends, in business, who try to persuade us that they are always losing money, yet they appear to live in considerable comfort—and we would like to have for the Lord's work some of the money that they spend upon luxuries of various kinds. So, when they complain of the hard times, and the keen competition in business, and the losses they are continually making, we are not greatly impressed by the sad story with which we are now fairly familiar! Then there are our farming friends who are far too often found in the ranks of the grumblers. If they do not actually speak against God, they frequently complain of the weather which He sends! It is either too wet or too dry, too hot or too cold! When crops are plentiful, prices are low—there is generally something or other which gives them an excuse for complaining, and so they sin against the Most High as the Israelites did in the wilderness!

What did those people get as the result of their murmuring? Did the way become any shorter because their soul was much discouraged? Did the sharp stones become any smoother? Did the thorns and thistles of the wilderness become changed into vines and olive trees? Did their adversaries all sheathe their swords and flee from them in terror? No, the way was just as long as ever, the stones just as sharp, the brambles just as plentiful, their enemies just as fierce and each day was just as wearying as all those that had gone before! And now, in addition to all their previous troubles, "the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and many people of Israel died." They complained when they had no reason for complaining—but now they had good ground for complaint or something to make them truly sorrowful! Their discontent, like a fire which never has sufficient fuel, was as a burning fever within them, so now fiery serpents set their veins aflame with their deadly poison! They were, indeed, rightly punished. They would not be content with the mercies which the Lord showered so abundantly upon them, so they were made to smart for their ingratitude! And our experience will be similar to theirs if we act as they did. We shall not be delivered from our troubles as the result of our complaining, but the Lord will chastise us with His rod of correction until He brings us humbly to confess our sins and to seek, for the future, to walk in His ways.

So you see, dear friends, the contrast between these two wilderness incidents. In the first case, real trouble carried to God in prayer was

turned into an advantage. And in the second case, foolish and wicked discontent, for which there was no reason, was allowed to spend itself in murmuring against the Most High—and so brought down upon the people fiery serpents which bit them until many of them died.

II. Now, secondly, LET US LEARN HOW WE MAY USE THESE TWO INCIDENTS TO OUR OWN SPIRITUAL PROFIT.

Fellow believer in Christ, you may do one or other of these two things—you may either cast your burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain you—or you may be like the bullock that is unaccustomed to the yoke and that kicks against the sharp goad and so angers his master and injures himself! Remember that *true faith is a holy thing, but murmuring is sin*. Do not think that it is a light thing to murmur against God, or to complain of His providential dealings with you. No, it is really setting up your fallible judgment or your self will against the infinite wisdom of the Most High! It is high treason against the King of kings to seek to—

"Snatch from His hands the balance and the rod,
Rejudge His judgments, be the god of God."

Are you, poor feeble mortal, able to drive the chariot of the sun? Can you control the whirlwind and put a bit into the mouth of the storm when it is raging in all its fury? You know that it is God, alone, who can say to the mighty ocean, "To here shall you come, but no further: and here shall your proud waves be stayed." How dare you, then, set up your feebleness against His omnipotence, and your ignorance against His omniscience, and your folly against His consummate wisdom? Bow down in the dust before Him lest your murmuring should bring upon you His righteous wrath and He should send upon you, if not fiery serpents, some other punishment that shall make you wring your hands in agony for many a day to come!

Further, *to trust in the Lord is both helpful and pleasant*. It is said that if a man would lie quite still in the water, he would float—that it is his kicking and struggling that causes him to drown. Whether it is *literally* so, I cannot tell, but I know that it is most delightful and most blessed—

"To lie passive in God's hands
And know no will but His."

It is the kicking and struggling against the will of God that brings us trouble and increased suffering! God would use the knife very gently upon us, but we dash ourselves against the sharp instrument and then there is a great gash which need never have been made if it had not been for our own folly! Who are the happiest men in the whole world? Are they not those who tell the Lord all their trouble, and cast all their cares upon Him, knowing that He cares for them? And who are the most miserable people in the world? Are they not those who are constantly complaining of their miseries and who never seem to realize how many mercies they have received? If you need to make yourself miserable, you will not have much difficulty in doing so! He who is looking for sorrow will probably

not have to look far before he finds it, but it is a great pity that he is not rather looking for sings and tokens of God's providential care and of His forgiving mercy! Happy is he who can sing with Faber—

"I bow to Your will, O God,
And all Your ways adore.
And every day I live I'll seek
To please You more and more!
I have no cares, O blessed Lord,
For all my cares are Thine—
I live in triumph, too, for You
Have made Your triumphs mine."

Again, dear friends, I think you can easily make a wise choice if I remind you that *to trust in the Lord honors Him*. For a child of God to repose in Him in full confidence must be pleasing in His sight. But for any child of His to be fretting, worrying, complaining, questioning must be dishonoring to Him. How would you feel if it were the case of one of your own children? If you heard him complaining that he did not know whether he would have any breakfast tomorrow morning, or where he would get any new clothes when his were worn out, you would say, "Trust me, my child, and I will provide for you." But when your child says, "I know that my father will provide for me—no care about that matter ever crosses my mind," he is honoring you by his confidence! And it is the Christian who trusts God most who honors Him most.

Remember, also, that *it is to your own honor to trust in the Lord*. This was the Master's own words to His disciples, "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat, or, What shall we drink, or, How shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek). For your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Any worldling can fret and fume about food, drink and clothing—but will you, a child of God, thus misbehave yourself? Why should you be groveling in the dust with the children of this world, when you should be soaring upward like the eagle, far above the mists and clouds of earth? Rise, believer, to the dignity of your newborn nature, and cast all your care upon your God, who cares for you!

Besides that, *believing in Jesus will be likely to make you more useful*. We are hardly likely to bring sinners to Christ if we carry about with us a long and careworn countenance! That will not be the way to recommend the gospel to others. There are some professors who seem to think that the more wretched they can be, the more communion will they have with Christ, but they are greatly mistaken if they do! They appear to aim at being altogether unbearable in society and to be utterly miserable in retirement. If they imagine that in leading such a life as that, they are reflecting credit upon their Master, nothing could be more erroneous! You would not like your servant—I will go further than that and say—you would not like your horse or dog to be so lean that you could count his bones! It would be no credit to you to have such a servant, or horse, or

dog—people who saw them would think they must have a sorry kind of master! The God of love no more wishes to have miserable servants and followers than we do! Many of His servants have good reasons for being sad, but no true servant of God who is in his right senses, thinks it is his duty to *make* himself sad! Paul was inspired when he wrote to the Philippians, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice." And I believe it is the cheerful Christian, and especially the Christian who can be happy in sickness, patient under adversity and joyous even in the hour of death who will win fresh adherents for the Lord Jesus Christ!

For all these reasons, then, I would have you follow the example of the children of Israel in the first of the two wilderness incidents we have been considering—but not in the second.

But, beloved, suppose and alas, we need not put it as a supposition, for it is only too true—some of us have been murmuring and God has sent a fiery serpent to bite us? We were discontented because of some fancied trouble and now we have a real trouble—what then? You remember how the narrative continues. "Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against you; pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make you a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole, and it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he looks upon it, shall live." So, when they sincerely repented of their sin in murmuring against the Lord and prayed to him through Moses as their representative and mediator, He revealed the remedy by which they could be healed. You remember when you first looked to Him of whom that bronze serpent was a type, and how you were immediately healed? So you must again look unto Him and He will cure the suffering which you have brought upon yourself by your murmuring! God loves you too well to let you perish despite your ingratitude and unbelief! He abides faithful and before our eyes He holds up, once again, His well-beloved and only begotten Son, and bids you look unto Him even as you did at the first! Happy is the Christian who is always "looking unto Jesus." Believer, if you have lost your evidences; if through your murmuring against God you have been so sorely chastened that you cry out in agony! And if you are now walking in darkness and can see no light, remember that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever! So still look to Him! Say to Him, "Just as I am, as once I came to You, O Jesus, my Lord and Savior, I come to You again! Though stained once more with my own wanton wickedness in murmuring against You when Your many mercies ought to have comforted me and made me rejoice, I still come to You and I believe that You can pardon, and relieve, and succor, and save, and sanctify me, now, even as You did at the first."—

"Just as you are, without one trace
Of love, or joy, or inward grace,

Or meetness for the heavenly place,
O guilty sinner, come!
'The Spirit and the Bride say, Come.'
Rejoicing saints reecho, Come!
Who faints, who thirsts, who will, may come!
Your Savior bids you come."

If any of you have never come to Jesus, come now! If you have never looked to Him who hung upon the cross, sin bitten sinner, look to Him, now, and you shall be saved at once! If you have looked to Him, before, look again, now, and never take your eyes off Him until they are closed in death! And even then, the eyes of your soul shall still continue looking unto Jesus—only they shall look upon Jesus sitting upon the throne of God as now, by faith, you look upon Him hanging on the cross!

May the Lord add His blessing, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
NUMBERS 21:1-9; JOHN 3:1-15.

Numbers 21:1-4. *And when king Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies; then he fought against Israel, and took some of them prisoners. And Israel vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If You will indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities. And the LORD hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities: and He called the name of the place Hormah. And they journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.* They were not allowed to go through the land of Edom. They had, therefore, to turn around and go right away from the land where they one day hoped to dwell. And the road was a particularly trying one, over hot and burning sand, "and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way." Sometimes God's own people, when they find that they are not so far advanced in the divine life as they thought they were, when they find old sins reviving and when troubles multiply upon them, get "discouraged because of the way." If this is our experience, let us not fall into the sin into which these Israelites fell, but even in our discouragement let us turn to our God.

5. *And the people spoke against God, and against Moses, Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loathes this light bread.* One gets tired, in reading of the wanderings of Israel in the wilderness, of this parrot cry, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt?" For nearly 40 years, this was their cry whenever they met with any sort of difficulty. How weary God must have been of their cry—and of them, too! And now it was raised because they had been fed with "angels' food" which they called "light bread." It was easy of digestion, healthful and the very best kind of food for them in the wilderness—but they wanted something

more substantial, something that had a coarser flavor about it, more of earth and less of heaven! There is no satisfying an unregenerate heart. If we had all the blessings of this life, we would still be vying for more.

6. *And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against you; pray unto the LORD, that He take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.* Like a true mediator, he was always ready—even when they had most insulted him and grieved his meek and quiet spirit—still to bow the knee and intercede with the Lord on their behalf. The people implored him to ask that the serpents might be taken away from them, but apparently they still continued to trouble them. However, if God does not answer prayer in one way, He does in another. The fervent prayer of a righteous man may not prevail in the particular direction in which it is offered, but it "avails much" in some direction or other! Just as when the mists ascend, they may not fall upon the very spot from which they rose, but they fall *somewhere*. And true prayer is never lost—it comes back in blessing, if not according to our mind, yet according to another mind that is kinder and wiser than our own!

8, 9. *And the LORD said unto Moses, Make you a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he looks upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.* [See Sermons #285, Volume 5—MAN'S RUIN AND GOD'S REMEDY and #1500, Volume 25—NUMBER 1500—OR, "LIFTING UP THE BRONZE SERPENT"—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

John 3:1-3. *There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that You do, except God is with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily I say unto you, Except a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* [See Sermon #130, Volume 3—REGENERATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] There must be a new birth because a new nature is absolutely necessary for the discernment of spiritual things. The natural man cannot comprehend spiritual things—they must be spiritually discerned. The new birth is therefore necessary that we may have a Spirit within us which can see or understand the kingdom of God. But until a man is born again, "he cannot see the kingdom of God."

4, 5. *Nicodemus said unto Him, how can a man be born when he is old, can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.* We understand the passage to mean, "Water, that is, the Spirit," but it may refer to the purifying

influence of the Word of God as symbolized by water. I do not think that baptism is referred to here at all.

6. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh.* Parents may be the most devout people who ever lived, but that which is born of them is only flesh.

6. *And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* It is only then, as we are born of the Spirit of God that there is any spiritual life in us whatever.

7, 8. *Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born again. The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell from where it comes and where it goes: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.* [See Sermon #1356, Volume 23—THE HEAVENLY WIND—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] He undergoes a mysterious change. He becomes a new man and he enters into a new life which others cannot comprehend. Though they hear the sound of it, they cannot tell from where this man's new life comes, or where it goes. He has become a spiritual person, not comprehended of natural men.

9-10. *Nicodemus answered and said unto Him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Are you a master of Israel, and know not these things?* "So learned in the law of God, are you ignorant of the Spirit of God? Have you read the law so many times and yet not found out that natural births and outward washings are of no use in spiritual things?"

11, 12. *Verily, verily I say unto you, We speak what We know, and testify what We have seen; and you receive not Our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and you believe not, how shall you believe if I tell you of heavenly things?* "If, at the very entrance to the kingdom of heaven, you say, 'How can these things be?' what will you say if I take you into the central metropolis of the truth of God and introduce you to the great King, Himself?"

13-15. *And no man has ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.* [See Sermon #153, Volume 3—THE MYSTERIES OF THE BRONZE SERPENT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

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BLACK CLOUDS AND BRIGHT BLESSINGS
NO. 3215

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1910,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

***"If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth."* (NKJV)**
Ecclesiastes 11:3.

IT was raining very heavily this afternoon at four o'clock when I was thinking over this text. The sharp crack of the thunder and the quick flash of the lightning seemed to be constant where I sat. When I came here, I found that you had not had a drop of rain—the weather was just as hot and feverish as ever. This seemed to me an example and an illustration of the sovereignty of God's dispensations. It is still true in the spiritual as well as the natural economy, that one place is rained upon and another is not rained upon. In one part of the church, God's grace descends in a flood, while another part remains as dry and arid as the wilderness, itself. Even under the same ministrations, one Christian's soul may be refreshed till it becomes like a watered garden while another may remain parched as the desert. God has the key of the rain and it is for us to ask Him to give us of the dew and the rain of His Holy Spirit. Let us walk humbly before Him lest He should say of us, as He did of His Jewish vineyard of old, "I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it." We may stand up and look to the Most High and learn our dependence upon Him for spiritual blessings, just as the farmer, knowing his dependence for his harvest upon God, watches the sky and the clouds—for without the rain what can he do?

But now, to come to the text itself, I propose a meditation upon three of its practical uses. First, as *suggesting a comfort for the timid.* Secondly, *as giving an argument with the doubting.* And thirdly, *as furnishing a lesson to the Christian.*

I. First, I think we may fairly use the text as A COMFORT FOR THE TIMID.

The clouds are black, they lower, they shut out the sunlight, they obscure the landscape. The timid one looks up and says, "Alas, how black they are and how they gather, fold on fold! What a dark, gloomy day!" What makes them black? It is because they are full of rain and, therefore, light cannot pierce them. And if they are full, what then? Why, then it will rain and the hot earth will be refreshed! And every little plant and every tiny leaf and rootlet of that plant will suck up moisture and begin to laugh for joy. Out of the black sky comes the bright daisy and the gar-

den is painted with many colors—and the only palette that is used is, after all, that black one—for the sky does it by its rain.

Now, Christian, you too, are of a timid disposition and every now and then, your circumstances are not as you would like to arrange them. Losses come very closely, one upon another. Friend after friend forsakes you. Sickness treads upon the heel of sickness. All things seem to be against you, as against Jacob of old. The clouds are very black, but may they not be black for the very same reason as the clouds above you—because they are full? And is it not very possible that it will be with you as it has been with all God's saints, according to the hymn we sang just now—

"You fearful saints, fresh courage take.
The clouds you so much dread
Are big [yes, black] with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head"?

If the clouds were not black, you might not expect rain! If your afflictions were not grievous, they would not be profitable. If your adversities did not really pain and trouble you, they would not be blessed to you. We have heard some people say, "If this trouble had come in such and such a shape, we would not have minded it." But God *meant* you to mind it, for it was in your minding it that it was blessed to you! "The blueness of a wound," says Solomon, "cleanses away evil." When the stroke causes black and blue wounds, when the spirit is really thoroughly wounded, then the blessing comes! It is not merely said in the Scriptures that there is a necessity for affliction. That is a great truth of God, but it is added that there is a necessity that the affliction should lower our spirits. Listen to the words—"Now for a season, if necessary, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations." The necessity is not merely for the temptation, but that you be in heaviness through the temptation—not for the iron, only, but for the iron entering into your soul. If the child liked the rod, it would be no chastisement—and if the Christian loved his affliction while he was in it—and it seemed joyous to him, then it would be no affliction! But it is the very sharpness of it, the vinegar and gall, that is the medicine that produces the good effect. The blackness of the cloud proves its fullness—and its fullness brings the shower.

I suppose we know this experimentally. *As a church, we can look back upon mercies which God has given us in a very extraordinary manner.* God intended that this house should be full of hearers every Sabbath for years. It is a very remarkable circumstance and one that always astonishes me more, perhaps, than it does any of you, when I see the aisles and every place crowded Sabbath after Sabbath. But how much of the success, with which God has crowned our ministry, has been due to the most afflicting providence that ever befell a Christian minister or a Christian church? Was it not, dear friends—to allude to that sad event which is still upon the minds of some of us, and will be till we die—when the

cry was raised and death came into the midst of our solemn assembly? Was it not due to that, to a very great extent, that the preacher became known and that so he has had an opportunity of speaking to many more souls than otherwise would have listened to him concerning the unsearchable riches of Christ?

You will have found it so, I think, in your own private estate. A big wave has washed you on to a safe rock. A black lifeboat has taken you out of a gay and bright, but leaky vessel, and brought you to your desired haven. You have been unburdened. If you have lost your riches, you have been better without them then with them. Your losses have, in the end, come to be practical gains. The good ship has gone across the waters more swiftly when some of that which was but needless ballast has been heaved overboard! I am sure I can allude to your *spiritual* sorrows—certainly I can to my own—as being most soul enriching. It is when one labors under a deep sense of sin—when, perhaps, one's hope is jostled to and fro like a reed shaken by the wind—when the spirit sinks and the soul is brought very low—it is *then* that we learn to study the promises, find out their value, prove their faithfulness and to know and understand more than ever of the grace and goodness of a covenant keeping God! "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept your word." This is only another way of putting the same truth of God. The clouds were full of rain, but they emptied themselves upon the man who needed grace from on high!

Now, brothers and sisters, *what has been true in the past, depend upon it, is true in the present.* I do not know—how can I tell?—what is your particular trouble, but I do believe that He who appointed it, He who measured it, He who has set its bounds and will bring you to the end of it, has a gracious design in it all! Do not think that God deals roughly with His children and gives them needless pain. It grieves Him to grieve you! "He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." It is easy to have a faith that acts backwards, but a faith that will act forwards—a faith for the present and for the future is the true faith—and the faith that you need now. Has God helped you out of one trouble after another and is it to be supposed that He will leave you in this? In six troubles He will deliver you—yes, in seven there shall no evil touch you. The particular water in which you now are struggling is intended and included in the promise, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you." It is, I must confess, sometimes difficult to bring the promise down to the particular case, for unbelief fights hard against it, but remember, unless the promise is applied to the particular case, it is like the liniment which is not applied to the wound, or like the medicine that is not received by the patient. The medicine not received may be very potent, but the man cannot know its value—and the promise of God may be very sweet and precious,

but it cannot comfort you unless it is applied! Do ask, then, for grace that you may believe while you are still under the cloud, black as it looks, that it will empty itself in blessed rain upon you.

So will it be, on the largest possible scale, in the whole church of Christ. There are many clouds surrounding the church of God just now. And I must confess that with all the religious activity there is abroad, there is very much to cause us great sorrow. The friends of evangelical opinions are few compared with the advocates of Broad Churchism and Romanism. The strength seems to be, meanwhile, on the wrong side—and the devil has stirred up a fierce tempest by reason of which some are alarmed. But we must not yield to fear. The Master knows that it is right for His soldiers to be sometimes rebuffed at Ai, though they have won Jericho, that afterwards they may search and find out the accursed thing and stone the Achan who has brought upon them defeat. He will yet be with us and the time shall come when we shall see that every cloud that was full of rain has emptied itself upon the earth!

II. Our second point is AN ARGUMENT WITH THE DOUBTING AND THE DESPONDING.

It is a law of nature that a full thing begins to empty itself. When the cloud gets full, it no longer has the power of retaining its fluid contents, so it pours them down upon the earth. When the river gets swollen, does it not rush with greater impetuosity towards the deep? And the ocean, itself, is continually emptying itself into the ocean that is above the firmament—that same ocean above the firmament emptying itself again—according to the text, upon the earth. As there is a circulation in the body and every pumping of blood into the heart is accompanied by another pumping of it out again, so is there a circulation in this great world—everything revolving and the whole machine kept in order, not by hoarding, but by spending—not by retaining, but by consecutively getting and giving.

Well now, dear friends, you may gather that when the cloud is full, it is going to rain—and I want you to draw an argument from this. *Our gracious God never makes a store of any good thing but He intends to give it to us.* Just think for a moment of God, our gracious Father. He is love. His name is love. His nature is love. "God is love." He is all goodness. He is a bottomless, shoreless sea, brimful of goodness! He is full of pardoning goodness to forgive sin. He is full of accepting favor to receive poor prodigals to His bosom. He is full of faithful goodness to watch over His dear children—full of bounteous goodness to bestow upon them all that they need. Now, if there is such a plenitude of goodness in the Father, it must be for some objective—not for Himself. Why should it be in Himself? It must be there for His creatures. Is it not written that He delights in mercy? We know that He makes the sun to shine upon the evil as well as upon the good. Then I, even though I am evil, will hope that this store of goodness in the heart of the everlasting Father is intended, some of it,

at any rate, to be poured out upon me, poor unworthy me! "If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth," and if God is full of goodness, it is that He may spend that goodness upon the sons of men! But from where do those bright and sparkling drops come, flashing like diamonds in the sunlight, turning to many colors and forming the wondrous iris? From where do you come, from where do you come, O you bright and heaven born drops of matchless rain, all pure and free from every stain—from where do you come? "We are come down to the black, hard, dusty earth. We are going to fall upon the desert or upon the sea. We descend on herds that ask not for us. We descend upon the soil that is chapped and needs us, but has not a tongue to ask for us, nor a heart to feel its need. *We come down from our element in heaven to tabernacle among men and to do them good.*" And so is it with the goodness of our blessed Father! If it is in Him, it is there for those on the earth who need it—for those who do not even feel their need and whose need is, therefore, all the deeper! Those who cannot feel their need and who, therefore, have a need that is the deepest of all needs. O blessed goodness that delights to spend itself upon the unworthiness of men!

Ah, troubled, doubting soul, think again and let me ask you, this time, *to think a little upon Jesus Christ the Son of the Father.* Beloved, it is a part of our belief that "it pleased the Father whom in Him should all fullness dwell." We believe that in His atoning sacrifice there is a fullness of satisfaction made to divine justice, that there is a fullness of cleansing power in His precious blood, that there is a fullness of righteousness in His holy life, a fullness of vivifying power in His resurrection, a fullness of prevalence in His plea, and a fullness of representation in His standing before the eternal throne to take possession of heaven for us! No one here, I think, looks upon Christ as a well without water, or as a cloud without rain. Now, dear heart, if you believe Christ to be a cloud that is full of rain, for what reason is He full? Why, that He may empty Himself upon the earth! There was no need that He should be a man full of sympathy except to sympathize with mourning men and women! There was no need that He should bleed except that He might bleed for you! There was no necessity that He should die except that the power of His death might deliver you from death! There was no need whatever that He should be a servant except that His obedience might justify many! The fullness of His essential Godhead may be supposed to be there for Himself, but the fullness of His mediatorial character is a mere waste unless it is there for you!

A man, looking at the coal mines of England, naturally considers that God made that coal with the intention of supplying the world's inhabitants with fuel and that He stored it, as it were, in those dark cellars underground for this favored nation, that the wheels of its commerce might be set in motion. Well, now, if I go to those everlasting mines of divine

faithfulness and of atoning efficacy which are laid up in Jesus Christ, I must conceive that there is a supply laid up for those who will require it—and so there is! Doubt it not—there is cleansing for the guilty, there is healing for the sick, there is life for the dead! If Jesus is full of power to save, He will save you. If you cry to Him, He will empty Himself upon you!

To proceed yet further, I would ask the doubter to *look at the infinite fullness of power which is treasured up in the Holy Spirit*. It is a part of our conviction that there is no heart so hard that the Holy Spirit cannot soften it, no soul so dead that He cannot quicken it and no man so desperately set on mischief that his will cannot be subdued by the effectual power of the Holy Spirit working in him. We believe the Holy Spirit to be no mere influence, no inferior or secondary power of moral suasion, but to be absolutely divine —a divine being exerting irresistible force upon the mental powers of man! Well, now, if there is this might, surely, when He appears in the character of a Comforter and a quickener, His might is there to be exerted. Is your heart hard? He will empty His softening influence upon it. Is it dead? His quickening power shall there find a congenial sphere in which to work. Are you dark? Then there is room for His light. Are you sick? Then there is a platform for His healing energy. "If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth," and if the Spirit of the living God is full of might and energy, it is that He may manifest it in all those poor, needy souls who desire to feel its power!

What a wondrous book this Bible of ours is! When you have read the Bible through a score of times, you may have only walked over the surface, then, or plowed, at most, the upper soil. If you take one passage and dig deep for the treasure that couches beneath, you will find it inexhaustible! This book has in it a matchless fullness. It were as possible to measure space, or to grasp the infinite in the hollow of your hands, as to take the entire compass of Holy Scripture. "It is high, I cannot attain unto it." It is broad, I cannot reach its boundary. And especially is there a fullness of comfort in the promises of God's word. Our hymn writer put it, I think, very properly—

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

Now, why is there this fullness in the Bible? "If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth." If the Scriptures are full of comfort, they are intended to be enjoyed, to be believed, to be fed upon by you! There is nothing to spare in this book. There is not too little, but rest assured that there is nothing too much. He that goes out in the morning after this manna, though he gathers his omer full, he shall have nothing over. And if he gathers little, yet still he shall have no need. There is enough for all and all its fullness is meant to be used!

I cannot apply that thought. I have not time to beat it out more, but I hope God means it for some of you. You do not trust God, some of you,

as you ought to do. You measure His corn with your own bushel. You know that you would fail your fellow men and think that He will fail you. You know your own weakness and infirmity—and you imagine that He will faint or be weary. Moreover, you know that you could not do a very generous thing for some who have been ungrateful and unkind to you—and you think He cannot either. Remember that passage, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." You think about saving—God only thinks about giving. You take a delight in getting—He takes a delight in bestowing. Go to Him! Go to Him! You would not need anybody to be long praying you to accept a gift, so do not think that God needs much beseeching in order to *give*, for it is as easy for Him to give as it is for you to accept! And as accepting seems congenial to our nature, so does bestowing seem congenial to His! Go to Him and He will empty out His grace upon you!

III. Now, thirdly, the text furnishes A LESSON TO CHRISTIANS.

"If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth." The drift of the passage is, of course, to be gathered from the context—and it was intended by Solomon to *teach us liberality.* He says, "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for you know not what evil shall be upon the earth. If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth." By which he means to say, "If your pocket is full, empty it out upon the poor and needy. If God has endowed you with much of this world's substance, look out for cases of necessity and consider it is as much the object of your existence to bestow help upon the needy as it is the design in the creation of a cloud that it should empty itself upon the earth."

Do the clouds ever lose by emptying themselves? No doubt when the cloud has emptied itself, it is renewed and still goes on its course. At any rate, however it may be with the cloud, if it is dissipated when the rain descends, it is not so with the Christian. God has a way of giving by cartloads to those who give away by shovelfuls. If we give at the back door, and I do not think we ought to give at any other door—He will be pretty sure to give to us in greater abundance at the window and at the front door likewise. Says Bunyan—

"There was a man and some did count him mad,
The more he gave away, the more he had!"

Thank God for men of that sort! "There is that who withholds more than is meet, but it tends to poverty" and, on the other hand, that sentence which has in it the nature of a proverb and a prophecy is often verified—"the liberal soul shall be made fat." I need not say much upon this to my own congregation, with whom I am acquainted. Most of you, I believe, do empty yourselves upon the earth in proportion as God assists you and

enables you to give. But there are many persons in this land—at least there used to be—worth thousands upon thousands a year, whose contributions to the cause of God are so utterly insignificant that it is difficult to suppose that the love of Christ has ever gone far enough into them to thaw their hearts, for it has not even penetrated their pockets, making the gold to melt and their riches to flow in liberality.

I was spoken to by a brother minister, not long ago, when I was preaching for him, and he said, "Do not spare them, sir, do not spare them. There is one pew there, in front of the pulpit, where three men sit who are worth a million between them. Our chapel is a thousand pounds in debt and yet three of our members have a million between them." I said to him, "I think you ought not to 'spare them,' yourself, I do not know why I should say it, only coming here to preach occasionally." "Well," he said, "but you may say, perhaps, what nobody else may." Really it is a most horrible thing that there should be such positive covetousness allied with a profession of Christianity—Christian men—shall I call them so?—who, after all the plain precepts of Scripture, practice idolatry! They talk of being "stewards," but they act practically as if they were the owners. When a man once gets into the habit of giving to the cause of God, it becomes as much a delight to contribute of his substance as to pray for God's bounty or to drink in the promises! How could I dare to exist if I still do not do something for Christ? Not do something for Jesus? Were it not to rob me of the highest privilege which can be accorded a man this side the grave? When I pray, I ask for something for myself or other people. When I praise, it is but little I can render. But oh, to think that I, a poor creature of God's own making, should be able to give to Him! It puts the creature in the highest conceivable light! It lifts him well above angels. There are works which laborious, disinterested, self-sacrificing Christians can do for Christ—

"Which perfect saints above
And holy angels cannot do."

Let the wealthy empty themselves upon the earth, and this shall be the way to fill themselves!

But, dear friends, not many of us are entrusted with much wealth. *Some Christians have a considerable amount of ability to serve the Lord.* They are, perhaps, able to speak for the Master. Now, I think that wherever there is some knowledge of God's word, a personal acquaintance with its power and some ability to speak, we should exercise our talent, if it is but one. And if we have ten, we should not keep one of the ten to ourselves. "If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth." And if a man is full of ability, he is the more bound to empty himself. If there is any minister who ought to work hard, it is the man who is successful. If there is a person living who ought to be always successful, it is the man whom God helps to preach with power. If God makes me to be a full cloud, I must go on emptying myself. If He gives me good store, I

must take care that I scatter it. We must do, each man according to his ability, for God requires not what a man has not, but what he has. Now, dear Christian friends, are you all, out of love for Jesus, doing what you can for Him? Are you, whether you are big clouds or little clouds, trying to empty yourselves upon the earth? The nearest people of your acquaintance—your children, your kinsfolk, your neighbors—are you trying to show these the way of life—

"Gladly telling to sinners round
What a dear Savior you have found"?

Though comparatively few of us have great ability, we all have some little capacity. *Some Christians have a large amount of experimental knowledge*. They are not eloquent, they are not educated, but they are wise. It has been our privilege to have some, in the very humblest walks of life, whose experimental knowledge of divine things was very much more profound than would usually be found in a doctor of divinity—men and women who have learned their theology, not in halls and colleges, but in courts and cellars. They have learned how to pray on bare knees. They have learned how to cry to the God of providence when the cupboard was empty. They have tried the reality of religion in the hospital and perhaps in the workhouse. Some have done business in the great waters and have seen the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. It is a great treat to talk to some of those old saints! Their lips are like the lips of the girl in the fable, which dropped jewels. There is a savor, an unction, about what they say. It is not theory, but experience with them—not the letter, but the very soul, marrow and fatness of the truth of God! You do not find them looking to an arm of flesh, or talking about the dignity of manhood, or the glory of mental power and so on. They know of nothing human except weakness and nothingness! They trust in nothing but the divine arm and the invincible strength of the Holy Spirit! Are there not some such here this evening? If you have any experience, let me say to you—as you have opportunity tell it out. Empty it upon the earth! If you have gained some knowledge of God, communicate it. If you have proved Him, confess to the generation about you that He is a faithful God!

I recollect, in a time of very great despondency, deriving wonderful comfort from the testimony of a very aged minister who was blind and had been so for 20 years. When he addressed us with the weak voice of a tottering old man, but with the firmness of one who knew the truth of what he said—and spoke of the faithfulness of God because he had tasted and handled it, I thanked God for what he said! It was not much in itself. If I had read it in a book, it would not have struck me. But as it came from him—from the very man who knew it and understood it, it came with force and power! So, you experienced Christians, if any others are silent, you must not be! You must tell the young ones of what the

Lord has done for you! Why, some of you good old Christian people—I do not mean all of you—but a few of you are very apt to get to talking about difficulties, troubles and afflictions more than about your joys, not unlike those persons in *The Pilgrim's Progress* who told poor Christian about the lions, and giants, and dragons, and the sloughs and hills, and all that sort of thing! They might have told this, but they should also have told of the eternal arm that sustains the Christian in his pilgrimage! Tell about the troubles—that is wise—but also tell about the strength of God that makes you sufficient! That is wiser! If you have experience, empty yourselves upon the earth!

I cannot particularize an instance of what may happen to be the form of treasure which God has committed to any or all of you, but I think there is not one saint out of heaven but has his niche to fill, some particular work to do and, therefore, some special talent entrusted to him. Do not hide it in the earth. Dig up that talent and put it out to heavenly interest for the benefit of others and for the glory of your God! Herein is the folly of so many Christians, that being wrapped up in the interest of their own salvation and taken up with their own doubts and fears, they feel little care and they take little trouble for others. They never seem to empty themselves out into the world that is around them, and never seem to get into a world bigger than the homestead in which they live. But when a man begins to think about others, to care for others, to value the souls of others, then his thoughts of God get larger! Then his consolations grow greater and his spirit becomes more Godlike. A selfish Christianity—what shall I call it but an unchristian Christianity, an impropriety in terms, a contradiction in its very essence? You do not find the men who are anxious after others so often troubled as those who give no thought except to themselves!

Mr. Whitefield, in his diary, tells of his times of depression, but they are comparatively few. And when he is going from one "pulpit throne," as he calls it, to another, and is preaching all day long and is hearing the sobs and cries of sinners—and perhaps bearing the hoots and pelting of a mob—sitting down as soon as he has done preaching in public, to finish up his letters, or to devote an hour to prayer, why, he has not time enough to get to desponding! He cannot afford space enough to be doubting his own interest in Christ. He is so engaged in his Master's service and has so much of the blessing of God upon it, that he goes right on without needing to stop! Christian, may you get into the same delightful state—warm with love to Christ, fervent with zeal for the spread of His kingdom! You shall not need, then, to ask any longer—

"'Tis a point I long to know
Oft it causes anxious thought—
Do I love the Lord or no,
Am I His, or am I not?"

But you may give a very practical answer by saying—

"There's not a lamb in all Your flock
I would refuse to feed.
There's not a foe before whose face
I'd fear Your cause to plead."

"If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth."

Observe, lastly, when it is that the clouds empty themselves. The text says when they are full. This is a broad hint, I think, to the Christian—it tells him, then, to work. David was to attack the Philistines at a certain signal—"When you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, then shall you bestir yourself." Take this as a divine signal, then—when you are full, it is time for you to set about doing good, emptying yourselves upon the earth! Mr. Jay tells young students—and there are some here—that they cannot always sermonize, but that there will come times when they can. "Now," he says, "when I find that the wind blows, I put up the sails. I make hay while the sun shines. And I get the outlines of my sermons when God assists me to do so, that I may have them in readiness, when, perhaps, the breeze may not seem to be so favorable and my mind not so much upon the wing."

Do good to yourselves by storing up when you have opportunity. But yet, Christians have particular times when they feel fuller than at others. A sermon has warmed you, or you feel very joyous and zealous just now. Well, you will, perhaps, feel sick tomorrow. You had better go and do some good tonight! "Nothing like the time present," is the old world's motto. "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," says the proverb. So rest assured that a duty done today will be worth two duties saved up for tomorrow! A word spoken for Christ to somebody before you go out of the Tabernacle may be the word you ought to speak. But if you wait till you have another opportunity, you may wait and wait, but the opportunity may never come. A Primitive Methodist brother said at one of the meetings, lately, that the reason why the Primitive Methodists got on so was that other Christians were waiting for something to turn up, but that the Primitive Methodists turned it up themselves! It was an odd thing to say, but there is a great truth in it. Some Christian people are always waiting for something to turn up. They want an opportunity of doing good and they mean to do it—oh, so well—when they get the opportunity.

My brothers and sisters, you always have an opportunity if you will. How does Solomon put it? "Whatever your hand finds to do"—the first thing which comes—"do it with all your might." You want work in a city like London? A Christian woman wants work for God in a city of three million inhabitants? A Christian man does not know what to do to serve his Master with all these courts, alleys and crowded houses—and all this filth and these thousands of gin palaces—and this drunkenness running down the streets? Nothing for a Christian to do? You are lazy, sir, or else you would never raise such a question! Say not, "What should I do?" but,

"Where shall I begin doing it?" And I would say, begin at the point that is nearest to you. So they did when they built the walls of Jerusalem—every man built opposite to his own house. There, you see, the advantage was that he had not to walk two miles to his work, and then come back at night. They built opposite to his own house, and so he was spared all that trouble. And then, again, when he had a little leisure time when he went to his dinner, he could sit and look at his work and think how to do it better next time, so that there was an advantage in that. And there is a great advantage in Christians working near where they live and in taking up that part of Christian service most congenial to their circumstances and to their tastes. "Whatever your hand finds to do"—next to it, close to it—"do it with all your might." Begin to do it and continue to do it, being always steadfast and immovable in the work of the Lord!

But if there is a time when you shall specially and particularly work for Christ, do it when you are full of His love. You have had a mercy lately—a great mercy—now is the time for special liberality! You were spared from bankruptcy during the great crisis, consecrate to God what might have been lost! You feel full of love to Jesus—go and talk about Jesus to those who do not know Him. You are full of zeal—let it manifest itself. You are full of faith—exercise it. You are full of hope—now go and lead others into the same hopeful state. Pray for a blessing upon others when you have had the best season of prayer, the sweetest period of communion at the Lord's table, or when you have been well fed on the Word. "If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth."

May God grant to some here who have no rest, who are without God and without Christ, that they may know their emptiness—and then may the Lord fill them with His own rich Grace, as He will do to all those who put their trust in Him. The Lord bless you, every one! Amen.

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THE TWO GATHERINGS
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"Gather My saints together unto Me, those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice."
Psalm 50:5.

JUST a few sentences must suffice concerning the first meaning of the text. I think there can be little doubt that we have here a prophecy of our Lord's second advent and of the gathering together in one assembly of all the chosen people of God—both those who shall then be in heaven and those who shall then be alive and remaining upon the earth. Having made a covenant with Christ by sacrifice, these shall all be gathered together unto Him, to be partakers of His glory when He reigns at the latter day in all the splendor of His millennial kingdom here below.

The text, however, seems to me to have two other meanings. I believe that it relates, first, to *the gathering together of all God's chosen people by the preaching of the word and by other means.* And that, secondly, it also has a bearing upon *the great gathering of all the chosen around the throne of Christ in everlasting glory.*

I. So, first, I have to speak concerning THE GATHERING TOGETHER OF ALL GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE BY THE PREACHING OF THE WORD AND BY OTHER MEANS. The text appears to me to be a message to God's people from the living lips of Him who redeemed us by His blood. He speaks to the *heavens* as though He would make all the providences of God to be His servants for this great work, and to the *earth* as though the willing hearts of His people, there, would gladly obey the summons, "Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice."

My first question will be, who are to be gathered? I think we must understand the text as relating to all the chosen people of God, including those who, as yet, have not been called and quickened and have not, in the strict sense of the term, made a personal covenant with God by faith. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the divinely appointed representative of all the elect—whatever He did, He did as their covenant head, their sponsor, surety and substitute. When He made a covenant with God on behalf of His people, they virtually made that covenant, too. As Adam's covenant concerned us all, and was practically our covenant with God, so Christ's covenant concerns all who are in Him and is reckoned as the covenant that they, also, have made with His Father. And I believe that the mission of the gospel is to gather out from among the rest of mankind all those whose names are written on the roll of the everlasting covenant—

those who were given to Christ by His Father before the foundation of the world!

I know, of course, that the gospel is to be proclaimed to all. And you know that I have not shunned to declare it in all its freeness and fullness. When we are giving the invitations of the gospel that we find in the Scriptures, we never think of limiting them! Though we believe the special purpose of Christ's atonement was the redemption of His church, yet we know that His sacrifice was infinite in value and, therefore, we set the wicket gate as wide open as we can and we repeat Christ's own invitation, "Whoever will, let him take the wafer of life freely." Yet we do not flinch from the solemn truth of God that none will ever be saved but those whom God foreknew and predestinated, whom in due time He calls, justifies and glorifies—and the great objective of the gospel, whatever other ends it may have, is to gather together unto Christ these chosen ones who are to be His in the day when He makes up His jewels. I come into this pulpit and I trust that you, dear friends, go forth to your various spheres of service with the comforting thought that we are not laboring in vain, or spending our strength for nothing—because there are some who must be saved, or, to use the expressive words of Paul concerning the rest which so many missed, "it remains that some *must* enter therein." We read concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, "He must go through Samaria," because there was one poor sinning woman there who was ordained unto eternal life, as well as many others who, through her instrumentality, were to be brought to Christ and to believe on Him! We also must preach, or teach, or serve the Lord in other ways because it is written concerning Christ, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." The gospel is to be preached to every creature in order that Christ's chosen ones may be gathered unto Him. We cast the net into the sea, for we do not know where the fish are, but God knows and He guides into the net those He means us to catch for Him. You know that a magnet will attract steel to itself—well, the gospel attracts souls that have an affinity to itself—and thus Christ draws His chosen ones unto Himself with the cords of a man, and bands of love!

My next inquiry is, *Who is to do this work of gathering Christ's chosen ones unto Himself*? Brothers and sisters in Christ, you know that every true child of God is to be employed in this blessed service! Some seem to think that this work is assigned upon only ministers or upon them and their brothers in office—their deacons and elders—and that it is to extend no further. We hear much about, "lay agency" nowadays, but we know nothing of any distinction between "clergy" and "laity" in this matter! All God's people are God's *kleros*—God's clergy—or if there is any laity, any common people, *all God's people are the laity,* "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Nothing has been more disastrous to the cause of Christianity than the leaving of the service of Christ to comparatively few of His professed followers! We shall never see the world turned upside down, as it was in apostolic times until we get back to the apostolic practice and all the saints are filled with the Holy Spirit and speak for Christ as the Spirit gives them utterance! My dear brother, surely you will not

say, "I pray you have me excused from serving Christ." Remember your Lord's own words, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let *him that hears say, Come*." Everyone who has heard and heeded the gospel invitation is under a solemn obligation to repeat that invitation to others! Every Christian, whatever his talents, or abilities, or circumstances, or opportunities may be, should realize that he has a commission to help in gathering together Christ's saints unto Him. All are not required to do the same work, but each believer is bound to do some work for the Master who has done so much for him. And everyone should inquire, "Lord, what will You have me to do."

Some of you can distribute tracts, and there are some tracts that are worth distributing. I met with two, this afternoon, which will help me in my sermon. And if you get such tracts and give them away discreetly, they may be read and may benefit the readers. Some tracts are never likely to be read, but good, pithy, striking narratives—tracts with much of Christ and the gospel in them—may be distributed with the prayerful confidence that a blessing will rest upon their perusal. There are some people who have special qualifications for this kind of work for Christ. While traveling last week, I was delighted to see at every station where the train stopped, a gentleman moving from carriage to carriage and offering a tract with the air of a man who was a practiced hand at the business! At a junction where some of us had to change, there were no less than four trains, and he was as busy as he could be giving his tracts to passengers in each train. I watched an American gentleman get out on to the platform and go up to the tract distributor and begin to talk about the war and other topics—but very soon, the earnest servant of Christ had brought the conversation round to the subject of personal godliness. By and by, he came to me. He was glad to see a minister of the gospel and I was glad to see him—and I hope that I might be as faithful in my sphere of service as that good man was in his!

But some of you can go a little beyond tract distributing. You can stand up at the corner of the street and preach the gospel in a simple but earnest style. I thank God every time I remember the scores of young men we have here whose mouths have been opened to speak for Christ. Go, on, my brave sons, bearing your testimony for the Master! Even if the police should sometimes move you off, be content to be moved and go and blow the gospel trumpet somewhere else! But take care to proclaim the good tidings of salvation, for you have your Lord's commission to do so! When a man receives a commission from the Queen, he is not a little proud of it. But you have a commission from the King of kings empowering you to gather together unto Him all who are included in the covenant of His grace!

Those of you who are not able to preach may find opportunities of talking to individuals one by one. There is great power in "buttonholing" people and speaking to them personally about their souls. Some of you can visit the sick and read and pray with them. Or you can look out for those in distress—the brokenhearted and hopeless ones who need to be

directed to Him who alone can deliver and heal them. Try to say something for your Master wherever you go, remembering that He has sent even the humblest and feeblest of you to gather together unto Himself those who have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice.

My third question is: Where are they to be gathered? The Lord says, "Gather My saints together unto Me." We are not told to gather them into the Baptist denomination, or into the Presbyterian kirk, or into the Episcopal establishment, or into any particular church! Our Lord's command is, "Gather My saints together unto Me." I have never been ashamed of being called a Baptist since I became one. And if I did not believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ordained the immersion of believers on profession of their faith, I would not preach and practice it. But, dear as Christ's own ordinances ought always to be to all Christians, our main business is not to bring men and women to baptism, but to bring them to Christ! Our principal objective is not even to bring people into church membership, or to communion at the Lord's table, but to bring them, by faith, to Calvary where the one great sacrifice for sin was offered; where the precious blood of Jesus was shed; where His perfect righteousness was forever completed; where the tearful eyes may see the suffering Savior and where the broken heart may find healing and salvation in His grievous wounds! Labor, my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, in all that you do or say, in your personal dealings with sinners, in your tracts, in your preaching, in your teaching, to set forth the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ—for so will you best obey your Lord's command, "Gather My saints together unto Me, those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice."

Perhaps someone asks, *"Where are the chosen ones that are to be gathered unto Christ?"* Where are they? Why, some of them may be sitting in the same pew where you now are! If you really want to gather Christ's saints together unto Him, begin with those who are close beside you now. If you want to bring Christ's chosen ones to Him, you can find some of them just outside this Tabernacle. You can find some of them as you are walking to your homes. You can find some of them in the streets, the courts and alleys all around us! You can find some of them in Whitechapel and others of them in the West End. I verily believe that missionaries of the cross are just as much needed in Belgravia as in Shoreditch. And perhaps some who live in the biggest houses in the wealthiest parts of London are less likely to have the message of salvation carried to them than are multitudes of the poorer citizens of this great city! Then there are the people in our suburban towns and villages where so many neglect the ordinances of God's house, or have not the religious privileges which abound in this metropolis. And beyond them are great masses in the country for whom few or none are caring. And the almost innumerable hosts of heathens, Muslims and others in distant lands who have never yet even *heard* the name of Jesus and know nothing of the glorious gospel which He commanded His servants to preach to them in His name! So dear friends, wherever you may be, seek to gather some to Christ! Begin with those who are in this congregation now, or with those

who are in your own household and then cease not from this blessed work as long as you live! As long as there is another jewel to be found to adorn Christ's crown—as long as there is another wandering sheep to be brought back to the Good Shepherd who bought it with His own blood—keep on at this blessed work in obedience to your Lord's command, "Gather My saints together unto Me, those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice."

II. Now, secondly, I want to show you that the text has a bearing upon THE GREAT GATHERING OF ALL THE CHOSEN AROUND THE THRONE OF CHRIST IN GLORY. In His intercessory prayer before He suffered, our Lord Jesus Christ 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." And in the text Christ says to His servants in the heavens above and on the earth beneath, "Gather My saints together unto Me, those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice."

I ask again, as I asked in the previous part of my discourse, *Who are to be gathered*? They are those who have made a covenant with the Lord by sacrifice, and here I take the text to mean those who have made a personal covenant with God in Christ Jesus—those who, by an act of faith, have accepted the covenant which Christ made with His Father on their behalf. This covenant has been made by sacrifice and through the mediation of the crucified Savior they have joined hands with the reconciled God. By His one offering, Christ "has perfected forever them that are sanctified," those who are set apart unto Him to be His sanctified ones, or, as the text calls them, His "saints." All of us who have been thus sanctified may boldly "enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh."

Dear friend, have you entered into this personal covenant with God in Christ Jesus? Have you, by faith, made a personal appropriation of what Christ did upon the cross when He suffered and died as the substitute and surety of all who trust in Him? If you are one of Christ's chosen ones, you will accept Him as your Savior. As long as you are content with your own doings and trust in them, you cannot be numbered among His saints. So—

"Cast your deadly 'doing' down,
Down at Jesus' feet!
Stand in Him, in Him alone
Gloriously complete!"

"He that believes on Him is not condemned." Do you believe on Him? If you do, you are not condemned and, therefore, you are justified and you shall, in due time, be glorified and so you shall be among those who shall be gathered together unto Christ at the last. But the Lord expressly says, "Gather My saints together unto Me." Those who have repented of their sin and turned from it. Those who have been constrained by His grace to live holy lives and who have entered into a covenant with Him to hate the sin that cost Him so much to redeem them from it!

Now I repeat another question that I asked before, *Where are these chosen ones to be gathered*? Let me beg you again to look at that little, all important word, "Me," in the text, "Gather My saints together unto Me." The Lord does not say, "Gather My saints together unto heaven, to the general assembly and church of the first born." They are to be gathered there, but He does not say so here. He says, "Gather My saints together unto Me." Is it not the very joy of heaven, the quintessence of its bliss, that we are to be gathered unto Christ? It is very delightful to think of heaven as the place of the perfect communion of saints, as the place of perfect worship, as the place of perfect rest and at the same time of constant unwearied activity—but, after all, though it may be a great comfort to us to think of heaven under any of these aspects, yet it is a far sweeter thought to us to remember that heaven is the place where Jesus is—and where His saints are to be gathered together unto Him! So with delight we sing—

"There shall we see His face,
And never, never sin!
There from the rivers of His grace,
Drink endless pleasures in."

The very glory of heaven is that we shall see Him—that same Christ who once died upon Calvary's cross—that we shall fall down and worship at His feet! No, more—that He shall kiss us with the kisses of His mouth and welcome us to dwell with Him forever! There are ineffable delights in the very name of Jesus! It is indeed like ointment poured forth! Then what unspeakable delights must there be in His presence in glory! If all His garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, what must Christ, Himself, be? For one glimpse of Him, I would give a life of broken bones, fever and every conceivable pang! No, more—I think I may even venture to say with Rutherford that if there were seven hells between my soul and Christ—and He should bid me dash through them all, I would count the distance all too short if I might but get to Him at the last, to behold His face, and to dwell with Him forever! I do not know whether there are any degrees in glory and I do not trouble about whether there are or are not—but this I do know, that all the saints shall be gathered together unto Christ—and that degree is high enough for any of them!

How are these chosen ones to be gathered? The verse before our text tells us that the Lord shall call to the heavens from above and to the earth beneath, so we may be sure that the work which He commands shall be accomplished! We sometimes say of a man, when he is very determined to do a certain thing, "He will move heaven and earth to do it." And Christ will move heaven and earth to accomplish His great purpose of gathering together unto Himself all those that have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice! Heaven shall have a part in this great work. The angels are intensely interested in the saints who are to be their companions in glory forever, for, "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" God gives the holy angels charge over His saints to keep them in all their ways, and to bear them up in their hands lest they should dash their feet against the stones. And they act at last as a spiritual convoy escorting them to heav-

en even as Lazarus "was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Even Satan, himself, and all his hosts are under the supreme control of Christ. And He can use them as He pleases in the accomplishment of His purposes concerning His saints. At all events, they shall not be able to frustrate those purposes, but they shall most certainly be fulfilled. Earth, too, shall have its share in gathering Christ's chosen ones unto Him. Every wind that blows will speed them to their goal. Every wave shall wash them towards their desired haven. Everything that happens shall be overruled to the same end— the gathering of Christ's saints together unto Him in glory!

Sometimes you and I lament when Christ's saints are gathered unto Him by death, but is not this wrong? They must go home to Christ at some time or other, so why not go when God pleases and as God pleases? I do not know that I would pray for sudden death, though sudden death is, to a believer in Christ, sudden glory—but I certainly would not pray that I might not be called home suddenly. So far as I am personally concerned, I would like to have a similar experience to that of good Dr. Beaumont who was preaching the word on earth, and just as he finished uttering a sentence of his sermon, was singing the praises of God in heaven! Or an experience like that of another minister, Brother Flood, whom I knew. He had just given out 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"—

when he fell back—for his desire was granted and he had gone from the earthly courts of the Lord's house up to the seat of God on high! Still, it does not matter how or when the saints are gathered unto Christ—whether by plague, or fever, or long lingering affliction, whether by accident on land or on the sea, or in any other way—they shall all be gathered together unto Him in due time! And when the muster roll is called at the last, not one will be missing of all those that have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice!. The great question for all of us is shall we be among them? In order to answer that question, we must ask a few others. Have we entered into personal covenant relationship with God through relying upon Christ's sacrifice upon the cross? Have we repented of sin and trusted in Christ as our own personal Savior? Does He count us among His saints, those who are seeking, by His grace, to live in righteousness and holiness before Him all our days? If so, then we may rest assured that we, too, shall be gathered unto Him with all those whom He has redeemed with His most precious blood!

But what am I to say to those who cannot answer these questions satisfactorily? Possibly the tracts I mentioned in the earlier part of my discourse will help to give me a message to them. There may be some people here who have no hope, no good hope, concerning the hereafter. Perhaps you do not even believe in any hereafter! If so, just listen to this little narrative. "Some time ago, there lived in a certain market town a watchmaker, an honest, sober and industrious man, but he was an infidel. He

did not believe in the Bible. He said that it was a book that was only fit for old women. As for what some said concerning the terrors of hell, they never alarmed him—and as for what they said concerning the glories of heaven, he reckoned they were only fancies or dreams. Suddenly, in the midst of life, he was stricken down and it was soon manifest that he was dying, and dying rapidly. On the day of his death, early in the morning, he began to say, 'I'm going, I'm going—I don't know where!' And then, as rapidly as he could speak, he continued, for the space of twelve or thirteen hours, to say the same words over and over and over again, 'I'm going, I'm going—I don't know where! I'm going, I'm going—I don't know where.' As his strength failed him, his voice became more weak and tremulous, but still his utterance was just the same, 'I'm going, I'm going—I don't know where.' And, at last, he died with those words upon his lips, 'I'm going, I'm going—I don't know where!'"

O My dear hearers, I do pray that this may not be the dying cry of any one of you, for if it is, the dreadful sequel is given in our Lord's declaration concerning the rich man, "in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." I cannot imagine anything in the whole work of the ministry that is more painful than trying to talk to those who have neglected Christ until the last hours of their lives and who, even then, feel no sorrow for sin, but pass out of this world into the next without the least ray of hope! There is, in my memory, a scene of this character which comes to me very vividly at this moment. Many years ago, when the cholera was raging in London, I was summoned, at three o'clock one morning, to go to a house near London Bridge where a man was very ill. He had been attacked by the cholera and knew that he must die. But although he was a godless, blasphemous man, he could think of no one but me whom he would like to see. So I had to be sent for in hot haste. I went to him, but he could do little more than express his horror at what was before him and his utter despair of any hope of escape. He asked me to pray, and I did so. But before I had finished, he was unconscious and soon he was in the pangs of death. I left him a corpse. I remember that for long afterwards I felt sad and grieved concerning the state of that man's soul. Yet, by nature, we were the children of wrath even as that man was—and but for divine grace, we might have spent our last day on earth as he did, in Sabbath breaking and our last hour of life in despair. God grant that we may always feel devoutly thankful for the sovereign grace that has made us to differ from others whom once we resembled, at least as far as this—that we were all, alike, the children of wrath!

In the other tract I read about a working man who was passing by an infidel lecture hall. He stepped in, although he was a Christian and, as he entered, someone on the platform, who had the appearance of a gentleman, was saying that it was all nonsense for anyone to say that infidels died a miserable death. He had just been to see one of their number and he could assure them, on the word of a gentleman, that he had died very happily. When the speech was over, the working man asked whether he might be allowed to say something. "Yes," said the chairman, "certainly you may." So he rose and said, "I have just heard something that has

greatly surprised me—I have heard of an infidel who has died happily. I have never before heard of such a thing as that happening, but as the speaker assured us, on the word of a gentleman, that it is true, I must not question the statement. I am, therefore, under the necessity of admitting that one infidel has died happily, but I feel sure that he must have lived a very miserable life, or else he could not have died so happily. Now I have a dear, loving wife, who makes my home right and cheerful. And when I come back from work, she always receives me with a smiling face and with my meals tastefully prepared. So I am sure that if I had to die and leave her—and to go I know not where—I could not die happily. I have four children—as smiling and happy children as you ever saw—and I love to hear their musical voices and their pretty prattle. But if I had to die and leave them—and to go I know not where—I could not die happily. So the only supposition that I can draw from the life of the man of whom this gentleman has told us is that he and his wife lived a cat and dog life, so that he was glad to be free from her at any cost. And that his children must have been so wicked or tiresome that he was glad to get away from them even though he did not know where he was going. My wife and children make me so happy that I do not want to leave them—and the only thing which makes me look forward to death without sorrow is the thought that I am going to a better world than this where there is one who loves me even more than my wife and children do, and where I hope one day to meet my dear ones again, to be parted from them no more forever."

When I read that tract, I thought that the working man's reasoning was perfectly sound. And I wish that all of you, dear friends, had just as good cause as he had to live happily and to die happily! You will have that if you will only trust in the same Savior in whom he trusted! May God the Holy Spirit enable you to do so now! This is the way of salvation. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." He saves all who put their trust in Him! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." All who believe on Him are His chosen ones—His *saints*, as our text calls them—and those who truly trust Him are known by the holiness and graciousness of their lives! They are gathered unto Him, here, as they are, by His grace, called out from the mass of mankind and, in God's good time, they shall all be gathered unto Him in that great general assembly and church of the first born which are written in heaven! May God grant that everyone of us may be there, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 50.

A Psalm of Asaph.

It is mentioned, in the life of Hezekiah, that "the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David and of Asaph, the Seer," so that very likely this Psalm was sung in

the temple after it had been cleansed and reopened for worship. The first part of the Psalm contains a majestic prophecy of the second advent.

Verses 1-3. *The mighty God, even the LORD, has spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined. Our God shall come and shall not keep silent; a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him.* He came once under the old legal dispensation and then, "there were thunders and lightning, and a thick cloud upon the mount…Sinai was altogether on a smoke because the Lord descended upon in it fire." And when Christ shall come, in the latter days, with equal splendor, there shall be fire and tempest to swell the pomp of His court.

4. *He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people.* Heaven shall yield up the blessed who are already there, and earth shall give up those that are alive and remain until Christ's coming. And so "the whole company of the redeemed shall stand in the presence of their great Lord and Savior when Christ shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believe." This is the summons that is to ring out to the heavens above and the earth beneath—

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.* Now the subject of the Psalm changes, but let not the doctrine of the second advent pass from our thoughts. Christ will surely come again, but are we all prepared to meet Him? Shall we behold that glorious appearance with joy or with sorrow? When He reigns gloriously with His ancients, shall we share in the splendors of that reign? Lord, call us to Yourself now! Help us to suffer with You now! Help us to bear reproach for You among men, now, and then, though—

"It does not yet appear
How great we must be made"—

yet we know that—

"When we see our Savior here,
We shall be like our Head."

Now the Lord addresses His own people—

7. *Hear, O My people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against you: I am God, even your God.* Note, then, that with all the faults which Christ can find in His people, He is still their God! All the sins of the saints cannot separate them from Christ. They may blot the indenture, but it is only a copy of the covenant made by Christ on their behalf—the real title deeds are in heaven beyond all risk of loss. Sinner though you are, O child of Israel, yet God is still your God—and all your imperfections, follies and backslidings can never rob you of your eternal interest in Him!

8-13. *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. 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 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? The Lord puts a slur upon the Levitical sacrifices in comparison with evangelical offerings. He sets prayer and praise before the blood of bulls or the sacrifices of goats! Yet we are not to understand that God despises the gifts of His people. If you give to God as though He needed your help, He will have none of it! But our gracious God is so condescending that although He needs nothing, He permits His people to bring their thank offerings and to lay them at His feet. My God, will You accept a gift from *me*? Then I will not be slow to give it to You! Let everyone of us feel in his heart that though God needs nothing from us, yet we need the privilege of giving to Him.

14, 15. *Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay your vows unto the most High; 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 both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] See the three ways of praising God? One is by giving Him your grateful thanksgiving. Banish your murmurings. Sweep away your mistrusts and let your mouth be filled with His praise all the daylong! Then the next way of praising God is by paying your vows unto Him—let your constant prayers and offerings to God prove the gratitude of your heart. And the last and sweetest way of praising God is to call upon Him in the day of trouble. There are many of you who are in trouble at this moment, therefore call upon God! Perhaps you say, "That will benefit me, but how will it glorify Him?" Why, God gets much honor out of hearts that dare to trust Him! If you can cast your burden upon the Lord, you will as much honor Him as angels do when, with veiled faces, they cry, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." We adore His wisdom, His faithfulness, His love, His grace, His truth, His power when we believe that in the darkest night He can bring us sudden daylight and that in the ebb tide of our affairs He can bring the floods back again. Christian, honor your God by calling upon Him! With all your difficulties, doubts and fears, call upon God and He will deliver you, and you shall glorify Him! Now comes another change—

16. *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?* Unconverted preachers, unsaved Sunday school teachers—what answer can you give to this question of the Most High?

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 a 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.* Slander, you see, is put side by side with adultery and theft and, indeed, I do not know whether it is not the worst of the three! You might almost as well cut a man's throat as slander his character. You had better steal his purse than steal his good name. "What shall be given

unto you? Or what shall be done unto you, you false tongue? Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper." There are no coals hot enough to burn slanderous tongues! There are no punishments severe enough for those who slander their own mother's son.

21. *These things have you done and I kept silent.* An amazing thing is that silence of God, that long suffering with sinners! And another amazing thing is the impudent interpretation which the sinner gives to that silence!.

21. *You thought that I was altogether such an one as yourself: but I will reprove you, and set them in order before your eyes.* "I will do what I have not yet done. If you think Me in arrears, I will clear myself with you soon. I will ease Me of My adversaries." When God arises in judgment, He may make it to be a slow work, but He will make it to be a sure work.

22, 23. *Now consider this, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. Whoever offers praise, glorifies Me: and to him that orders his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God.* How blessed, then, is it to praise the Lord both with your lips and with your life!

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AN EARNEST WARNING AGAINST UNBELIEF
NO. 3217

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1910,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And to whom did He swear that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Hebrews 3:18, 19.

ALL the histories of Scripture are written for our examples, but especially the story of the Israelites in the wilderness, which is given to us at a length far exceeding the value of the narrative unless it is intended for purposes of spiritual instruction, for it occupies four books of the Old Testament and those, by no means, short ones! These things were written that we might see ourselves in the Israelites as in a mirror—and so might be warned of dangers common to us and to them—and be guided to a worthier use of the privileges which we enjoy. Always read Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy with this view—"This is the story of the church of God in the wilderness—I would see how God dealt with them and how they dealt with Him, and from this learn lessons that may be useful to me in my own pilgrimage to the eternal rest."

The great promise which was given to Israel was Canaan, that choice land which God had of old allotted to them. "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel." He made Palestine to be the center of worship, the joy of all lands, the seat of His oracle and the place of His abode. In the wilderness the tribes were journeying towards this country and it was a very short distance from Egypt, so that they might almost at once have taken possession of the land, and yet it cost them forty years' traveling! If you trace their travels, you will see that they ran a perpetual zigzag, backward and forward, to the right and to the left. Sometimes they were actually journeying away from the promised rest, plunging into the deeps of the howling wilderness—and all, we are told, because of their unbelief! The land itself flowed with milk and honey. It was a land of brooks and rivers, a land upon the surface of which all choice fruits would grow, and out of whose bowels they could dig copper and iron. It was the choicest of all lands and will yet again become so when there is an end of the accursed rule which now makes it desolate. Once more, under decent, settled rule and properly irrigated, it will again bloom and become such a country as the entire world besides cannot match! This was the promised land and into it they were to enter—and there to multiply and increase as the stars of heaven—and to be a nation of kings and priests unto God. But "they could not enter in because of unbelief." This, alone, shut them out.

Brothers and sisters, Canaan is a type to us of the great and goodly things of the covenant of grace which belong to believers. But if we have no faith, we cannot possess a single covenant blessing! This day, in the proclamation of the gospel, the demand is made of faith in God. And if there is no faith, no matter how rich the gospel, how full its provisions and how precious the portion which God has prepared, none of us can ever enter into the enjoyment of them!

Some of you, because of unbelief, have not entered into the rest which God gives to His people even here below ("for we which have believed do enter into rest") and into the rest which remains—the blessed *Sabbath* of the skies—you will not be able to enter because of unbelief. This pains and troubles me, but so it is. Moses wrote a mournful Psalm which began, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations," and then he went on to weep and bewail the transitory nature of man's estate. He wrote it while he was seeing forty funerals, at least, every day, for it required an average of forty deaths per diem to carry off all the people that came out of Egypt in the forty years. Their days were spent in bewailing the dead so that it *was true of them as it is not true of us*, "All our days are passed away in Your wrath." They had to mourn and sigh with Canaan but a little way ahead! They might have been laughing in its glades, sunning themselves in its plains, feasting on its figs and grapes and corn, but instead, there they were—pining and dying, digging graves and expiring—for "they could not enter in because of unbelief." Many, many, many this day are tormenting themselves with needless despondency, shivering in fears they need not know and vexed with plagues they need not feel because they fail to rest in Christ through unbelief! Alas, myriads more are descending into the lake that burns with fire and they know no rest—and never shall know any! For them the harps of angels never sound! For them the white robes are not prepared because the unbelieving must have their portion in the lake of fire! Oh, that God would now deliver them from this dreadful sin of unbelief!

I have only three remarks to make. And the first is that *these were a highly favored people, yet they could not enter in because of unbelief*. Secondly, that *the sole and only thing, according to the text, which shut them out was unbelief*. And that, thirdly, *there were other people, their own sons and daughters, who, being delivered from this unbelief, did enter in*. That must have made the case more clear against them because their little ones, who they said should be prey, were, nevertheless, permitted, each one, to stand in his lot. God's purpose was not frustrated because of man's unbelief! "If we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself."

I. First, then—THESE WERE A HIGHLY-FAVORED PEOPLE, YET THEY COULD NOT ENTER IN BECAUSE OF UNBELIEF.

Mark you, this was not said of Egyptians, Amorites or Philistines! No, it was said of Israelites who occupied the position of those who, in the New Testament, are called the "children of the kingdom"—many of whom will be cast out. These are the persons to whom it may be truly said, "Be you sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come near unto you." The dust of the feet of God's servants will be shaken off against you, but yet you have heard the message of mercy and you have been as highly fa-

vored as Bethsaida and Chorazin when they heard the Word of God which, through its rejection, worked for them a more intolerable doom!

Now, think of it, *these Israelites had seen great wonders worked*. These men were in Egypt during those marvelous plagues. What times to live in, when they heard of miracle after miracle, peals of God's great thunder when He made His storm to beat about the head of proud Pharaoh! These men had seen the waters turned into blood and the fish floating dead upon the stream. They had seen the diseases on the cattle and the great hailstones which destroyed the harvest. They had been in the light when all the Egyptians were in the darkness that might be felt! They had seen the plagues of locusts and of lice—and all the terrors of the Lord when Jehovah took arrow after arrow out of His quiver and shot them against the hard heart of Pharaoh. They had all eaten of the paschal lamb on that dread night when Egypt sorely wept because the chief of all their strength had been killed in all the dwellings of the sons of Ham! They had gone out with their kneading troughs in haste to escape from the land of bondage—brought forth with a high hand and an outstretched arm. These very men had been with Moses when Pharaoh pursued them and when that lifted rod split the Red Sea and Israel found an open channel where of old the waves had perpetually rolled! They had marched through the depths as through the wilderness and they had seen the eager waters leap back again into their place and drown all Egypt's chivalry! They had heard the song of Miriam, "Sing you to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea." Yet "they could not enter in because of unbelief."

And, oh, brothers and sisters, there are some among you who have seen great marvels worked by God! You have known the gift of His dear Son so as to be assured of the fact—and to see it with your mind's eyes—though you have not believed unto salvation. You know what God has worked for His people! You know how He delivered them and saved them by the blood of His Son. You have been present when the power of the Lord has swept through the audience as the wind sweeps through the forest and breaks the cedars of Lebanon! You have known the mighty works which God has done in the midst of the congregation! Your eyes have seen them and your fathers have also told you of the wondrous things which He did in their day and in the old time before them! And yet, with all this before you, and your mother in heaven, and your sister in the church of God, and your friends saved, you cannot enter in because of unbelief! Ah, the Lord will not have mercy upon you because of what you have seen, for so much light is but an aggravation of the guilt of your unbelief! And, instead of pleading in your favor, it demands justice on those that believe not after all they have seen!

To these Israelites great things had been revealed, for during their sojourn in the wilderness, they had been scholars in a gracious school. You, yourselves, have marveled that they did not learn more. What glorious marches those were through the wilderness when the mountains saw You, O God, and they trembled when Sinai was altogether covered in smoke! To what other people did God ever speak as He spoke to them? To whom did He give the tablets of divine commandments written with

His own mysterious pen? Where else did He dwell between the cherubim and shine forth with glorious majesty? Where else did He reveal Himself in type and shadow, by priest and sacrifice and altar? Where else was heard so sweetly holy Psalms and daily prayer? Where else smoked the morning and the evening lamb, God teaching by all these? And yet, when they heard, they provoked! When they were taught, they refused to learn! When they were called, they went not after Him. Their hearts were hardened and they believed not the Lord their God!

We too, have enjoyed a clear revelation. We have heard the gospel more plainly than the Israelites ever did. This blessed book has more light in it than Moses could impart and the preaching of the gospel, where it is done affectionately and earnestly, and by the help of the Spirit of God, is a greater means of grace to the soul than all the sacred rites of the tabernacle! Shall it be with us as with them? "They could not enter in because of unbelief"—shall we labor under the same disability? Sharers in solemn feasts and yet their carcasses fell in the wilderness! Partakers of countless blessings, favored with the light of God and yet shut out from Jehovah's rest because they believed not! Will this also be our portion?

Remember, also, that *they were a people with whom God had great patience*. Has it ever struck you—the great patience which must have been exercised in 40 years of provocation? I put it to any man here who has a good temper and is very calm and cool and singularly forgiving—how long could you stand provocation? Brother, if they did always provoke you intentionally, willfully and repeatedly, how long could you bear it? Ah, you could not be *provoked* one half as long as you think you could, without, at least, coming to blows. When Jesus said to His disciples that if a brother should trespass against them seven times in a day, and seven times a day should turn and say, "I repent," they should forgive him—the very next thing we read is that the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith," as much as to say, "Flesh and blood can never attain to *that*, Lord! You must increase our faith if we are to do *that*." But *forty years' provocation*—what do you think that can do? Some men bear provocation well because they cannot return it, on the principle mentioned in Cowper's ballad—

"So stooping down, as needs he must
Who cannot sit upright."

But when a man knows his power to end the provocation and to deliver himself, he is not so slow to ease him of his adversary. See the gentleness of the Lord! Forty years He is provoked! One would have thought that, surely, in that time these people would turn and repent. Moses, himself, I think, in the greatest agony of his prayer, could only have said, "Lord, give them 12 months in which they may mend their ways." That gracious intercessor who is mentioned in the parable of the fig tree only said, "Let it alone this year, also." That was all. But this was *forty years*! A fruitless tree standing for 40 years! Why cumbers it the ground? Oh, the stupendous mercy of God! But they could not enter into His rest after all. Will it be the same with you who have heard the gospel for many years? What is to become of you? When so much patience is lost upon you, what must happen next? I scarcely feel as if I can pity you. I seem

as if I pitied God that He has borne your indifference so long as the only return for His great love! In what manner has He acted that you should so ungenerously treat Him and continue to provoke Him? I fear it will, before long, be said of you, "they could not enter in because of unbelief."

Once more, only, on this point. *These people had also received great mercies*. It was not merely what they had seen, what they had been taught and the long suffering they had enjoyed—they had received very remarkable favors. They drank of the Rock which followed them. And the manna fell every morning fresh from heaven for them. Men did eat angels' food! They had a cloudy pillar to guide and shield them by day—and that same pillar at night became a light of fire and so lit up the canvas city all night long. The Lord was a wall of fire round about them and a glory in their midst! Will you think, dear friend, what God has done for you from your childhood until now? Perhaps you found yourself upon a mother's lap and she was singing of Jesus. And as you grew up, you dwelt in a family circle where that dear name was a household word. By and by, you were led to a godly teacher to be taught more about Jesus. And since then you have heard from the pastor's mouth, a message which he tries to steep in love whenever he delivers it. Then think of the Lord's gracious providence. You have been fed and cared for. Perhaps you have been brought very low, but you have had food and raiment. Others are pining in the workhouse and you have, probably, an ability—or you are in health and are able to earn your livelihood. And in times of sickness, God hears you and keeps you from death. You have been preserved in accidents and here you are, kept alive with death so near! Will you not turn unto the Lord? For if not, He will not always spare you. Earth feels your weight too much for her and almost asks God to let her open a grave for the wretch who refuses to love His Creator! Time, itself, is getting impatient of your sin and hurrying on the hour when your allotted span will be over—and you will be forced into a dread eternity! O soul, soul, highly favored as you are, it seems so sad a thing that of you it should be said, "*He* could not enter in," or, "*she* could not enter in"—"because of unbelief."

II. And now a few words upon our second head. NOTHING BUT UNBELIEF SHUT THEM OUT. "They could not enter in because of unbelief."

It was not through great sin in other respects although they were a sinful people. God was ready to forgive them everything else but unbelief. And had they been but willing and obedient, the times of their ignorance He would have winked at. He had provided sacrifices on purpose to take away sins of ignorance and multitudes of other sins, but nothing takes away the sin of unbelief, as long as it remains in the heart. You must be believers, or the blood of Jesus Christ, itself, shall never be sprinkled upon you to your cleansing! However great your sins may have been, all manner of sin and iniquity shall be forgiven you if you believe. The greatness of your sin shall not shut you out of heaven—only unbelief will stop the way.

Neither, my dear brothers and sisters, *would their other evil tendencies have kept them out of Canaan*. God knew what they were. They had been a race of slaves in Egypt and it is not easy for a nation, long in bondage,

to rise to the dignity of freedom—the Israelites in the wilderness were people of a low type, much degraded by slavery—and God was therefore lenient with them. Many laws He did not make because He knew they would not keep them—and there were some things which He permitted them which could not be permitted us. "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to put away your wives," said Jesus. The Lord was very gentle towards their moral weakness and bore with them as a nurse with her children. But when it came to unbelief—a doubt of Him who was so clearly God, a denial of His power, His faithfulness, His truth—then they were shut out of Canaan as with an iron gate.

My brothers and sisters, they were *not unbelieving from lack of evidence*, yet they had not more than you have, because most of you have abundant evidence of the truth of the gospel. The Bible to you has been God's book from your childhood and you take its inspiration for granted and it is, therefore, inexcusable if you do not trust Christ! If a man's skepticism includes a doubt of the existence of God, or the truth of Scripture, we will talk to him another time. But with most of you there are no such questions, and the Lord Jesus might well demand of you, "If I tell you the truth, why do you not believe Me?" If before the judgment seat of Christ a man shall be forced to confess, "I believe the Bible to be God's word," I cannot imagine the apology which he can frame in his heart for not having believed in Jesus Christ! To you, then, there is no lack of evidence—and if you are shut out of heaven, your own willful unbelief must bear the blame!

The Israelites were *not unbelieving from lack of encouragement* for as I have already shown you, the Lord sweetly encouraged them to believe in Him by the great things He did for them and by His gentle dealings day by day. Most of you have been gently persuaded and encouraged to trust in the Lord Jesus. How blessedly the Word of God has worded its invitations so as to suit the fearfulness of poor trembling sinners! And as a preacher, I can honestly say that I lay out all my wits to think of truths of God which might cheer desponding souls! God, who abounded to me in all goodness and mercy and is bringing me tenderly to His feet, has made me long after souls that I may bring them to Him! If you have not believed, it has not been for lack of invitations, expostulations, encouragements and words of consolation. No, you will not be able to blame the Bible or the preacher! Unbelief of the most wanton kind will be chargeable to you and will shut you out of God's rest!

Nor would it have been true if the Israelites had said that they could not enter in because of difficulties. There was the Jordan before them and when they entered the land, there were cities walled to heaven, and giants before whom they felt like grasshoppers. Yes, but that did not hinder them, for God divided the Jordan, made the walls of Jericho to fall flat to the ground and sent the hornets before them to chase out the giants! Israel had little more to do than to go up and take the spoil!

Now, soul, there is no difficulty between you and eternal life which Christ either has not removed already or will not remove as you believe in Him. As for your iniquities, when you believe, they are gone—the Jordan is divided. As for your inbred sins, He will surely drive them out, little by little, when you believe in Him. As for your old habits, which are like the

high walls of the Canaanite cities, they shall fall down at the sound of the ram's horn of faith! Only believe and you shall enter into rest! Trust in God, and impossibilities shall vanish and difficulties shall become a blessing to you. Nothing hinders you except that *you will not believe*. And if you will not believe, neither shall you be established. "If you believe not," says Christ, "that I am He, you shall die in your sins." "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." This is the sin of which I pray the Spirit of God to convict you—"Of sin because they believe not on Me."

III. The third head is that SOME DID ENTER IN. These were their own children and I have been wondering whether if I should preach in vain to a whole generation of those who reject Christ, I might yet hope that their children would rise up to call the Redeemer blessed! Dear young man, do not follow in your unbelieving father's footsteps! Dear girl, do not imitate the indecision, the limping between two opinions which you have seen in your mother! If her carcass must fall in the wilderness, there is no reason why yours should. Is it not a great mercy that the Lord does not reject us because of the sins of our fathers? Though you were a child of shame, yet you may be a child of divine grace! Though your pedigree were dishonorable, your end may be glorious! If the history of your ancestors is full of unbelief and rejection of the Lord, yet this need be no reason why you should perish with them!

Look at the effect of this upon the fathers, as they looked upon their sons and said, "That boy of mine will have a house and home in the holy land, but I must die in the desert. That girl of mine will be among the merry wives that make joy in Eshcol and that go up to the house of the Lord in Zion—but I must be buried in this waste of sand, for the Lord has sworn in His wrath that I shall not enter into His rest." Fathers and mothers, how do these things suit you? I am sure if it were my lot to see my boys rejoicing in the Lord while I was an unbeliever and could not enter in because of unbelief, I could not bear it! I could not bear it! How I wish that your children would entice you to Christ! I have known it happen by the influence of dear departing infants. Many a time the Lord has taken a babe away from its mother's breast, to her grief at first, but to her salvation in the end! The shepherd could not get the sheep to follow till he took up its lamb and carried it in his bosom—then the mother would go wherever he liked. Perhaps the Lord has done that with some of you on purpose that you may follow Him. Do you want Him to come and take another little one? Ah, He may, for He loves you! If one is not enough, He may take another till, at last, you follow the shepherd's call. If you will not follow Jesus, you cannot enter where your babes have gone! Unbelieving mother, you shall not see the heavenly field wherein your little lambs are resting—you are divided from them forever! Unbelieving father, you cannot follow your sons—your believing offspring are with God, but you must be cast out from His presence. Can you endure this?

O, impenitent sinner, do you not know that God's purpose shall not be frustrated? If *you* will not have Christ, others will! If *you* will not come to the banquet of His love, He will gather the wanderers and the outcasts,

for His wedding shall be furnished with guests! As surely as the Lord lives, Christ shall not die in vain! Heaven shall not be empty and the sacred orchestra of the skies shall not lack musicians! If you count yourselves unworthy, others whom you have despised shall be welcomed to the feast of love! Harlots and outcasts, His mighty grace will save—but you, the children of the kingdom—shall be cast into outer darkness where weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth are heard! Can you bear it? Can you bear to think of it? If *you* can, I cannot! When I think of any of my hearers perishing, I feel like Hagar when she could not help her child and, therefore, laid him under the bushes and went away saying, "Let me not see the death of the child!" One of you lost? One of you lost? It is too much for me to think of! Yet to many of you the gospel has been preached in vain, for the hearing of it has not been mixed with faith. The Lord have mercy upon you!

To me it is especially appalling that a man should perish through willfully rejecting the divine salvation. A drowning man throwing away his lifebelt, a poisoned man pouring the antidote upon the floor, a wounded man tearing open his wounds—any one of these is a sad sight—but what shall we say of a soul putting from it the Redeemer—and choosing its own destruction? O souls, be warned and forbear from eternal suicide! There is still the way of salvation—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." To believe is to trust. I met with one the other night who had imbibed the notion that saving faith was simply to believe that the doctrines of the Word of God and the statements therein made are true. Now faith *includes* that, but it is much more! You may believe this entire book to be true, and be lost notwithstanding your belief! You must so believe it as to act upon it by trusting. "Trust what?" you ask. Let us alter the question before we answer it. "Trust *Whom*?" You have to trust in a living person—in the Lord Jesus Christ who died as the substitute for those who trust Him—and lives to see that those whom He bought with blood are also redeemed from their sins by power and brought home to heaven. Trust Jesus Christ, soul! Have done with yourself as your confidence and commit your soul unto the keeping of the faithful Redeemer!

Have you done so? Then, even if the clock has not ticked once since you believed in Jesus Christ, you are as surely saved as if you had been a saint these 20 years, for he that believes in Him is not condemned! This declaration makes no stipulation as to time. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." God grant that you may obey the heavenly precept, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 2; 3.

Hebrews 2:1. *Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.* That is to say, because Jesus is so great, because the truths which He came to reveal are so infinitely important, "therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." For sometimes, we seem to let them slip. We grow

old. Our mind is dull. Our heart is occupied with other matters and we let these heavenly things leak out, or drift by us, as if we were not concerned in them.

2, 3. *For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?* Listen! "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" Not if we resist it, reject it, despise it, oppose it—but if we *neglect* it! If a man is in business, it is not necessary that he should commit forgery in order to fail—he can fail by simply neglecting his business. If a man is sick, he need not commit suicide by taking poison—he can do it just as surely by neglecting to take proper medicines! So is it in the things of God—neglect is as ruinous as distinct and open opposition! "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?"

3, 4. *Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?* Observe, then, that this gospel comes to us by Christ and it is confirmed to us by His apostles, and further confirmed by those signs and wonders, and divers miracles which God sent as the seals of apostolic teaching! So that this spell is not one about which we can raise any question whatever—it comes by a medium which we must not dare to question—it has confirming seals in it which it is blasphemous for us to dispute! Oh, how gladly should we receive it! How tenderly should we treat it! How devoutly grateful should we be for it and how earnestly should we comply with all its requirements!

5. *For unto the angels has He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.* God has not made angels to be the preachers of the gospel. Doubtless they derive some happiness from it, if only from the sight of those converted under it, but it is in no sense under the government of angels.

6-8. *But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that You are mindful of him? Or the son of man, that You visit him? You made him a little lower than the angels; You crowned him with glory and honor, and did set him over the works of Your hands: You have put all things in subjection under his feet.* It is so, in a measure, in the natural world. Man is made to be the master of it—and the ox and the horse, with all their strength—must bow their necks to man. And the lion and the tiger, with all their ferocity, must still be cowed in the presence of their master. Yet this is not a perfect kingdom which we see in the natural world. But, in the spiritual world, man is *still* to be supreme for the present and, therefore, Christ becomes not an angel, but a man! He takes upon Him that nature which God intends to be dominant in this world and in that which is to come.

8. *For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.* We see not yet man the master of everything. Not even Christ, the model man, the head of all men. While He was here below, He was not a ruling Lord, but a suffering servant. He said to His disciples, "I am among you

as He that serves." Yet it is in Him that the dominion once given to man is to be seen most clearly displayed.

9. *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor.* We see that by faith. We see Jesus not merely as God, but as the God man exalted "far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion."

9, 10. *That He, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man. For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.* [See Sermon #2619, Volume 45—THE CAPTAIN OF OUR SALVATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Not that Christ needed to be made perfect in nature, but perfect in His capacity to be the captain of our salvation—complete in all the offices which He sustains toward His redeemed people. He must be a sufferer that He may be a sympathizer—and hence His sufferings made Him perfect.

11. *For both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one.* [See Sermon #2418, Volume 41—"ALL OF ONE"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] He who sets them apart and they who are set apart "are all of one." They are of one nature and they have one destiny before them.

11. *For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren.* Does not this bring very sweetly before you the close relationship of Christ to His people? He has espoused their nature and He acknowledges it by calling then brethren!

12. *Saying, I will declare Your name unto My brethren, in the midst of Your church will I sing praise unto You.* The apostle was writing to Hebrews and, therefore, he quoted from the books with which they were familiar. He here quotes the 22nd Psalm as the words of the Messiah.

13. *And again, I will put My trust in Him. And again, Behold I and the children which God has given Me.* There are some passages which we should never have thought related to the Messiah if the New Testament had not told us that they do. Hence I have no doubt that we much more often err in not seeing Christ in the Old Testament than in seeing Him there, for there may be many other passages besides these which are supposed to speak of Christ which do speak of Him.

14. *Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.* [See Sermon #166, Volume 4—THE DESTROYER DESTROYED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] By His own death, Christ broke that evil power which brought death into the world with its long trail of woe! He did this, not by His example, not even by His life, but by His death! Therefore let those who speak slightingly of His atoning sacrifice see their folly, for it is through death that Christ destroys "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

15, 16. *And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.* [See Sermon #90, Volume 2—MEN CHOSEN—FALLEN ANGELS REJECTED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Christ's great mission was not to save angels,

but to save men. Therefore He came not in the nature of angels, but in the nature of men.

17, 18. *Therefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted."* And this is the reason why He suffered—and why He became a man capable of suffering—that He might be able to succor the tempted. It was for this that Christ left Heaven, for this He was born of the virgin, for this He lived and for this He died, that He might be "able to succor them that are tempted." [See Sermons #487, Volume 9—A TEMPTED SAVIOR—OUR BEST SUCCOR; #1974, Volume 33—THE SUFFERING SAVIOR'S SYMPATHY and #2885, Volume 50—CHRIST'S SYMPATHY WITH HIS PEOPLE—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

Hebrews 3:1. *Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.* Think of Him, think how great He is, think what attention He deserves from all who believe in Him!

2-6. *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. 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.* See the superiority of Christ over Moses—Moses is honored by being called the servant of God, but Jesus is the Son of God, and as Son, Master over His own house.

6. *Whose house are we.* Christ built the house. He laid us together like stones upon the great foundation. Moses is but a caretaker in the house.

6. *If we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.* Final perseverance is an absolute necessity of a child of God. We do not prove ourselves to be a part of the house if we move about like loose stones!

7-10. *Why (as the Holy Spirit says, Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted Me, proved Me and saw My works forty years. Therefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known My ways.* Do not provoke your God by your quibbling, or your murmuring, or your idolatry—act not as those unbelievers did who died in the wilderness.

11, 12. *So I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest). Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.* [See Sermon #2552, Volume 44—"TAKE HEED, BRETHREN"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] There was that "evil heart" in the Israelites—is there not a danger that it may be in you, also, who are partakers of the like nature?

13. *But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* [See Sermon #620, Volume 116—A WARNING AGAINST HARDNESS OF HEART—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] If sin came to you openly proclaiming

itself as sin, you would fight against it. But it is very cunning and deceitful and it gradually petrifies the heart and especially the heart of those who think that they will never provoke God by their sin. Pride has already begun to work in them—and where pride can work, every other sin finds elbowroom. God save us from the deceitfulness of sins!

14. *For we are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.* [See Sermon #1042, Volume 18—A PERSUASIVE TO STEADFASTNESS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] You are to hold fast, to hold on and to hold out to the end—and the grace you need in order to do this is waiting for you if you will but look for it and daily live under the power of it!

15, 16. *While it is said, Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.* All but two that came out of Egypt died in the wilderness—only Joshua and Caleb were found faithful among the faithless.

17. *But with whom was He grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?* See how the apostle speaks of them! He does not say that their bodies were buried, but that their carcasses fell in the wilderness! Unbelief degrades us into beasts whose carcasses fall beneath the battleaxe of judgment. Oh, that we might all be rid of unbelief—that degrading, desecrating, defiling, destroying thing!

18, 19. *And to whom swore He that they should not enter into His rest but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.* It was not the sons Anak that kept them out! It was not the waste howling wilderness! It was nothing but their own unbelief!

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"But we preach Christ crucified."
1 Corinthians 1:23.

IN the verse preceding our text, Paul writes, "The Jews require a sign." They said, "Moses worked miracles; let us see miracles worked and then we will believe," forgetting that all the wonders that Moses worked were altogether eclipsed by those which Jesus worked while He was upon the earth in the flesh. Then there were certain Judaizing teachers who, in order to win the Jews, preached circumcision, exalted the Passover and endeavored to prove that Judaism might still exist side by side with Christianity—and that the old rites might still be practiced by the followers of Christ. So Paul, who was made all things to all men that he might by all means save some, put his foot down and said, in effect, "Whatever others may do, we preach Christ crucified—we dare not, we cannot and we will not alter the great subject matter of our preaching, Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

Then he added, "and the Greeks seek after wisdom." Corinth was the very eyes of Greece and the Corinthian Greeks sought after what they regarded as wisdom—that is to say, the wisdom of this world, not the wisdom of God which Paul preached! The Greeks also treasured the memory of the eloquence of Demosthenes and other famous orators. And they seemed to think that true wisdom must be proclaimed with the graces of masterly elocution—but Paul writes to these Corinthian Greeks, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God."

Now, in these days there are some who would be glad if we would preach anything except Christ crucified! Perhaps the most dangerous among them are those who are continually crying out for intellectual preaching, by which they mean preaching which neither the heavens nor the preachers, themselves, can comprehend—the kind of preaching which has little or nothing to do with the Scripture and which requires a dictionary rather than a Bible to explain it! These are the people who are continually running about and asking, "Have you heard our minister? He gave us a wonderful discourse last Sunday morning! He quoted Hebrew, Greek and Latin. He gave us some charming pieces of poetry—in fact it

was altogether an intellectual treat!" Yes, and I have usually found that such intellectual treats lead to the ruination of souls. That is not the kind of preaching that God generally blesses to the salvation of souls and, therefore, even though others may preach the philosophy of Plato or adopt the arguments of Aristotle, we preach Christ crucified, the Christ who died for sinners, the people's Christ and, "we preach Christ crucified" in simple language, in plain speech such as the common people can understand!

I am going to try to put our text into practice by telling you, first, *what we preach.* Secondly, *to whom we preach it.* And, thirdly, *how we preach it.*

I. First of all, WHAT WE PREACH. Paul is the model for all preachers and he says, "We preach Christ crucified."

In order to preach the gospel fully, there must be a very clear description of the person of Christ, and we preach Christ as God—not a man made into a God, nor a God degraded to the level of a man, not something between a man and a God, but, "very God of very God." He is one with His Father in every attribute—eternal, having neither beginning of days, nor end of years; omnipresent, filling all space; omnipotent, having all power in heaven and on earth. He is omniscient, knowing all things from eternity—the great Creator, Preserver and Judge of all—in all things the equal and the express image of the invisible God! If we err concerning the deity of Christ, we err everywhere! The gospel that does not reveal a divine Savior is no gospel at all—it is like a ship without a rudder—the first contrary wind that blows shall drive it to destruction and woe be to the souls that are trusting to it! No shoulders but those almighty ones which bear the earth's huge pillars can ever carry the enormous weight of human guilt and human need. We preach to you Christ, the son of Mary, once sleeping in His mother's arms, yet the infinite even while He was an infant! Christ the reputed son of Joseph, toiling in the carpenter's shop, yet being all the while the God who made the heavens and the earth! Christ, who had nowhere to lay His head, the despised and rejected of men, who is, nevertheless, "over all, God forever." Christ nailed to the accursed tree, bleeding at every pore and dying on the cross, yet, living forevermore. Christ suffering agonies that are indescribable, yet being at the same time the God at whose right hand there are pleasures forevermore. If Christ had not been man, He could not have sympathized with you and me, nor could He have suffered in our place. How could He have been the covenant head of the sons and daughters of Adam if He had not been made in all points like them, except that He was without sin? With that one exception, He was just as we are—bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh—yet He was as truly God as He was man, the one of whom Isaiah was inspired to prophesy, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." So, in preaching Christ crucified, we preach the glory of heaven conjoined with the beauty of earth—the perfection of humanity united with the Glory and dignity of deity!

Then, next, we must very clearly preach Christ as *the Messiah, the Sent One of God*. It had long been foretold that a great Deliverer would come who would be "a light to lighten the Gentiles," and to be the glory of His people, Israel, and Jesus of Nazareth was that promised Deliverer, of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write. He was sent of God to be the Savior of sinners. He took not this office upon Himself without authority, but He could truly say, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God." He became the substitute for sinners, but this did not happen accidentally, but by divine decree, for we read, "the Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all." A priest unordained, a prophet unsent of God, a king without divine authority would have been only a mockery—but our great High Priest was divinely anointed, our peerless prophet was sent of God and our king is King of kings and Lord of lords, rightly ruling as the eternal Son of the eternal Father! Sinner, this truth of God should bring you hope and comfort—the Christ whom we preach is the Lord's anointed! And what He does, He does by God's appointment. When He says to you, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," He speaks for His Father as well as for Himself, for He has the warrant of the eternal to support His declaration! Therefore, come confidently to Him and put your trust in Him!

When the preacher has laid a good solid foundation by preaching the person of Christ and the Messiahship of Christ, he must go on to preach *the work of Christ*. I can only give a brief summary of what would take all eternity to expound. We must so preach as to show how, in the everlasting covenant, Christ stood as the surety and representative of His people and how, in the fullness of time, He came forth from the ivory palaces dressed in the garments of flesh—and how He first worked out an active righteousness by the perfect obedience of His daily life—and at the last worked out a passive righteousness by His sufferings and death upon the cross. Beginning at the incarnation, going on to the great work of redemption, telling of Christ's burial, resurrection, ascension, intercession before His Father's throne and glorious second coming, we have a theme that angels might well covet—a theme that may well awaken hope in the sinner's heart!

But it is especially *Christ crucified* whom we are to preach. His wounds and bruises remind us that we must tell you that "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." It is at Calvary that salvation is to be found! Where Jesus bowed His head and gave up the ghost, He overcame the powers of darkness and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers! There is one word that every true servant of Christ must be able to speak very distinctly—that word is substitution. I believe that substitution is the keyword to all true theology—Christ standing in the place of sinners and numbered with the transgressors because of their transgressions, not His own—Christ paying our debts and discharging all our liabilities. This truth of God involves, of

course, our taking Christ's place as He took ours, so that all believers are beloved, accepted, made heirs of God and, in due time, shall be glorified with Christ forever! Brother ministers, whatever you fail to preach, make your hearers always clearly understand that there is a divine and all sufficient substitute for sinners—and that all who put their trust in Him shall be eternally saved!

When we have preached Christ thus, we must also preach His offices. We must preach Him as the one great High Priest who always lives to make intercession for us. We must preach Him as the prophet whose words are divine and, therefore, come to us with an authority that cannot be set aside. And we must mind that we always preach Him as King, putting the crown of praise upon His royal head and claiming from His people the unfaltering allegiance and loyalty of their hearts—and the undivided service of their lives!

We must also preach *the qualifications of Christ for His offices*. Is He a husband? We must tell how loving and how tender He is. Is He a shepherd? We must proclaim His patience, His power, His perseverance—and we must especially tell of His self-sacrificing love in laying down His life for His sheep. Is He a Savior? We must show how He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him. We must talk much of the gentleness that will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. We must delight to speak of Christ as bending over the broken in heart, binding up their wounds and having His ears always open to hear the cry of a contrite spirit! It is the character of Christ that is the magnet that attracts sinners to Himself—and upon this blessed theme one might go on speaking forever! When Rutherford was talking of the beauties of the Christ whom he loved so dearly, one of his hearers was compelled to cry out, "Now, mon, you are on the right string, keep to that!" And, indeed, this is a theme that might stir the stammerer to speak with power and make the very dumb to be eloquent for Christ! Oh, how glorious is our blessed Lord! With the spouse we may well say, "Yes, He is altogether lovely." We cannot exaggerate His excellence and charms and it must be our constant aim to paint such a portrait of Him that sinners may fall in love with Him and trust Him to save them with His great salvation!

We must mind that we always preach Christ as *the sinner's only hope*. In the olden times, there were certain simpletons who sought after a universal remedy for all diseases—a cure-all. But their search was in vain. All the advertisements of quack medicines that ever deceived silly people will never convince sensible folk that such a cure-all for all the diseases to which flesh is heir has ever been or will ever be discovered. Yet there is a cure-all for the diseases of the soul, and that cure-all is Christ! Be your disease what it may—the raging fever of lust, the shivering fits of doubts and fears, or the fell consumption of despair—Jesus Christ can heal you! Whatever form sin may take—whether it is the blind eye, or the deaf ear, or the hard, stony heart, or the dull, seared conscience—there is a medicine in the veins of Jesus that we may well call the divine heal all! No case that was ever submitted to Christ has baffled His skill and He is still "mighty to save." We must be very clear in telling the sinner that there is

no hope for him anywhere else but in Christ. Nine out of ten of the arrows in a minister's quiver ought to be shot at the sinner's good works, for these are his worst enemies. That "deadly doing" that needs to be cast "down at Jesus' feet"—that *trying to be* or *to feel something* in order that they may save themselves—this is the curse of many! O Sinner, if from the crown of your head to the soles of your feet, there is no sound part in you, but you are full of wounds, bruises and putrefying sores, yet, if you will but believe in Jesus, He will make you whole every whit, and you shall go your way a sinner saved by grace!

We must also preach Christ as *the Christian's only joy*. We needed Christ as a life buoy when we were sinking in the waves of sin, but we need Him to be our meat and our drink, now that He has brought us safely to land. When we were sick through sin, we needed Christ as medicine, but now that He has restored our soul, we need Him as our continual nourishment. There is no lack which a Christian ever has which Christ cannot fully supply and there is nothing in Christ which is not useful to a Christian. You know that some things that we have are good, but they are not altogether of service to us. For instance, fruit is good, but there is the skin to be pared off and the seed to be thrown away. But when Christ gives Himself to us, we may take the whole of Him and enjoy Him to our heart's content! Everything Christ is and everything Christ has, is ours. Therefore, Christian, make a covenant with your hands that you will lay hold on Christ's cross for your only confidence! Make a covenant with your eyes that you will look nowhere for light but to the Sun of Righteousness! Make a covenant with your whole being that it shall be crucified with Christ and then be taken up to heaven to live and reign with Him forever! Yes, let this be the utterance of your heart—

"You, O Christ, are all I need,
More than all in You I find."

II. Now, secondly, TO WHOM ARE WE TO PREACH THIS?

Possibly, one brother says, "You ought to preach Christ to the *elect*." But how are we to know who are the elect? I read a sermon, some time ago, in which the minister said, "I have been preaching to the living in Zion—the rest of you are dead and I have nothing to say to you. The election has obtained it and the rest are blinded." Preachers of that sort have life to preach to the living, medicine to prescribe for those who are whole, but what is the good of that? Fancy Peter standing up with the 11 on the day of Pentecost and saying to the crowd gathered around them, "I do not know how many of you who are here are elect, but I have to say to you that the election has obtained it and the rest are blinded." How many would have been converted and added to the church through such a message as that? Now Peter was, at that time, filled with the Spirit—and it was by divine inspiration that he preached Christ crucified to the whole of that mixed multitude and then, when they were pricked in their heart and cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" He was equally inspired when he answered, "Repent, and be baptized, every one

of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

I mean to do as Peter did, for I regard Christ's commission to His disciples as binding upon us today—"Go you into all the world, and *preach the gospel to every creature*." I cannot tell whether every creature to whom I preach is elect or not, but it is my business to preach the gospel to all whom I can reach, resting assured that all of them whom God has chosen unto eternal life will certainly accept it! When a certain clergyman asked the Duke of Wellington, "Does Your Grace think it is any use preaching the gospel to the Hindus?" he simply replied, "What are your marching orders?" As a soldier, he believed in obeying orders. And when the clergyman answered that the orders were, "Preach the gospel to every creature," the Duke said, "Then your duty is quite clear. Obey your Master's orders and don't you trouble, about anybody else's opinions."

The main business of a true minister is to *preach the gospel to sinners* and he is never so happy as when he is preaching to those who know themselves to be sinners! When he is preaching to those who are self-righteous, he is in great trouble about the effect of his message, for he fears that it may prove to be a savor of death unto death to them. But when he meets with those who sorrowfully confess that they are guilty, lost and undone, then he rejoices in hope of blessed results from his preaching. He feels that he is now among fish that will soon take the bait, so he drops his line into the river and soon has the joy of bringing many to land! He knows that bread is always sweetest to hungry men and that even bitter medicine will be eagerly swallowed by the man who its very ill and who longs to be cured. He understands that it is the naked that need to be clothed and the penniless who clamor for alms. O sinners, if you realize that you are foul and vile, full of all manner of evil, with nothing of your own that is worthy to be called good—and if you are longing to be delivered from evil of every sort and to be made holy as God is holy, I am glad that my Master has given me in His word such a message as this for you—"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Still, a true minister of Christ will not confine his preaching to sinners who are sensible of their guilt, but he will *preach the gospel to sinners of all ages*. To the young, whose lives have not yet been defiled by the vices of age, he preaches Christ crucified as the children's Savior and he is glad, indeed, when the boys and the girls trust in Jesus and are saved. To you who have reached middle life, he preaches Christ crucified as the balm for every wound, the cordial for all care and thankful is he when you, also, are saved by grace through faith in Jesus! To the old and gray headed, to the decrepit, to those on the very verge of the tomb, he still preaches Christ crucified! If he could find a sinner who had reached the age of Methuselah, he would have the same gospel to preach to him, for he knows that there is no Savior but the crucified Christ of Calvary! And he also knows that, old or young, or if neither old nor young—all who trust Him are immediately saved and saved forever!

And as he preaches Christ to sinners of every age, he also *preaches Christ to sinners of every rank*. He has nothing better than Christ to preach to queens, princes and nobles—and he has nothing less than Christ to preach to peasants, artisans, or paupers—Christ crucified for men of letters and learning and Christ crucified equally for the ignorant and illiterate!

He also *preaches Christ to sinners of every sort*, even to the atheist, the man who says there is no God! He bids him believe and live. He preaches Christ to the openly profane. When they pause for a while in their swearing, he tells them of that great oath which God has sworn, "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his way and live." We preach Christ to the harlots in the street and oh, how joyfully have many of them received Him and how gladly have they found cleansing from their foul stains in Jesus' precious blood! We preach Christ to the drunk, for we believe that nothing but the grace of God can rescue him from his degradation and sin—and many such sinners haves we seen reclaimed by the gospel!

The preaching of Christ crucified, the lifting up of the dying Son of God, "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," has power enough to turn the whole world upside down and to change innumerable sinners into saints, so we mean to keep on *preaching Christ to all sinners of all sorts*! We do not intend to leave out one, not even you, my friend, who think you are left out, or ought to be left out. We know that there is a book of life before the throne of God and that no more names can be written there—they were all recorded before the foundation of the world when the Father gave to Christ those who are to be eternally His. We cannot mount up to heaven to read the names that are written there, but we believe the list contains millions upon millions of names of those who have not yet trusted in Christ, so we mean to keep on preaching Christ to sinners of every age, of every rank, of every sort, of every degree of blackness and vileness! And we believe that "there is yet room," there is yet mercy for the miserable, there is yet forgiveness for the guilty who will come and trust in Jesus Christ and Him crucified!

III. Now, lastly, HOW OUGHT WE TO PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED?

I think, first, we ought to preach Christ very boldly. I recollect a young man going into a pulpit to address a small congregation, and he began by saying that he hoped they would pardon his youth and forgive his impertinence in coming to speak to them. Some foolish old gentleman said, "How humble that young man is to talk like that!" But another, who was wiser, though he was younger, said, "What a dishonor to his Lord and Master! If God sent him with a message to these people, what does it matter whether he is young or old? Such mock modesty as that is out of place in the pulpit." I think that second man was right and the first one wrong. A true minister of the gospel is an ambassador for Christ and do our ambassadors go to foreign courts with apologies for carrying messages from their sovereign? It would be a gross insult to the crown of these realms if they showed such humility as that in their official capacity! Let

ministers of the gospel keep their modesty for other occasions when it ought to be manifested, but let them not dishonor their Master and discredit His message as that silly young man did! When we preach Christ crucified, we have no reason to stammer, or stutter, or hesitate, or apologize—there is nothing in the gospel of which we have any cause to be ashamed! If a minister is not sure about his message, let him keep quiet till he is sure about it! We believe and, therefore, we speak with the accent of conviction! If I have not proved the power of the gospel in my own heart and life, I am a base impostor to be standing in this pulpit to preach that gospel to others! But as I do most assuredly know that I am saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and as I feel certain that I have been divinely called to preach His gospel—

"Shall I, for fear of feeble man,
The Spirit's course in me restrain?
Or undismayed in deed and word,
Be a true witness for my Lord?"

But while we preach Christ boldly, we must also preach Him *affectionately*. There must be great love in our proclamation of the truth of God. We must not hesitate to point out to sinners the state of ruin to which sin has brought them. And we must clearly set before them the divinely appointed remedy. But we must mingle a mother's tenderness with a father's sternness. Paul was like both mother and father, in a spiritual sense, in his ministry. He wrote to the Galatians, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." And to the Corinthians he wrote, "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." And every true minister of Christ can, in his measure, sympathize with him in both those experiences. Yes, sinners, we do, indeed, love you! Often our heart is well near broken with the longing we have to see you saved! We wish we could preach to you with Baxter's tearful eyes—no, rather with the Savior's melting heart and all-consuming zeal!

Then, next, we must preach *Christ only*. With Paul, every true minister ought to be able to say to his hearers, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." The preacher must never mix up anything else with the gospel. Every time he preaches, he must still have the same old theme, "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Christ is the Alpha of the gospel and He is the Omega, too! The first letter of the gospel alphabet and the last letter—and all the letters in between! It must be Christ, *Christ*, CHRIST from beginning to end! There must be no work mongering or anything else mixed up with Christ! There must be no daubing with untempered mortar in our building upon Christ, the one foundation that is laid once for all!

The preacher must also mind that he preaches Christ *very simply*. He must break up his big words and long sentences and pray against the temptation to use them. It is usually the short, dagger like sentence that does the work best. A true servant of Christ must never try to let the people see how well he can preach. He must never go out of his way to drag a pretty piece of poetry in his sermon, nor to introduce some fine quotations from the classics. He must employ a simple, homely style, or such a style as God has given him. And he must preach Christ so plainly

that his hearers can not only understand him, but that they *cannot misunderstand* him even if they try to do so!

Now as the time has gone, I must close by saying that we must try to preach Christ *savingly*. O sinners, I would that you would trust Christ this very moment! Do you realize how great your danger is? Unconverted soul, you are standing, as it were, over the mouth of hell on a single plank—and that plank is rotten! Man, you may be in your grave before another Sabbath dawns and then, if unsaved, you will be in hell! Beware lest you are taken away unprepared, for if that is your unhappy lot, there will be no ransom that can deliver your lost soul from going down to the Pit! See your need of Christ, sinner, and lay hold of Him by faith! None but Christ can save you! Christ is the Way! You may go about all your days trying to find another entrance to heaven, but you will not find it for this is the only one. Why will you not come to God by Christ? Why are you so ungrateful as to despise the long suffering mercy of God? Will not the goodness of God lead you to repentance? Shall Christ die for sinners and yet will you, O sinner, turn away from Him who alone can give you life? If you will but trust Him, He will save you! Your sins, which are many, shall all be forgiven you! You shall be adopted into the family of God and in due time you shall find yourself in heaven to go no more out forever! If you would be happy. If you would enjoy the peace that passes all understanding. If you would have *two* heavens—a heaven below and a heaven above—trust in Jesus, sinner, trust in Jesus this very moment! Go not out of this building unsaved. One believing look will bring you salvation, for—

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

Look unto Him, look unto Him now! May the Holy Spirit enable you to look and live, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 CORINTHIANS 1.

Verses 1, 2. *Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth.* Note the humility of Paul in associating with himself an almost unknown brother, Sosthenes. Although the letter is written by Paul, yet, as if he did not care to stand in isolation even for a moment, he associates Sosthenes with himself in the salutation—"Unto the church of God which is at Corinth."

2. *To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints.* Called to sacred uses, set apart unto God. That is the call of all believers—they are like those vessels of the sanctuary which were not to be used by any but the priests of God, and by them only for God's service.

2. *With all who in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.* That is a very happy phrase, "both theirs and

ours." There are multitudes of saints whose faces we never saw, yet Christ is theirs. There are some with whom we might not agree in all particulars, yet Christ is theirs just as much as He is ours. All Christ is theirs, and all Christ is ours, and here is the grand bond of union between believers of different nationalities and different tongues.

3. *Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.* Grace first, for that is the fountain. Then peace comes, for that is the fitting stream to flow from the fountain of grace. Seek not peace first, for there is no peace for unregenerate man! Grace first, then peace, and "both must come from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

4. *I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ.* That is wisely written, for Paul was about to upbraid these Corinthians for many serious faults, yet he begins by acknowledging that they had certain excellences. It gives you a ground to stand upon if you are willing to see all that is good in those whom you have to rebuke. But Paul did not merely use this as a polite way of commencing his epistle. He really did, every day, thank God for the divine grace which these Corinthians had! Yet how seldom do we thank God for the grace that He has given to other people, especially if they outshine us, if they do more for the cause of God than we do—then we half regret that they have so much grace! But it was not so with Paul.

5, 6. *That in everything you are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you.* [See Sermon #2875, Volume 50—CONFIRMING THE WITNESS OF CHRIST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The church at Corinth was an important church, with more than the usual number of speaking men among the members. This led to mischief, but had they known how to use this talent aright, the church at Corinth might have been of great service! Instead, it split itself up into little parties and became one of the worst churches that then existed, as certain communities which imitate them in this present day, have also done.

7, 8. *So that you come behind in no gift: waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that we may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Paul continues to recognize the abundance of their endowments and to express for them the utmost of affection. And then he adds his full conviction that God would prove the power of His grace by keeping them unto the end, and then presenting them "blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

9. *God is faithful, by whom you were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.* [See Sermon #2580, Volume 44—PARTNERSHIP WITH CHRIST—Read/download the entire sermon free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] As Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "Faithful is He that calls you, who also will do it." To be called by the faithful God is the guarantee of everlasting salvation!

10. *Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that you be perfectly joined together in the same kind and in the*

same judgment. They could not speak the same thing if they had not the same mind and the same judgment. Paul dreaded the introduction of anything that would divide the hearts of believers, one from another, and, beloved, let every one of us, wherever we go, be on the side of Christian truth, Christian unity and Christian love. There is no true unity outside of truth of God and the nearest way to Christian union is union in the truth of God! When error shall be destroyed, that which divides will be taken away. When truth is dominant, union will be universal, but it will not be so before that is the case.

11. *For it has been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by they which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.* He does not go beating about the bush, but he speaks straight out and gives the name of his informants, for persons who bring reports about others should always be ready to have their names mentioned. It may be unpleasant for them, but it is sometimes necessary to do unpleasant things and those who will not allow their names to be mentioned in connection with a statement adverse to character, deserve no notice whatever.

12. *Now this I say, that every one of you says, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.* The last were as bad as the others—it makes no difference what the party name is—for it may only thinly conceal the most sectarian spirit to say, "I am of Christ."

13. *Is Christ divided?* Paul begins with that, for it is the worst of all divisions to make Christ the head of a party in His own church!

13-16. *Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius, lest any should say that I had baptized in my own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides I know not whether I baptized any other.* Paul considered that it was a providential circumstance that He had baptized no more of them, else they would have cried themselves up as superior to those who had been baptized by others.

17. *For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.* It is true that baptism is in the original commission of all Christ's servants, but it occupies a very secondary place compared with the preaching of the gospel! It was an evil day when the Christian church began to put rites before doctrines, and ceremonies in the place that should be occupied by the gospel, itself! Paul therefore says that his main commission was "not to baptize, but to preach the gospel."

18-20 *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?* Indeed He has! He has let it run the full length of its tether so that we may see the folly that can be taught by wise men!

21. *For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that be-*

lieve. Not by foolish preaching, but by that preaching which men call foolishness.

22. *For the Jews require a sign.* They were always looking for supernatural manifestations.

22. *And the Greeks seek after wisdom.* They would believe nothing but what could be proved to them by logic.

23-25. *But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.* They call it foolishness, but it is wiser than men's wisdom! God at His lowest (if we can imagine such a thing) is wiser than man at his highest "and the weakness of God (if such a thing could be) is stronger than men."

26-28. *For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of this world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are.* [See Sermon #587, Volume 10—GOD'S STRANGE CHOICE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Those that do not even seem to have an existence—those that are so despicable that men do not deign to take any account of them—these are the very ones with which God shall break in pieces the many mighty errors of all the ages!

29-31 *That no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that gloried, let him glory in the Lord.*

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"HE BLESSED HIM THERE"
NO. 3219

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He blessed him there."
Genesis 32:29.

JACOB had said to the angel, "Tell me, I pray You, Your name." In answer to that inquiry, he was gently rebuked. The angel did not come to ratify Jacob's curiosity, but He came as a messenger from God with a blessing—"and He blessed him there." There are a great many things we would like to know when we read the Bible. But if we read it so as to find salvation, that will be much better than having our curiosity gratified. When we come to hear a sermon, too, we should like, perhaps, to meet with some fine passages, or to have some telling anecdotes that we could carry away with us. But if, instead, the Lord's messenger shall give us a blessing from God, Himself, it will be infinitely better! The disciples, after the Resurrection, wanted to know from the Savior something about the times and seasons, but He did not tell it to them. He said to them, "You shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you." That was far better, far more valuable to them—and though for the time it might not please them so much, yet, for all practical purposes, it enriched them far more! Angels' names we can afford to leave, but God's blessing we must have and we cannot do without it!

I. Let us just think, for a minute or two, WHAT THIS BLESSING WAS WHICH JACOB GAINED AS THE RESULT OF A NIGHT OF PRAYER.

I wonder whether anybody here has ever spent a night in prayer. Is there a man among us who has ever wrestled with the angel for so long? Alas, I am afraid to put the question and ask for an answer lest I should only gain one through your silence! Brothers and sisters, it is not easy to continue for a whole night in prayer. It has been well observed that it is easier to hear a sermon two hours long than to pray for an hour. The more spiritual the exercise, the sooner we tire. Joshua was not weary of fighting in the valley, but Moses' hands began to grow weary with holding them up in prayer. Yet surely there have been times in our lives, as in that of Jacob's, when a night of prayer would have been becoming. Surely we have been in as great straits and struggles as he was and have needed the benediction of heaven as did that much tried patriarch. Perhaps it would be well, before long, to try to accomplish this feat and wait, from sunset to sunrise with God. The old knights, before they took a higher degree of knighthood, spent a night in some church and were supposed to be in prayer. He that shall really spend a night in prayer

shall win celestial blessings. He shall lie down a Jacob, but he shall rise up a prince! There is a distinct advance from Jacob to Israel, from being a supplanter to being a prince! Prayer gives an incalculable blessing and this is the advance Jacob gained—an incomparable advance in spiritual things.

But besides that, he gained as the blessing attending that night's prayer, *deliverance out of great peril*. He thought that he and his would have been slain by Esau, but the angel blessed him and not a single lamb of all his flock was hurt, neither were the women and children put to the slightest fear! Prayer brought down heaven's shield to cover Jacob in the hour of danger!

Again, he got what was still better under some aspects, *reconciliation with his brother*. He had done his brother grievous wrong, but his brother forgave him. I do not know, but I think a Christian would almost sooner be exposed to peril than live under a sense of having committed an injustice. It is a great relief to your mind, when you have done so, to find it all set right again. To think, "I did that man a wrong, but it is gone and forgiven forever," is a blessing worth praying all night to obtain!

Happy was Jacob, also, to have *the breach healed between himself and his brother.* To meet him, fall upon his neck and kiss him—to feel that being so near akin they should no longer be divided in heart. Are you divided from your brother? Has any root of bitterness sprung up to trouble you? Have the friendships of life been curdled by dislike? It were well to have a night of prayer to get them back again—and again to serve side by side with your fellows. I take it to be a vast blessing to a Christian to be delivered from the temptation to retaliate, to be saved from all hardness of heart and bitterness of spirit. The angel, when He gave Jacob that, blessed him, indeed!

Besides all these blessings—in addition to having risen in rank before God, to having had his wrong amended, to having been forgiven by his brother, to being restored to friendship—I do not doubt that from that night a blessing rested upon Jacob's heart and the dews of that night fed his soul for years to come! He was anointed with fresh oil from that moment! And as he rose, limping upon his thigh, he was not merely a better man by title, but better by nature! He had been away in a far off country with Laban and much of the dew of his spirit had gone from him. But now that he had got back again into Canaan, the angel sealed his return by giving him the blessings of the return!

Such were the blessings of Jacob and I should not wonder if there is someone here who has said, "I know in a measure, personally, what those blessings are and wish I enjoyed them to the fullest." My prayer, beloved brothers and sisters, is that even tonight God may bless you! According to your necessity, may He shape the blessing, but oh, may He bless you, indeed, and bless you here!

II. Now, secondly, let us inquire, WHAT WAS THE PLACE WHERE JACOB GOT THIS CHOICE BLESSING?

And the answer comes, first, it was a place of very peculiar trial. He had just got out of Laban's clutches to fall in the way of Esau. He had fled from a lion and now a bear met him—and he feared that his wives and children would be utterly destroyed by his revengeful brother. It was a fearful trial and the mere fear of it must have left scars on his heart. Yet, "He blessed him there." Is not this a very usual circumstance with the people of God, that their severest trials are the times of their choicest mercies? I remind you how often this has been the case, and how true Cowper's words have been—

"The clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head."

Believe that, for the present trial in which you are, perhaps, now entering, it shall be written, "He blessed him there where He tried him." He will bless you there, where He is trying you—in the waters, in the furnace when you are being refined again and again, and the hot coals are being heaped upon you—He will bless you there! The disciples feared, we are told, as they entered into the cloud, but it was there that they saw the Savior transfigured. And often we fear the cloud into which we enter when we are only passing into the secret place of the Most High, where, under the shadow of the Almighty, we shall have yet more delightful visions of Himself!

If we were wise, we would begin to welcome trials. We would rather fear to be without them for, up till now, what do we not owe to the furnace, to the rod, to the threshing flail? Scarcely has a mercy of any great spiritual value come to us at all except by the way of the cross! I am sure I may look upon every choice blessing I have enjoyed as having come to me in rumbling wagons like the good things which came from Egypt to old father Jacob. We have been blessed in places of trial—let us not, therefore, dread to go to such places again, but go on our way towards heaven feeling that whatever difficulty we meet with shall only be another of the spots in which God shall bless us. "He blessed him there."

It was also a place of pleading. That is most noteworthy. "He blessed him there," where he had spent a night in prayer. Where he had a wrestling match with an unknown stranger. There where he would not let the angel go. There where he held Him fast until he gained the benediction. "He blessed him there." If you are short of blessings, resort to the place of mighty prayer—

"Beyond your utmost needs
His love and power can bless!
To praying souls He always grants
More than they can express."

All things are open to the man who knows how to pray importunately. "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force." Mark you, Jacob's wrestling was no child's play. I have seen painters attempt to depict it and only now and then have they caught the true idea. But one of them represents Jacob as trying most lustily to give his an-

tagonist a back fall and, no doubt, he did tax his strength to the utmost until, in the dead of night, he was faint—faint with the toil he had gone through.

Begging of God must be real work. It is said of begging that it is the worst trade in the world, but a man who is to make anything of prayer must throw his whole soul into it. Your prayers that have hardly life enough in them to live, your words that hang like icicles beneath your tongues, that are scarcely heard even by yourselves, how do you think that they will be heard by God? If there is not enough prayer in us to stir our own hearts, how can we expect that God should be moved by our entreaties? It was not so with Jacob—"He blessed him there." There he prevailed, and if you want a blessing, you must get it in that way. When you get to the state that you will take no denial—that you would sooner die than not be blessed—you shall get it.

Again, in addition to its being a place of trial and a place of pleading, *it was a place of communion*. Do you recognize it? Jacob called it, "Peniel"—that is, "the face of God"—because there he had seen God face to face. O beloved, these are things to feel rather than to speak about! To see God! Blessed, indeed, are "the pure in heart" when they get this benediction fulfilled in their experience and come so into union with Christ as to be able to look to God with an eye that is not blinded with fear! Oh to speak with God, pouring out our hearts before Him and to hear Him speaking with us, the promise no longer lying like a dead letter on the page, but leaping out of the page as though alive, as though God had just spoken it and we were hearing it from His divine mouth! Do you know what this blessing means? Can you read Solomon's Song through and stay, "I understand it"? Is it your experience that you have ever fed on the body and blood of Christ, having His very life in you? If you have, then you have seen God and it will be said of you, "He blessed him there." Brothers and sisters, we miss a thousand blessings because we are too busy to commune with God! We are here, there, and everywhere, except where we ought to be. We are running to this and to that instead of sitting with Mary at the Master's feet. He blessed Mary as she sat there, and there, too, will He be sure to bless us—

"Oh that I could forever sit
With Mary at the Master's feet!
Be this my happy choice—
My only care, delight and bliss,
My joy, my heaven on earth, be this—
To hear the Bridegroom's voice!"

But once more. Where Jacob got the blessing, *it was a place of conscious weakness*. The angel touched the sinew in the hollow of his thigh. While he got the blessing, he got lameness, too, and he might be well content to carry that lameness to his grave! I have often found that the place where I have seen most of my own insignificance, baseness, unbelief and depravity has been the place where I have found a great blessing. Did you ever try to preach and fail in the doing of it—and then found that God blessed you there? Have you ever tried to be earnest with the Sun-

day school children and were earnest, too, but in your own judgment you made a fool of yourself? Have you not found that God blessed you there? Is it not one of the greatest blessings that can occur to us to be made to think little of ourselves? May not God be enriching us most when He is emptying us and preparing us for the largest possible benediction when He is making us to see how destitute in all things we are?

The most unpleasant places to us in life are often the places where the blessing comes most. "He blessed him there." He took the rich man from his palace and made him live in a cottage, but, "He blessed him there." He took the strong man from his vigor and laid him on a sick bed. But, "He blessed him there." He brought down the man of full assurance into a state of trembling and anxiety, but, "He blessed him there." He brought the man of busy usefulness down to be a patient sufferer, unable to stir hand or foot for the Lord he loved so well, but, "He blessed him there." He took the man of good repute and allowed his character to be evilly spoken of—and his good name to be withered—but, "He blessed him there." It is often so. We limp with lameness, with shrinking of the sinew, the precious thing wherein our strength seemed to lie! But that may be the very way to a benediction which otherwise we would never have received.

I would then encourage each one of you to seek a blessing, wherever you may be. I think most of you have been in the house of trial—seek to get a blessing there. The place of pleading, at any rate, is open to you all—get a blessing there. The sacred spot of communion—we may get the blessing that is always to be found there. And I suppose most of you have had your times of tumbling, of stripping and getting very low—may you get a blessing there!

III. So I turn to notice very briefly that THERE ARE OTHER PLACES WHERE CHRISTIANS GET BLESSINGS besides the place where Jacob won his.

Beloved, there is a place (how shall I speak of it?) where the Lord has always blessed us. It is *of old in eternity*. God is so glad to bless His people that He began doing it long ago! "Long ago," do I say? He began before time began! He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world. When the decree was given, when the covenant was established, when the election was determined, He blessed each one of us there, if indeed we are believers in Jesus—

"Sons we are through God's election,
Who in Jesus Christ believe
By eternal destination,
Sovereign grace we here receive!
Lord, Your mercy
Does both grace and glory give."

I might point to a thousand spots all down the line of history and say that all of us who are in Christ were blessed there! But I will only linger at the cross and say, "Where Jehovah was made a curse for us and suf-

fered in our place, He blessed us there! And at that open, empty tomb, from which escaped the living Savior whom the bands of death could not hold, He blessed us there! He who died for our transgression, rose again for our justification and by His resurrection—He blessed us there! And when He stood on Olivet about to depart and pronounced the blessing upon His disciples, He blessed us there! And as He ascended up on high, leading captivity captive—from His royal chariot He cast down lavishly with, both His hands ten thousand gifts for the sons of men which He had received even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them—He blessed us there! And up in heaven where He sits till His work is done, He points to His wounds, and points to our names, and reminds the Father of His eternal love to us! He has blessed us there, for He has raised us up and "made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

But as *there are places in your own experience*, Beloved, where He has blessed you, I would take some of you back in your history to the moment when you first knew the Lord. I often try to refresh your memories about that—and I do not think I can do it too often. Where was the spot when, laden with woes and sins, you saw Jesus Christ and looked to Him and at once were lightened? Where was it? When was it? Twenty years ago, perhaps. With some of us, more than that! With others, only two or three years ago. With others of you, perhaps, it is only a week ago! Well, whenever it was, when He led you to see the Savior, He blessed you, there, as you never had been experimentally blessed before! I should not wonder if the day is marked down in your diary, though there is little need it should be, for it is marked on the tablets of your memory and you will never forget it. O blessed spot! O happy moment when Jesus first met with me! He blessed me there! Well, since that time, have there not been other places where He has blessed you?

I might mention every trial you have had and say, "He blessed you there." I might mention every benefit you have received and say, "He blessed you there." But time would fail me. Only I will remind you that when you have been prompt to obey your Lord and keep close to Him—and have not allowed any cloud to come between you and Him, He has blessed you there! If you have kept up that spirit of obedience, take care to let your eyes be to Him as the eyes of a handmaiden are to her mistress, for He will bless you there! And have you not found that when you have been most empty and had least self-reliance, He has blessed you there? When you have been very weak and little in your own esteem, and felt that you were nothing, and less than nothing, and ready to die—has He not blessed you there? When you have been kept low, without an ambitious thought, down on the very ground before Him and have been afraid to look up from a sense of unworthiness, has He not blessed you there? Oh, then, keep to the low places! There is no place so safe as the Valley of Humiliation—

"He that is down need fear no fall,
He that is low, no pride."

He has blessed you there! It would be difficult for me to say where God has *not* blessed me. Wherever He has led me, wherever He has directed me, seeking His blessing I have found it and, therefore, will I bear my witness to His faithfulness.

Well, by and by, when your time will come to die, He will bless you there. Before that time, you may be a sufferer, but He will bless you there. You may lose the dear husband who now is your strength, or the beloved wife who now is your comfort, but He will bless you there! You may have to go to the grave with one child after another—and you yourself may be very weak and scarcely have life left within you, but He will bless you there! What He has been He will be. If God could change, we might doubt, but since He never changes and is without shadow of turning, let us look back through the many days since we first met Him and He met us. Remember that we have been held up till now and that He has helped us in every time of need! And then ask—

"After so much mercy past,
Will He let us sink at last?"

What I am saying is very commonplace and might suggest itself to anybody here. But, at the same time, when you get into trouble, it does not always suggest itself and you have need to be reminded of these simple principles. He blessed you there, and in such places He will bless you again!

One more word about that, and it is this. Has not He often blessed you *in the house of prayer*? Has He not blessed you in listening to the gospel? I know He has. Never, therefore, neglect the house of God. Has He not blessed you at the prayer meeting? Cannot you say, "He blessed me there"? Well, then, let us see your face there as often as possible! Has He not blessed you at the communion table? Oh, if there is under heaven an ordinance that is Christ's mirror. If there is under heaven a hand that can withdraw the blind and pull up the lattices and let us see the King in His beauty, it is the Lord's Supper! He has often blessed us there! Let those who despise the table of the Lord stay away—but those who have got the blessing will wish to be there often and come again and again, saying, "Sirs, we would see Jesus."

IV. We have seen what Jacob's blessing was and where God blessed Jacob. We remember where He has blessed us and now, in the last place, let me ask, IS NOT THIS ONE OF THE PLACES WHERE WE MAY EXPECT HIM TO BLESS US?

Is there a man here who, never, to his own knowledge, had a blessing from God and who is saying, "I wish God would bless me, even me"? Are you willing, if God helps you, to give up all your sins? Would you wish to be clear of them? Well, soul, if you desire that, God will bless you right now! For, if you would be rid of sin, God also wishes you to be rid of it—and so you and He are agreed. He will be sure to blot your sins out and tread them under His feet through His dear Son, Jesus Christ. Do you say that you need a blessing? I will put another question to you. Are you

willing to have Jesus Christ be your Savior, not in part, but altogether? Will you let Christ be the first and the last? Will you take Him not to be a makeweight, but a Savior who can save you from head to foot, who can give His blood to cleanse you, His righteousness to cover you, Himself to be all in all to you? Soul, if you will take a whole Christ, He waits to be received by you! Only trust Him and He is yours! "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God."

There was a soul, once, that wanted Christ and, "He blessed him there!" There was a soul once that wanted to be rid of sin and, "He blessed him there." There was a soul that said, "Lord, save or I perish!" And "He blessed him there." There was another whom said, "God be merciful to me, a sinner" and, "He blessed him there!" There was one that cried to Him and He did not seem to hear—but at last she came in the crowd and touched His garment's hem—and He blessed her there! And there was another whom He called a dog. "Yet," she said, "the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table," and He blessed her there! O anxious, seeking, timid, trembling souls, do trust in Jesus! Rest in Jesus and He will bless you now—and you shall go on your way rejoicing!

It was with a young man [*In this paragraph, Mr. Spurgeon was evidently describing his own experience at his conversion and afterwards*] a day of seeking and he entered a little sanctuary and heard a sermon from the words "Look unto Me, and be you saved." He obeyed the Lord's command and, "He blessed him there." Soon after, he made a profession of his faith before many witnesses, declaring his consecration to the Lord—and "He blessed him there." And soon he began to labor for the Lord in little rooms among a few people and, "He blessed him there." His opportunities enlarged and, by faith, he ventured upon daring things for the Lord's sake—and "He blessed him there." A household grew about him and together with his loving wife he tried to train his children in the fear of the Lord—and "He blessed him there." Then came sharp and frequent trials and he was in pain and anguish, but the Lord "blessed him there." This is that man's experience all along—from the day of his conversion to this hour! Uphill and down dale his path has been a varied one, but for every part of his pilgrimage he can praise the Lord, for, "He blessed him there."

There may perhaps, be some Christians here in trouble. Brother, sister, I do not ask you what your trouble is, and I do not want to know. But there is a little text I would like to whisper to you—"Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." Will you not trust to Him after that? If so, He will bless you there! Is your trouble concerning temporal need? Let me put this passage into your mouth as a sweet morsel, "Your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him." Suck that down and He will bless you there! Oh, what a blessing will come out of the marrow and fatness of that thought! Is there a poor Christian here who says, "I feel half ashamed to go to the communion table. I am so unworthy"? You never were worthy and never will be! Turn your eyes again to the cross! Look to the Savior for worthiness. He will bless you

there! "I feel so cold and chill," says another. Think of the Savior's love to poor, dead, cold sinners such as you are and He will bless you there! If you are very cold, it is no use thinking of the cold in order to get hot—the best thing is to go to the fire. And if you feel dull and dead, do not try to get better by looking within and examining yourself—fly away to Jesus Christ and He will bless you there! Let all of us now say, "Dear Lord, meet with us, show us Your hands and Your side." And if we come to His throne in that spirit of desire, He will bless us there!

The Lord be with us all, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 10:24-42.

Our Lord had been sending forth His 12 apostles to preach the gospel of the kingdom and to work miracles in His name. Having given them their commission, He warned them of the treatment they could expect to receive and then fortified their minds against the persecutions they would have to endure.

Verses 24, 25. *The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house, Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?* The name, Beelzebub, or Beelzebub, meaning the "god of filth" or, as some say, "the god of flies," was applied by the Jews to the very worst of the evil spirits. They supposed that there were some devils worse than others and the very head and master of them all they called Beelzebub. And now they supplied this title to our Lord Jesus, Himself! Well then, if men should give us evil names and evil characters, need we marvel? Shall Christ be spit upon and despised—and shall you and I be honored and exalted? You have heard of Godfrey de Bouillon, the crusader who entered Jerusalem in triumph, but who refused to have a golden crown put upon his head because, he said, he never would be crowned with gold where Christ was crowned with thorns. So do you expect to be honored in the world where your Lord was crucified?

26. *Fear them not, therefore, for there is nothing covered that shall be revealed; and hidden that shall not be known.* "They will misrepresent you, slander you and speak evil of you—but if your good name is covered up now, it shall be revealed one of these days—perhaps in this life, but if not in this life—certainly at the day of judgment "when the secrets of all hearts shall be made known." It is really marvelous how sometimes in this life slandered men suddenly obtain a refutation of their accusers and then it seems as if the world would serve them as the Greeks did their successful runners or wrestlers when they lifted them upon their shoulders and carried them in triumph!

27. *What I tell you in darkness, that speak you in light: and what you hear in the ear, that preach you upon the housetops.* [See Sermon #2674, Vol-

ume 46—LEARNING IN PRIVATE WHAT TO TEACH IN PUBLIC—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This is what we are to preach—what Christ tells us. And this is how we are to get the matter of our discourses—be alone with Christ, let Him talk to us in the darkness—in the quietude of the closet where we commune with Him in prayer. Then this is where we are to preach, "upon the housetops." We cannot literally do this, here in this land upon our slanting roofs, but in the East, "the housetops" were the most public places in the city—and all of them flat—so that anyone proclaiming anything from the housetops would be sure of an audience, and especially at certain times of the day! Preach, then, you servants of God, in the most public places of the land! Wherever there are people to hear, let there not be any lack of tongues to speak for God!

28. *And fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.* A philosopher—Anaxarchus, I think it was—was known to say when a certain tyrant had threatened to kill him, "You cannot kill me. You may crush this *body*, but you cannot touch Anaxarchus." So fear not those who cannot kill the soul—if that is safe, you are safe! Even Seneca frequently asserted that it was not in the power of any man to hurt a good philosopher, "For," he said, "even death is gain to such a man!" And certainly it is so to the Christian! For him to die is indeed gain! But oh, fear that God who can destroy the soul, for then the body, also, is destroyed with a terrible and tremendous destruction! "Fear Him."

29, 30. *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.* [See Sermon #187, Volume 4—PROVIDENCE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] So then, God takes more care of us than we take of ourselves. You never heard of a man who numbered the hairs of his head! Men number their sheep and their cattle, but the Christian is so precious in God's esteem that He takes care of the meanest parts of his frame and numbers even the hairs of his head!

31, 32. *Fear you not, therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows. Whoever, therefore, shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven.* What a glorious promise is this! "I will confess him to have been bought with My blood. I will confess him to have been My faithful follower and friend. I will confess him to be My brother, and in so doing I will favor him with a share of My glory." Have you confessed Christ before men? If you have trusted Him as your Savior, but have not publicly professed your faith in Him, however sincere you may be, you are living in the neglect of a known duty and you cannot expect to have this promise fulfilled to you if you do not keep the condition that is appended to it! Christ's promise is to confess those who confess Him. Be you, then, avowedly on the Lord's side. "Come out from among them and be you separate, says the Lord." Outside the camp the Savior suffered—and outside the camp must His disciples follow Him, bearing His reproach!

33. *But whoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven.* Not to confess Christ is practically to deny Him. Not to follow Him is to go away from Him. Not to be for Him is to be against Him. Looking at this matter of confessing Christ in that light, there is cause for solemn self-examination by all who regard themselves as His disciples.

34. *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.* Do not misunderstand the Savior's words! Christ's usually spoke in a very plain manner, and plainness is not always compatible with guardedness. Christ *did* come to make peace—this is the ultimate end of His mission, but for the present, Christ did not come to make peace. Wherever Christianity comes, it causes a quarrel because the light must always quarrel with the darkness and sin can never be friendly with righteousness! It is not possible that honesty should live in peace with thievery! It cannot be that there should be harmony between God's servants and the servants of the devil! In this sense, then, understand our Savior's words.

35, 36. *For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.* This is always the case, and I suppose will be to the end of the chapter. Whenever true religion comes into a man's heart and life, those who are without the grace of God, however near and dear they may be to him, will be sure to oppose him!

37-39. *He that loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that takes not his cross, and follows after Me, is not worthy of Me. He that finds his life shall lose it: and he that loses his life for My sake shall find it.* In the days of the martyrs, one man was brought before the judges and, through fear of the flames, he recanted and denied the faith. He went home, but before the year was ended his own house caught fire and he was miserably consumed in it, having had to suffer quite as much pain us he would have had to endure for Christ's sake but having no consolation in it. He found his life, yet he lost it. Now, in a higher degree, all who, to save themselves, shun the cross of Christ, only run into the fire to escape from the sparks! They shall suffer more than they would otherwise have done. But whoever is willing to give up everything for Christ shall learn that no man is ever really a loser by Christ in the long run! Sooner or later, if not in this life, certainly in the next, the Lord will abundantly make up to every man all that he has ever suffered for His sake. Now comes a very delightful passage—

40. *He that receives you, receives Me, and he that receives Me receives Him that sent Me.* When, therefore, you are kind to the poor. When you help the people of God in their difficulties and necessities, you are really helping Christ in the person of His poor but faithful followers!

41. *He that receives a prophet in the name of a prophet.* That is, not as a gentleman, nor merely as a man, nor as a talented individual, but as a prophet of God—

41. *Shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.* Just the same reward which God gives to prophets and righteous men, He will give to those who receive them in the name of a prophet or of a righteous man. A prophet's reward must be something great and such shall be the reward of those who generously receive the servants of God!

42. *And whoever shall give a drink unto one of these little ones—only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple—verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.* There have been times, even in our own country when to give "a cup of cold water" has been to run the risk of suffering death. In the dark days of persecution, some who were called heretics were driven out into the fields in the depth of winter to perish in the cold—the king's subjects were forbidden—upon pain of death, to give them anything either to eat or to drink. Now, in such a case as that, giving "a cup of cold water" would mean far more than if you or I simply gave a cup of water to someone who happened to be thirsty. But our Lord Jesus Christ here promises to reward any who, for His servants' sake, will dare to risk any consequences that may fall upon themselves.

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"A TIME TO LOVE"
NO. 3220

A SERMON PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1910, *DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,* AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 6, 1863.

"A time to love."
Ecclesiastes 3:8.

IF you will look at our text, dear friends, you will see that it is very ominously followed by the words, "and a time to hate." We are changeable creatures and we live in an ever changing world—and this chapter gives an accurate summary of how most of our lives are spent! "A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep and a time to cast away; a time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace." Ours is a checkered life. We are not long in any one state and we quickly change from one condition to another—which is sometimes better, but sometimes worse.

I am not going, however, to speak about these earthly variations, but about something that is of a far higher order. And I intend, first, to apply the text to *Christ's love to us*, for He had "a time to love." And then, secondly, to apply it to *our love to Him*, for we, also, have "a time to love."

I. First, then, concerning CHRIST'S LOVE TO US, for He had "a time to love."

Go back with me in thought, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, to *the council chamber of eternity*. God ordained that Adam, the great representative of the human race, would fall in the time of testing and that you and I and all mankind would be ruined by his fall. In His farseeing vision, He perceived all of us going astray like lost sheep and then arose the necessity for the appointment of a deliverer to rescue us from going down into the pit. No angels had been created, then, and even though they would be, not one in all the shining ranks, nor all of them combined, could have saved a single soul! The Savior who would be sufficient to accomplish this colossal task must be divine. Then was it with Christ "a time to love," and He came forward and entered into an everlasting covenant with His Father on His people's behalf. Let us never forget that

eternal council chamber where Christ undertook to be our surety and substitute and, in due time, to die for us, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

Now let your thoughts fly onward to that period when the fullness of time for the birth of Christ had come. Will Christ leave His throne, His Father's house, the company of the holy angels and the spirits of just men made perfect? Yes, that He will, for it is with Him now, once again, "a time to love." Stripping Himself of all His bright array and laying aside all His glory, He comes down to Bethlehem's lowly manger and there I see Him lying in His mother's arms, just as any other infant might have done, though He was so wondrously unlike any other child that was ever born! Having become incarnate and having come to live here on earth, it was absolutely necessary that a perfect righteousness should be worked out on behalf of His people. But in such a wicked world as this was then, and still is, this could only be accomplished through shame, reproach, rebuke and slander of the most abominable kind! Does someone ask, "Did He endure all that?" Yes, that He did, for it was with Him, "a time to love." He could truly say, "Reproach has broken My heart," yet He willingly bore it for His people's sake. The tongue of slander assailed Him so that even His miracles were attributed to satanic agency. On the cross, He was to reach the lowest depth of shame and to be "despised and rejected of men"—yet He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem—well knowing all that would befall Him there.

His death upon Calvary was, indeed, "a time to love," for having loved His own, He loved them even unto death! But did the immortal bow His head to mortality? Did the eternal hang in agony upon the accursed tree? Yes, that He did, for it was with Him, "a time to love," and many waters could not quench His love, neither could the floods drown it. Come with me, you who truly love Him, and whose hearts leap with joy as you think of His glory—come with me and see Him in His shame and suffering! There is your Lord and Master, of whom you have often sung—

"Crown Him, crown Him,
Crown Him Lord of all"—

yet look at Him now! You will not wonder to see Him so emaciated as you remember the agonies through which He has already passed. There was that dreadful night in Gethsemane when His griefs and woes were so terrible that His soul was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death and His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Then there was His betrayal by Judas, the forsaking by all His disciples, the denial by Peter, the mockery of trials before Annas and Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod, the scourging and the spitting and all the unknown agonies that He had to endure! Ah, beloved, we talk very calmly about all this, but what must it have been for Christ to suffer thus? Why, a little pain soon lets us see what cowards we are—a little spittle from slanderous tongues drives us almost to despair! We cannot endure much for our Lord's sake, but see how much He endured for our sake! Listen to Him

as He applies to Himself the prophetic language of David in the 22nd Psalm—"I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint: My heart is likes wax; it is melted within Me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd and My tongue cleaves to my jaws; and You have brought Me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed Me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed Me: they pierced My hands and My feet." Surely, now it is with Him, "a time to love." Our sins are piled upon Him in a tremendous load that would crush anyone else—and that makes even Him to cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" This was the love of which Charles Wesley sang—

"Stronger His love than death or hell,
Its riches are unsearchable—
The firstborn sons of light
Desire in vain its depths to see!
They cannot reach the mystery,
The length, and breadth, and height."

But has Christ ceased to love us now? Oh, no, beloved, *for every day and every moment is with Him, "a time to love."* Do you remember when you knew Him not, or only knew Him to despise Him? You went to the house of prayer, but you were godless and careless. You heard the preacher inviting his hearers to acknowledge Jesus as their King, but you said, "We will not have this man to reign over us!" Perhaps you were among those who cursed His name, profaned His Sabbaths and persecuted His people—yet it was with Him, "a time to love," and His great love was manifested toward you even when you were dead in sins! For Christ to love us when we love Him is gracious on His part, but for Him to love us when we hated Him is most wondrous of all! Strange, indeed, is it that it should have been with Him, "a time to love" when with us it was, "a time to hate."

Do you remember, too, my brothers and sisters, when you did kneel in secret before the Lord and your broken heart poured itself out in sighs and groans? When you did cry out from the depths of your soul, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," did not the Lord say to you, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you"? And was it not, then, with Him, "a time to love"? And since then you have sinned against Him again and again, yet He has loved you notwithstanding all! You have had many a time when your spirit was cast down within you, yet you have found that it was with your Lord, "a time to love" you. You have been many a time in the furnace of affliction, yet that, also, has been with your Lord, "a time to love" you! When you were despised by your fellows, when you were slandered and maligned, did Jesus forsake you? Has He ever proved false to you? Has His love toward you ever ceased? Has that fountain ever been dried up? No, beloved, from the first day when He called us, by His grace, even until now it has always been with Him, "a time to love." It is so at this moment. You may be slow to embrace Him, but He is not slow

to embrace you! You may not be saying, with the Psalmist, "My heart and my flesh cries out for the living God," but He wants to see your face, He longs to hear your voice, for with Him it is now, as it has always been, "a time to love."

You shall also soon fall asleep in Jesus. Your hands shall soon be stretched out motionless and your eyes shall be closed in darkness. But, thank God, your last hour shall be very specially with your dear Lord and Savior, "a time to love" you, and you shall then realize the truth and sweetness of Dr. Watts' lines—

"Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on His breast I lean my head,
And breathe my life out sweetly there."

Then, in due time, shall come the resurrection and amidst the splendors of that long looked for day, the great King, stepping down from His throne, shall meet His spouse, His church, and clothing her with His own glory, shall take her up to sit with Him upon His throne and then, indeed, shall it be with Him, "a time to love." Then, in the millennial age, when—

"No strife shall vex Messiah's reign,
Or mar those peaceful years
To plowshares men shall beat their swords,
To pruning hooks their spears"—

it shall still be with Christ, "a time to love." And in heaven, itself, when depth and hell shall have been cast into the lake of fire and when all the redeemed shall have been gathered home to their Father's house where there are many mansions, and the Lord's right hand shall have gotten Him the final victory over all His enemies, it shall still be with Him, "a time to love."

II. Now, secondly, we are to apply the text to OUR LOVE TO CHRIST.

We, also, have often proved that it is with us, "a time to love." Our Lord's love to us is the great eternal fountain from which our love to Him always springs, so let it not be unworthy of the divine source from which it flows. Wake up all your powers and passions, beloved, while I try to speak upon this lower, yet truly important theme! If my voice should weary you, let your beloved's voice charm you while He speaks right into your hearts.

When has it been with you, "a time to love"? *Go back to the beginning of your Christian life*. Do you remember that blessed day when Jesus first met with you? You can never forget the time when your great load of guilt rolled off your shoulders and you were so relieved that you felt you must dance for joy! Ah, that was, indeed, "a time to love." Young converts, make the best use you can of your earliest consecrated hours—let the love of your espousals be inexpressibly sweet. There will be many other times of love, but none of them will ever have quite the same sweetness as you enjoyed when first you realized that Christ had loved you with an everlasting love and, therefore, with loving-kindness had drawn you unto

Himself. Oh, what rapturous fellowship my soul had with Him on that never to be forgotten day when—

"I looked to Jesus and I found
In Him my star, my sun"!

I could have kissed the blessed hands and feet from which flowed the blood that cleansed me from all my sins! I could have sung, then, from my very soul—

"Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads,
I'll follow where He goes!
'Hinder me not,' shall be my cry,
Though earth and hell oppose."

That was, indeed, in the deepest and best sense, "a time to love."

Since then, it ought always to have been with us, "a time to love" our Lord but, alas, it has not been so, for our hearts have grown cold and lukewarmness has stolen upon us. Yet do we not remember *when we had to forsake all for Christ?* Some of you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, can recall the time when things came to this pass—that your own parents and brothers and sisters would have nothing to do with you unless you would have nothing to do with Christ. With others of you, it was your business that must fail if you keep true to Christ. In some instances, it was a very dear friend who threatened to part with you forever if you would not part with Christ. But whatever form your trial took, I feel sure that it was with you, "a time to love" your Lord with even greater intensity than before—that is to say, if you ever loved Him at all. I think it is really "a time to love" the Savior when it costs us something to love Him. And I can bear my testimony that there is never a better "time to love" the Savior than when most everybody seems to be against you. I can never forget that night in the Surrey Gardens Music Hall when such a terrible calamity happened while I was preaching to an immense congregation. I was blamed by many as though I had caused the catastrophe. For a time, it seemed as though my brain could not recover from the dreadful shock that it received when I realized what had taken place! My spirit had sunk to the very lowest depths of despair, but one day, as I was walking in the garden to which I had been taken for seclusion and quiet, all of a sudden this passage came to my mind—"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.] In a moment, the thought came to me that as long as Christ was exalted, it did not matter what became of me! If my King was crowned; if my captain gained the victory, it did not matter even if He allowed me to be flung upon the dunghill as worthless and permitted my name to be slandered by every tongue and every pen! Then was my soul quieted and my heart found

rest and, it was, indeed, to me, "a time to love" my Lord more than ever as I thought of His present exaltation and His future universal triumph!

Beloved, you have sometimes had a sense of sin that has made you thoroughly wretched. But you have gone again to the—

"Fountain filled with blood"—

and you have received renewed tokens of your Lord's favor and that has been to you, "a time to love" Him still more ardently! Have you backslidden, and has your loving Lord knocked at the door of your heart until you have let Him in again? Then that has surely been to you, "a time to love" Him most intensely. Have you had—

"Streams of mercy, never ceasing"?

Have you been permitted to prosper in this world? Then, surely, that was "a time to love" your Lord for all His goodness to you. On the other hand, did your riches take to themselves wings and fly away, or were those who were very dear to you, called home to be with Jesus? Then that, also, was "a time to love" your Lord, for we often love Christ all the more when we lose everyone else and everything else! Rutherford put this thought very sweetly when he was writing to one who had lost first her husband, and then each of her children, one by one. "Your Ladyship must be very dear to the heart of Christ," he wrote, "or He would not try you as He does. He takes such delight in your love that He would have every atom of it for Himself—so He took your husband first, for He said, 'I will have the husband's share of her love.' Then you poured out your love upon your firstborn, his father's heir, and Jesus took him, for He said, 'I will have the share of love that she gives to her eldest son.' So it went on until you had only one of your darlings left, your Benjamin, and He said, 'I will have Benjamin's portion,' so He took him, also, away that He might have all your ladyship's love for Himself. And," added Rutherford, "I often wish that He would think as much of me and try me in some such way as that." So, beloved, when trial has come to you, I trust that you, also, have proved it to be "a time to love" your Lord more than you have ever done before!

And when your brethren grow cold and the church as a whole gets lax, when you have to sorrowfully cry, "How sadly the faithful are failing from among men!" then is it "a time to love" your Lord with all the greater fervency because the love of so many is waxing cold! When the mortal and the human prove how frail and fickle they are, then lay hold the more firmly on Him who is immortal and divine—and who will, therefore—never disappoint those who put their trust in Him. And, on the other hand, when you are able to rejoice in real fellowship with your brothers and sisters in Christ, then it is also, "a time to love," so gather up all the love of all the saints into one great bundle, put your own into the middle of it and give it all to Christ Jesus your dear Lord and Savior!

I was thinking, this afternoon, while meditating upon this theme, that this is *my* "time to love." I can never tell how long it may please the Lord to spare me to this people. That is no concern of mine, but I am greatly

concerned to work with all my might for my gracious Lord and Master while I may. So long as I am your pastor, I feel a holy anxiety to get out of you, for the glory of God, all that you can render to Him of sacred service. I feel that it is the minister's business not only to be like the vinedresser who cares for the vine in all the various stages of its growth, but he must also be like the treader of grapes who seeks to get every drop of the luscious liquid out of the purple clusters beneath his feet. I long to see the rich wine of your souls' affections flowing out to your Lord to the very last drop—and it would be a most comforting thing to me, even in dying, if I could say, "I have been helped to make my people's hearts warm with Jesus' love, to loosen their tongues to proclaim to others His immense, unsearchable love, to set their hands busily to work for Christ in many ways and to start their feet running to search out the Lord's stray sheep and bring them back to His fold!" This, then, is my "time to love."

But brother and sister in Christ, is it not also your "time to love"? Think what opportunities you have down here of showing your love to your Lord and Savior! Even in heaven you will not be able to do what you can do on earth in the way of succoring the needy, helping the feeble, comforting the desponding, reclaiming the backsliding and seeking to point sinners to the crucified Savior! The angels can prostrate themselves adoringly before the throne of God, but they cannot teach the children in our ragged schools. Redeemed and glorified spirits can join in the everlasting hallelujahs of the skies, but they can no longer climb up creaking staircases in the haunts of poverty and minister to the sick and dying who lie languishing there. They can still praise their Lord, but they cannot preach Him! They can talk to one another of His love, but they cannot make it known to lost and helpless sinners as you and I can. So let this, beloved, be our "time to love."

That communion table, where many of us will presently gather to commemorate our Savior's dying love reminds us that *whenever we come to our Lord's table*, it should be with us "a time to love." What love is pictured in those emblems of our blessed Master's broken body and poured out blood! He knew how prone we would be to forget Him, so He instituted this memorial ordinance on purpose to remind us of Him as often as we should partake of it. The bread and the wine are reminders, not only of Christ's great love to us, but also of His ardent desire that we should love Him. Can I, my Lord, dare partake of those sacred emblems and yet not love You with my whole heart and soul? If the days of persecution were to come back, how many of us would be willing to go to the stake and be burned alive rather than give up our love to Christ? Yet think of all that He endured for us! He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked out His hair—and He hid not His face from shame and spitting! My gracious Master, You have given Your flesh and Your blood to be the spiritual food of my soul—give me the grace to consecrate my flesh and blood and all the powers of my body, soul, and spir-

it to You and to Your blessed service! Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, come with me and fall down before the Lord in loving adoration—

"Words are but air, and tongues but clay"—

reverent silence seems congenial to such a theme as this—

"Love divine , all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven, to earth come down."

Blessed Jesus, how can we adequately praise such love as Yours? Oh, for a heart that could be all on fire and for a body that should be like a smoking sacrifice offered up as a whole burnt offering to You! Well, if we cannot have this while we are still in this imperfect state, we must look forward to another "time to love" our Lord more fervently than we can ever do here below! But, by and by, when we reach the blessed land beyond the river, when we shall sit down at the King's own table in glory, when we shall feast upon such dainties as we have never seen or tasted upon earth, then, indeed, will it be "a time to love" to the highest degree that is possible to the glorified spirits above!

Now I have finished my discourse when I have said how grieved I am that all of you do not experimentally know what I have been talking about. Oh, that you all really knew the love of Christ! Your eyes must be blind, indeed, if you cannot see the beauties of Jesus! Your ears must be deaf if you cannot hear His charming voice! And your hearts as hard as adamant—are you made of such hell hardened steel that you will not love my Lord and Master? By those wounds that He endured even for His enemies, by that blood which so freely flowed for those who were then His foes, by those languid eyes so full of pity for sinners, by that loving heart overflowing with compassion for the vilest of the vile, I implore you to tell me—Can you look at Him and not love Him? Can you think of Him as He hung upon Calvary's cross and not put your soul's trust in Him? Come and see if there is any sorrow that is like unto His sorrow—

"All you that pass by, to Jesus draw nigh,
To you is it nothing that Jesus should die?"

Look at Him dying there, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." And if God the Holy Spirit will open your eyes to see Him and give you the grace to trust Him, you will gladly enough yield to Him the love of your hearts! And if you once really love Him, you will gladly be His servant forever! I cannot comprehend how it is that some of us are so cold towards the Lord Jesus Christ. How is it that we can, even for a moment, tolerate that wicked, that diabolical Laodicean lukewarmness towards Him whose love is like a flaming fire? Come, Holy Spirit, give us coals of juniper! No, give us of Your own divine sacred fire—

"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly dove,
With all Your quickening powers,
Come shed abroad a Savior's love—
And that shall kindle ours."

Then shall it indeed be with us "a time to love." God grant that it may be so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
SONG OF SOLOMON 4.

This is a chapter which is, perhaps, more adapted for private meditation than for rending in public. Nevertheless, as this is a communion season, and I trust that the most of us are partakers of the life of God, I could not resist reading it this evening. It is a love song, the song of the loves of Jesus. As He sets forth the beauties and charms of His church, may the same beauties and charms be found in every one of us through the grace which He imparts to us by His Spirit! May we, as parts of His mystical body, be fair and lovely in His esteem because He has bestowed upon us so much of His own loveliness! Let us walk so carefully with God that there may be nothing to put even a spot upon our garments, or to defile our grace given comeliness.

Verse 1. *Behold, you are fair, My love; behold, you are fair.* "Twice fair, first, through being washed in My blood and next, through being sanctified by My Spirit!"

1. *You have doves' eyes within your locks.* Jesus prizes the love of His people which flashes forth from their eyes as they look upon Him. The good works of His people, like the locks of hair which are the beauty and glory of the female form, are the beauty of the church and of every individual believer. It is a beautiful thing to have the eyes of faith glistening between the locks of our good works to the praise and glory of God!

1. *Your hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Mount Gilead.* O my soul, see that you have many such acceptable works of faith and labors of love!

2. *Your teeth*—Those parts of our spiritual being with which we feed upon Christ, and masticate and assimilate the word. "Your teeth"—

2. *Are like a flock of sheep that are evenly shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them.* We should seek so to feed upon the Word of God as to become fruitful by it. If we spiritually feed upon the flesh of Christ, we shall afterwards be the means of bringing forth an abundant harvest of holiness to His praise and honor.

3. *Your lips are like a thread of scarlet.* And well they may be, for what is there for the believer to talk about but the scarlet of the Savior's blood—that matchless bath in which we are washed whiter than snow? My mouth, be you filled with the praises of the Lord, that my lips may be like a thread of scarlet!

3. *And your speech is comely.* There is always a comeliness in that conversation which is full of Christ! So, beloved, let your conversation always be such as becomes the gospel of Christ. But that cannot be the case unless there is much of Christ in it.

3. *Your temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within your locks.* Those parts of us with which we think upon God's word should always

be surrounded by good works. Doctrines in the head, without *holiness* in the life, are of no service. But when the temples are covered with the locks of righteousness, then are they like a piece of a pomegranate, acceptable both to God and men.

4. *Your neck is like the tower of David built for an armory.* And what is this but our faith? Does not the neck join the body to the head—and is not faith that connecting link by which we are united to Christ? Oh, for that faith which is like the tower of David built for an armory! It is sure to be assaulted—let it, therefore, be firmly founded and fully armed.

4. *Whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.* They hung up their bucklers in memory of their triumphs. Read the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which is a record of the victories of faith. The promises of God are also like these bucklers which are hung up in the armory! Let us be so familiar with them that we shall have them ready for use in every emergency.

5. *Your two breasts are like two young roes that are twins which feed among the lilies.* The ordinances of God's house are very delightful to Christ and to His people, too. And consequently, that part of our spiritual being which seeks to feed others and specially to nourish the young believer, is very precious in Christ's esteem. When He has finished the description of His church, Christ says—

6. *Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, I will get Me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.* Our Beloved has gone away from us until the day of His reappearing—until the night of His church's anxiety is over and the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings! Jesus has gone from earth, but where is He? He has gone to intercede for us before the throne of His Father! He has gone to where there are mountains of myrrh. Think, beloved, of the sweet perfume that always arises from His one great sacrifice for sins! Well may He compare it to a mountain of myrrh and to a hill of frankincense!

7. *You are all fair, My love, there is no spot in you.* Drink that truth in, Christian. If ever there was a honeycomb full of virgin honey, it is here. Though in yourself you are defiled, yet in the eyes of Jesus, looked upon as covered with His righteousness, "you are all fair." No, more—"there is no spot in you." You are as dear to Him as though you had never sinned! Yes, in His sight you appear without a single fault! He has so cleansed you in His precious blood that "there is no spot in you."

8. *Come with Me from Lebanon, My spouse, with Me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' den, from the mountains of the leopards.* My heart, leave the world! Leave its sweet places—though Lebanon is full of fragrance—leave it! Leave the world's high places. Though the top of Amana may seem to reach to heaven, leave even that to have communion with your Lord! "Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." The best spots in the world are for you, O spouse of Christ, but lions' dens and mountains of leopards! You are always in

danger while you consort with worldlings, you are always in peril while you are entangled with the world—so get away from Lebanon, from Amana, from Shenir and Hermon—leave everything for your Lord!

9. *You have ravished My heart.* I think the Septuagint reads it, "You have unhearted me," as if Christ's people had taken away His heart so that it was all theirs, and not His any longer. "You have ravished My heart."

9. *My sister, My spouse, you have ravished My heart with one of your eyes, with one chain of your neck.* The eyes of love and the neck of faith with its chain, hold captive the heart of Christ—

"So dear, so very dear to Christ,
Dearer I cannot be.
The love wherewith God loves His sons,
Such is Christ's love to me!"

Oh, what a miracle of mercy it is that Christ, Himself, should be unhearted by such foul and loathsome creatures as we were! Yet He loved us so that He would have us and, having determined to do so, He put a beauty upon us that is really now worthy of His love! I speak advisedly, for the righteousness of Christ and the sanctification of the Spirit have in them something so fair that Christ does not now love that which is unworthy of His love—that righteousness which He has Himself worked in us now rightly claims His affection.

10. *How fair is Your love, My sister, My spouse!* [See Sermon #282, Volume 5—CHRIST'S ESTIMATE OF HIS PEOPLE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Hear that, O spouse of Christ? Your love is often very cold, very feeble and, even at its best, it is not what you would have it to be, nor what it ought to be. Yet Jesus values it highly and says, "How fair is your love, My sister, My spouse!"

10. *How much better is your love than wine!* Yet He knows what the best wine is like, for He is one day to drink it new with us in His Father's kingdom, yet He says that the love of His people is much better than wine, yes, even than that wine.

10. *And the smell of your ointments than all spices!* You know that He has the smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia upon His garments when He comes out of the ivory palaces, yet He considers that His people's graces are sweeter than all the spices that ever grew.

11, 12. *Your lips, O My spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under your tongue; and the smell of your garments is like the smell of Lebanon. A garden enclosed is My sister, My spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.* [See Sermons #431, Volume 8—A SECRET AND YET NO SECRET and #1957, Volume 33—THE LORD'S OWN VIEW OF HIS CHURCH AND PEOPLE—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Oh, that my heart were like that at this moment! Jesus, shut the gates and shut out the world, and every wandering, wayward, sinful thought! Then shut Yourself in my heart and walk in it as in a garden that is walled around into which no intruders dare enter!

13, 14. *Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphor, with spikenard, spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices.* Oh, that this were fully true of us—that all our thoughts, words, and actions, which are like the fruits of the garden, were as full of spices of heavenly fragrance as Jesus here declares that He thinks them to be! Yet, alas, how little we do for Him, though He sets such store by our little that He regards it as much!

15. *A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.* Such should the whole church and each individual believer be. O my soul, be not only shut up for Christ, but be, when the time comes, opened to do good to all the world! Oh, that I might be like a well of living waters in my speech at all times! And that you, my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, whenever you are dealing with others, might be a well of living waters to every thirsty soul! Speak of Jesus wherever you go! Talk of Jesus whenever you can! You have been shut up and Christ has been in you—now be opened to give forth to others what He has given you! The chapter concludes with a delightful prayer. Let us, each one, pray it—

16. *Awake, O north wind, and come, you south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits.* [See Sermons #1941, Volume 33—GRACE FOR COMMUNION and #2475, Volume 42—"MY GARDEN"—"HIS GARDEN"—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The church here, you see, desires to feel two opposite winds. Though it should be the rough north wind of affliction that blows upon her, if it will but make her spices flow, she will be glad. But if it is the soft south wind of blessed and hallowed fellowship with her Lord, she is equally pleased, for what she longs after is that her Lord may take delight in her.

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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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"YET THERE IS ROOM"
NO. 3221

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1910,

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 21, 1862.

"And yet there is room."
Luke 14:22.

I REMINDED YOU, this morning, [See Sermon #485, Volume 8—NO ROOM FOR CHRIST IN THE INN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] that there was no room for Christ and His parents in the inn at Bethlehem—and also that there were then other places where, although there was no room for Christ, far inferior persons found a welcome and entertainment. I need, this evening, to convince you that although there are still many sinners who seem to have no room for Christ in their hearts and lives, yet there is plenty of room for sinners in the heart and love of Christ! And I am going to give them an earnest, tender, affectionate invitation to come to Christ while "yet there is room." You who have hitherto been strangers to the grace of God. You who, as yet, have never feasted at the gospel banquet, you who have, until now, been content with this world's frothy dainties and have never tasted that which is substantial and satisfying for time and for eternity—to you, even to you—comes the message of our text, "yet there is room."

I. My first question concerning the text is, WHERE IS THERE ROOM? And the answer is, there is room in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness! There is room for you to be washed and to be made clean. Vast multitudes have gone into that fountain black as the thickest night—and they have come up from the washing "whiter than snow." Innumerable offenses have there been washed away, but the fountain has lost none of its cleansing power, nor will it until the last elect soul has been washed therein, as Cowper so confidently and so truly sings—

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

It is our joy to be able to assure you that in that blessed bath of cleansing, "yet there is room!"

There is room, too, in that chariot of love which carries the washed ones all the way to heaven—that chariot of which Solomon's was a type and of which we read, "he made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem." In this chariot there is room for millions more—and if you are washed in His precious blood, He who is

greater than Solomon will take you up and carry you on and over the rough and rugged road of this wilderness world—and conduct you safely to His Father's house above. You shall travel joyously in the best of company, so enter while there is room, sinner, and there is room now!

There is room, too, in the Father's great family. He has adopted an innumerable multitude of those who once were children of wrath and servants of Satan! He has selected some of the vilest of the sons and daughters of Adam, but they are washed, they are cleansed, they are regenerate and they have received the seal of their adoption into the family of God and are joyously crying, "Abba, Father!" But there is room for millions more in that great family! Earthly fathers, as a general rule, have no room for strangers in their home—the house is already crowded with their own boys and girls—so they cannot receive other people's children into their family. But there is still room in the great Father's heart for all who will come unto Him by Jesus Christ, His Son. All whom He has chosen unto eternal life have not yet believed in Jesus and been "sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." All whom He intends to save have not yet been brought to recognize Him as their Father and their God, so again I say that there is still room in the great Father's heart for all who will come unto Him by Jesus Christ, His Son!

There is room, too, in the visible church here below. We gladly welcome every new convert and we say to each one—

"Come in, you blessed of the Lord,
Stranger nor foe are thou!
We welcome you with warm accord,
Our friend, our brother now."

"The Lord knows them that are His," but all that are the Lord's are not yet added to His visible church. Thousands of them stray in the paths of sin—millions of them are as yet like jewels hidden away in the mire, or pearls lying many fathoms deep in the caverns of the sea! There is still room for more stars in the diadem that adorn the brows of the church on earth! There is still room for more golden candlesticks to give her light. She still has room for many more children to be dandled on her knees and to suck at her breasts—use whatever metaphor we may, we can still say, in the words of our text—"yet there is room."

There is room, too, in the ordinances of God's house. There is room for you, Christian brother or sister, in the liquid tomb which is the emblem of your Savior's grave! You may be buried with Him by baptism into death and rise from the baptistery in the likeness of His resurrection, therefore to walk with Him in newness of life! There is room for you, too, at that communion table where, in eating bread and drinking wine, we spiritually eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood and so prove that He dwells in us and we dwell in Him.

There is room for you at the children's table—you will not overcrowd us! We are not like the elder brother who was jealous because the prodigal was welcomed back to his father's house and his father's table. We

shall have none the less enjoyment, but all the more, if you will come and join us at the feast of love—there is abundant room for you there.

Better, still, and more to your soul's solace, *there is room for you in heaven*! The long procession has been streaming through the gates of pearl from the day when Abel, the proto-martyr, entered the heavenly city, until this very moment, as I am speaking to you! The last emancipated soul has just flapped its wings for joy, left its mortal cage behind and entered into everlasting liberty! The redeemed from among men have been taking their appointed places before the throne of God, waving their palms, wearing their crowns, playing their golden harps and singing their songs of victory! But there is still room in heaven for many more! There are crowns there without heads to wear them and harps without hands to play them—and mansions without tenants to inhabit them and streets of gold that shall have something lacking until *you* have trodden them—if you are one of the Lord's own people. There is room for multitudes whom God has chosen—to come to swell the hallelujah chorus of the skies! It is very sweet even now, but it has not yet reached its full force and grandeur—it needs to have ten thousand times ten thousand voices added to the already mighty choir—and then the glorious chorus shall roll up to the throne of God louder than the noise of many waters and as the voice of a great thunder, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigns! And He shall reign forever and ever!"

What a dreary message I would have to deliver if I had to tell you that there was no room! Let me give you one or two illustrations. In passing over some of the more difficult passes of the Alps, the traveler sees small habitations by the side of the road, marked "Refuge No. 1," "Refuge No. 2," and so on, up to the hospice on the summit, and then down the other side more refuges similarly marked. When a storm comes on and the wind and snow beat into a man's face so that he cannot see his way, and he sinks more than knee deep in the drifts—it is a happy circumstance for him that, perhaps a little way ahead, there is a refuge where he and others in the same plight may find shelter till hospitable monks come and take them to the hospice, or send them on their way! Imagine that one dark night the snow is pouring down, the flakes fall so thickly that you cannot see a star, the wind howls among the Alps and the poor traveler, nearly blinded, staggers up to the door of the refuge—but he sees outside of it a dozen or two other travelers all clustered together, nearly frozen to death, and they say to him—"The refuge is crammed! We can't get in, so we must perish, though we have reached the door of the refuge but there is no room for us inside." Ah, but I have no such bad news as that to bring to you tonight! Crowded as you are here, this great building has scarcely room enough to hold you—but the love of Christ is not so cramped that I need say to you, "There is no room here." "Yet there is room." All who are inside the refuge are but a small number compared with those who are yet to come for, in later and brighter ages, of which this is but the dawn, we believe that conversion work will go on far more

rapidly and that the Lord's elect will be brought to Him in much greater numbers than in these days! Whether it will be so or not, it is our joy to tell you that "yet there is room" in the great gospel refuge which the Lord of the way has so graciously provided for all who will enter it!

Here is another picture. There has been a wreck out there upon the coast. The ship has struck upon the rocks and she is fast going to pieces. Some of the poor mariners are clinging to the mast—they have been hanging there for hours. Heavy seas have broken over them and they can hardly retain their hold. Some of the crew have already become exhausted and have fallen off into the deep—and the others who are clinging for dear life are almost frozen with cold! But look there—a rocket goes up—they believe that they have been spotted and, after a while, they see that a lifeboat is coming to their rescue! Perhaps the brave men give a cheer as they row with all their might to let the pour shipwrecked sailors know that there is help at hand. As the lifeboat comes nearer, its captain cries, "Oh, what a lot of men! What can we do with so many? We will take as many of you as we can, but there is not room for all." The men are helped off the wreck, one after the other, until they seem to fill the boat. Each man's place has two crammed into it, but at last the captain says, "It's no use. We can't take any more. Our boat is so full that she'll go down if we put in another man." It's all over with those poor souls that must be left behind, for before the gallant boat can make another trip, they must all have fallen into the waves of the sea and been lost.

But I have no such sad tale to tell you tonight, for my Master's gospel lifeboat has thus far taken in but few compared with those she will yet take! I know not how many she will hold, but this I do know, that a multitude which no man can number shall be found within her and, amid songs of everlasting joy, they shall all be safely landed on the blessed shore where rocks and tempests will never again trouble them! The lifeboat is not yet full—there is still room in her for all who will trust in Jesus! Poor mariner, give up clinging to that wreck on the rocks! Poor sinner, give up clinging to your works and to your sins! There is room in the gospel lifeboat for you and all who will put themselves under the care of the great captain of salvation, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

II. Now we will change our view of the subject by asking and answering a second question, WHEN IS THERE ROOM? Lay the emphasis upon the word, "yet," in the text. "*Yet* there is room." "*Yet!*" Ages have marched along with solemn tramp, generations have followed generations and all have yielded their quota to the great church of Jesus Christ—but, "yet there is room" for millions more! There have been multitudes passing through the valley of repentance up to the cross of Calvary! Multitudes beyond all human calculation have found peace and pardon in Christ! But, for all that, "yet there is room!" A few years ago the churches of our land, and especially the churches of Ireland, had a visitation of divine grace when many were converted to God. And in this church we have had a revival that has lasted all the years of our pastorate. We have had no special season of revival—there has been a continual revival, practi-

cally all the time, at New Park Street, at Exeter Hall, at the Surrey Gardens, and here in the Tabernacle. The blessed work of conversion goes on, never slowly, but quite as fast as we can keep pace with it! The Lord is constantly adding to our numbers! Sometimes, as on the last occasion, 74 in a single month! On another occasion, a hundred! But we can still say, "yet there is room," and if all the churches in London and throughout the whole kingdom were to be multiplied exceedingly, we feel that we could still come to our pulpits as revival years passed over us and say, "yet there is room."

Besides, sinner, you are getting old now. Those gray hairs tell a tale of years that have passed. Your youth fled long ago and your early manhood is now over—God knows how you have spent it—but you are here, tonight, like an old barren tree, almost ready for the everlasting burning unless sovereign grace shall save you even now! And I am here to tell you that "yet there is room!" How old are you? Are you sixty? Are you past seventy? Can you look back over 80 years? Are you getting close to ninety? Well, even then, "yet there is room," for you and if you had outnumbered the years of Moses, yes, and if you had lived as long as Methuselah lived, I would still say to you, "yet there is room!"

Think, too, of the many times that you have rejected Christ. Again and again the invitations of the great giver of the gospel feast have been sent to you, but you have refused them all! Before I was born, some of you old people had many loving warnings and entreaties from godly ministers who have long since gone home. You were not altogether unmoved by your mother's prayers and your father's supplications, and now, in these latter times, it has pleased God to speak to you by one who is so much younger than you—in words that would burn if they could, coming as they do, red hot from a heart that is all on fire with love to your souls! My words have often reached your ears and have sometimes reached your consciences, too, yet the Lord knows how many vows have been made in this house and broken at the door—how many impressions have been made during the sermon—and obliterated before you have reached your homes! There are some of you who will find in me a swift witness against you at the bar of God! If you should say that you never heard the gospel, I will testify that you have heard it plainly and faithfully declared time after time. I have not preached as I wish I could, but you have always been able to understand my message! I have not sought to find gaudy words and polished periods with which I might tickle your ears, but in God's name, I have told you that unless you repent and believe, you shall surely perish! And I have preached to you the love of Jesus and pointed you to His wounds and bid you look unto Him and live. Yet you have rejected every warning and every invitation that I have given you up till now. But, notwithstanding that, I am still sent to say to you, "Yet there is room—yet there is room."

It may be that some of you have been adding sin to sin till you have now got to such a pitch as you never dreamed that you would reach.

There is that young man over there in the gallery, who used to be at every prayer meeting and used to attend one of the Bible classes and all the services. *You* know, young man, to whom I am referring—that young man did run well, but he first went astray just a little bit and then still more—then he went from bad to worse and now he has gone to the worst of all! Let it never be told where it may reach his father's ears, what sin he has committed only this week! Ah, young man, if you had been told, even a little while ago, that you would sin thus, you would have said, as Hazael said to Elisha, "But what? Is your servant a dog that he should do this great thing?" You would not have believed yourself capable of falling so low as to commit the offense in which you have now indulged! And I venture to prophesy that although you think you have repented of it, you will return to it as the dog turns to his own vomit and as the sow that was washed returns to her wallowing in the mire! There are some sinners who never seem to be satisfied till they have gone to the full limit of their tether. They are like the waves of the sea that must keep on advancing until they have reached their flood tide and can go no further. Yet sinner, though all this is so terribly true of you, though you have gone as far as you can go in sin, "yet there is room" even for you in that cleansing fountain of which I spoke a few minutes ago!

Probably I am addressing some who will never see another year roll over their heads. No, I may say that it is an absolute certainty concerning not merely one or two, but concerning many here present! I do not know how many out of the six or seven thousand persons now present will, according to the ordinary rate of mortality, die within a year from this night, but certainly a considerable number will. Therefore I am not talking fanatical nonsense, but solid truth! There are some persons here who will not even see another month on earth—and very many who will never see another year. And there may be at least one here who will not see even another day! How near this makes us feel to the unseen world, how close to death! I have known many such cases as this. One of the officers or members of the church meets me as I am coming in, and says to me, "Do you remember so and so?" "Yes, I think I do. Where does he sit?" "Well, there is his seat." "Oh, yes!" I reply, "I remember him well. What about him?" "Why," says the friend, "last Sunday morning, as he was walking home after the service here, he was taken ill, went straight to bed and died." Some of you know the brother to whom I am referring. Not long ago, another friend said to me, "Do you know Mr. so and so?" "Oh, yes!" I answered, "why do you ask?" "Well, dear Pastor," he said, "the Lord has been pleased to call her to Himself quite suddenly." It is often thus—the stroke falls where it was least expected and God, in a moment, calls one and another of our friends to meet their final doom. We cannot say to any of those who have been called away from our midst, "yet there is room," but we can say it to you who are here!

III. I think I have dwelt long enough on that word, "yet." I want in closing to ask another question, WHY IS THERE ROOM?

How do we know that there is still room? Well, our text is enough to make us sure, even if we had nothing else, but we have other reasons for knowing, "yet there is room." And the first reason is because the decree of election is vast and wide. Those individuals who try to caricature our doctrinal sentiments are in the habit of saying that we teach that God has chosen a few to be saved and left the great majority of mankind to perish. They know that we have never said any such thing! And they also know that no man of any standing in our denomination has ever said any such a thing! On the contrary, we believe that God has ordained a countless host, so numerous that no man can number it, who shall be everlastingly saved! And we think we have some warrant for believing that the number of the saved will vastly exceed the number of the lost, that in all things Christ may have the preeminence. Certainly, whatever may be our opinion upon that matter, we rejoice that the lines of divine election are not narrow, that the chosen people of God are not a mere handful—and we believe that when the time comes for the great King to make up His jewels, it shall be found that the case contains such multitudes of them that they shall be beyond all human calculation! It is our joy to know that God has chosen a great host to be saved and, as they have not all been saved yet, it is clearly proved that, "yet there is room!"

Again, we believe that Christ *offered an infinite sacrifice for the redemption of His people.* We cannot look at His blessed person as the God man, Christ Jesus, without believing that the sufferings of such a substitute for sinners must have had an infinite value—so we are fully persuaded that no limit can be set to the merit of Christ's death—although we also believe that Christ had a definite purpose in His death which cannot be frustrated—and that this purpose was the salvation, not of all men—but of as many as His Father had given Him, according to His own words, "I lay down My life for the sheep." And according to Paul's words, "Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it." Yet so great a sacrifice as that of Christ could not have been offered without a great objective in view! In fact, He told His disciples that "the Son of Man came…to give His life a ransom for many." We therefore believe that in the great fold wherein the Good Shepherd preserves His blood bought sheep, there is yet room for many more to enter!

Further, we come to the same conclusion by considering *the great design of God in the whole of His providential arrangements*—in the permission of the fall and in the wondrous plan by which the fall, itself, is made to minister to God's glory by being a foil, a dark background, to set forth the brightness of the divine grace which delivers sinners from eternal ruin! We believe that the objective of the covenant of grace and of the plan of redemption so amazing as that which is revealed in the Scriptures could not have been a small one! It must be a great multitude of redeemed souls that will satisfy Christ for the terrible travail of soul that He endured—it cannot be an insignificant company that will be won by His almighty hands and His holy arms, but a mighty host who shall be

the fulfillment of the Lord's eternal design and bring to Him due honor and glory forever and ever! Therefore, also for this reason we are persuaded that "yet there is room."

Moreover, brothers and sisters, when we consider *the prevalence of Jesus' plea and the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit's agency*; when we see the daily preparation which God makes for sending out fresh ministers of the gospel; when we understand that the earth is to be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea—and because we believe that the millennial reign of Christ will certainly begin at the time that God has appointed—we are persuaded that there are unnumbered millions yet to come to the gospel feast and, therefore, we still cry, "yet there is room!" At that great banquet there shall not be one seat that shall be empty at the last! God has made provision for just as many as will come and it shall be found that the provision is sufficient for all the guests who accept the King's invitation—that the great eternal decision of God was not frustrated and that even the perversity of man's wicked will, which keep him from coming to God, shall be made, somehow or other, to reflect honor on the great giver of the feast! Not a chair shall be vacant at that feast and not one of the redeemed shall be missing when the role is called at that day! We have not yet reached that period, so we can still say, "yet there is room."

Well, sinner, as it is true that "yet there is room," we have a word of warning to say to you. There is room in the precious blood of Christ, there is room at the gospel feast, there is room in the church on earth, there is room in heaven—but if you will not occupy this room, I must solemnly tell you that there is room for you elsewhere! Alas, *there is room in hell!* There may hardly be prisons enough for all the criminals on earth, but there is room for them in hell! There are "nations that forget God." There are myriads that hate Him, there are millions more that neglect His great salvation, but there is room for them all in hell if they will not repent and believe the gospel! Blasphemer, there is room in hell for you! Despiser of God's day and of God's word, there is room in hell for you! And for some of you it may be that there are only a few more weeks or days—and then you will enter upon your terrible heritage! Grow on, you tares, till you ripen, and then, when you are bound up in bundles to be burned, let the bundles be ever so big, there is room for them all in hell! Proud boasters, you may speak what Jude calls, "great swelling words," now, declaring that you will fight the matter out with God, but you will find that in hell there is room to humble you and room to destroy you there to all eternity! Is it not enough to make a man's heart break even to think of such a terrible doom? Then what will it be to have to endure it without any hope of release forever? I remind you again that some of you will be there before long unless you repent! Oh, by the living God, in whose name I speak to you, I do entreat you, if you love yourselves, consider these things! For if you will not have Christ as your Savior, you will have His wrath remaining upon you forever and ever! If the message of God is despised by you, how shall you escape if you neglect so great a

salvation? Sinner, are you resolved to make your bed in hell? Soul, have you set your heart on it? Will you tonight give your hand to Satan and promise to be his slave forever? Stop, man! This may be the last time that your conscience will ever be alarmed, so I plead with you to trust in Christ before I send you away to your homes. Think seven times before you do reject Him this once more, lest the slighted, grieved, almighty Spirit should depart from you and never strive with you again!

My last thought which I pass on to every unconverted sinner, is this—as there is room in the blood of Christ, as there is room in heaven, *why not for me?* Will not each sinner here also say, *why not for me?* Soul, what does God say to you tonight? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." So this is what you have to do—obey the gracious message and believe in Christ! To believe on Christ is to trust Him and I am sure that He deserves your trust. He is God, able to save you—and He is man, willing to save you. He would not have died if He had not loved sinners. He stands pleading with you tonight, blessed be His name, and though it has been with stern words that He has spoken to your conscience, now He asks you to trust Him and He says that if you do, you shall be saved! Soul, will you trust Him now? I hope the Spirit of God will lead you to say, "Yes, I will trust Jesus tonight. I feel utterly unworthy, but then He died to save the unworthy. My heart is very hard, but I know that He can soften it. I do not feel my need of Him as I should feel it, but He did not tell me I was to feel my need and make that my qualification. He said, 'Let him that is thirsty, come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' I will venture to come to Him while yet there is room."

Perhaps the black doubt comes to you, "*Is there room for me*?" My answer to that question is this—you are *commanded* to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ! It is impossible for you to do that and yet be lost! You shall find that there is room for you, room which no one but yourself can occupy, room in that kingdom of which Christ says that it was ordained for you before the foundation of the world! Your business, sinner, is to trust Christ just as you are, now, and just where you are! O my hearers, you whose souls are committed to my trust, I feel that I must have your souls for my Master! He knows that I care for no wages but your immortal souls! He knows that if He denies me your souls, I shall feel that I have labored in vain and spent my strength for nothing. This year God has blessed the word to many, many hearts! Hardly a day has passed without someone being blessed and not a sermon have I preached in this Tabernacle without hearing afterwards of conversions through it—and I sincerely trust that it may continue. Lord, speak to hearts that have resisted You until now! Sovereign grace, there is nothing that can stand against You—Your goings forth are mighty and irresistible! You speak, and it is done, You command and it stands fast forever! Speak, Lord, and Your servants shall hear and this night they shall say, "We will come unto You while *yet there is room*."

May God grant that many shall come to Jesus this very moment, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 14:7-24.

Verse 7. *And He put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when He marked how they chose out the chief rooms.* This parable was by far the best part of the entertainment of the day!

7-9. *Saying unto them, When you are bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest place lest a more honorable man than you is bidden of him; and he that bade you and him comes and says to you, Give this man place; and you begin with shame to take the lowest place.* For, of course, the next room is full, and the next, and the only vacant seat, when the feast has begun, will probably be in the very lowest room of the house.

10. *But when you are bidden, go and sit down in the lowest place, that when he that bade you come, he may say unto you, Friend, go up higher. Then shall you have worship in the presence of them that sit at the meal with you.* Note that our Savior was not just then talking to His disciples, or else He would have given more spiritual reasons for His advice. But, speaking to the people who were gathered as guests at the Pharisee's house, He appealed to them with an argument suitable to themselves. We may, however, extract the marrow from this bone! Let us not covet the highest place. Let us not desire honor among men. In the church of God the way upward is downward. He that will do the lowest work shall have the highest honor. Our Master washed His disciples' feet and we are never more honored than when we are permitted to imitate His example.

11. *For whoever exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.* There is a conspiracy of heaven and earth and hell to put down proud men, neither good nor bad—the highest nor the lowest can endure those who are self-exalted! But if you are willing to take your right place, which is probably the lowest, you shall soon find honor in the midst of your brethren!

12. *Then said He also to him that bade Him, When you make a dinner or a supper, call not your friends nor your brethren, neither your kinsmen, nor your rich neighbor lest they also bid you again, and a recompense is made you.* Our Savior, you see, keeps to one line of instruction. It was a feast, so He used the feast to teach another lesson. It is always well, when men's minds are running in a certain direction, to make use of that particular current. When a feast is uppermost in the minds of men, it is no use starting another subject. So the Savior rides upon the back of the banquet, making it to be His steed! Note His advice to His host—"Try to avoid doing that for which you will be recompensed. If you are rewarded for it, the transaction is over. But if not, then it stands recorded in the book of God and it will be recompensed to you in the great day of account."

13, 14. *But when you make a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and you shall be blessed; for they cannot recompense you: for you shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.* It should be your ambition to have something set down to your credit "at the resurrection of the just." If you do someone a kindness with a view to gaining gratitude, you will probably be disappointed. And even if you should succeed, what is the gratitude worth? You have burned your firewood, you have seen the brief blaze, and there is an end of it. But if you get no present return for your holy charity, so much the better for you!

15, 16. *And when one of them that sat at the meal with Him heard these things, he said unto Him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then said He unto him.* As if to prove what a privilege it is to be permitted to "eat bread," there, but that the persons who appear most likely to do so will never taste of it—and that the most unlikely persons will be brought into it. Jesus "said unto him."

16, 17. *A certain man made a great supper and bade many: and sent his servants at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready.* [See Sermon #1354, Volume 23—ALL THINGS ARE READY, COME—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] They had accepted the invitation, so they were pledged to be present but, in the meantime, they had changed their minds with regard to their intended host—and they were unwilling to grace his feast.

18. *And they all with one consent began to make excuses. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it: I pray you have me excused.* Yet it was supper time and people do not generally go to see pieces of ground at night! And if the man had bought the land, he ought to have seen it before he bought it! People do not generally buy land without looking at it. A bad excuse is worse than none. [See Sermon #578, Volume 10—A BAD EXCUSE IS WORSE THAN NONE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] and this is one of those excuses which will not hold water for a minute!

19. *And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to inspect them: I pray you have me excused.* He pretended that he had bought five yoke of oxen without inspecting them and that he wanted to inspect them after he had bought them, when, of course, he could not cancel the bargain! A likely story! But, when men want to make an excuse, and they have no truth to serve as the raw material, they can always make one out of a lie!

20. *And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.* [See Sermon #2122, Volume 36—A STRAIGHT TALK—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This man did not ask to be excused—he had married a wife, so that settled the matter! Of course he could not go to the feast.

21. *So that servant came and told his lord these things.* Every true servant of Christ should go to his Lord and tell him what reception his Master's message has had. After service, we sometimes have an inquirers' meeting, but after every sermon there ought to be a meeting of the

servant with his Lord to tell the result of the errand on which he has been sent. Sometimes, as in this case, it will be a very painful meeting as the servant tells how his Master's message has been despised and His invitation rejected.

21. *Then the master of the house being angry.* Notice what the Lord does even when He is angry—He invents some new way of showing mercy to men! "The master of the house being angry."

21. *Said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.* Happy anger that explodes in blessing! The justly angry master turns away from the bidden ones who had insulted him and sends for those who had not hitherto been bidden, that they might come to the feast!

22. *And the servant said, Lord, it is done as you have commanded, and yet there is room.* They fetched in all the poor people, the maimed, the halt and the blind whom they could find—it was a great gathering and a strange gathering—yet there was still room for more guests at the banquet!

23. *And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.* [See Sermon #227, Volume 5—COMPEL THEM TO COME IN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] "Bring in highwaymen and hedge birds, those that have no place where to lay their heads—fetch them in by force if necessary, 'that my house may be filled.'"

24. *For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.* They were invited, yet they would not come. But others shall come and fill the tables and the great feast shall be furnished with guests! No provisions of mercy will ever be wasted. If you who are the sons and daughters of godly parents, or you who are the regular hearers of the Word of God will not have Christ, then others shall! If you hear, but hear in vain, then the rank outsiders shall be brought in and they shall feed upon the blessed provisions of the infinite mercy of God and God shall be glorified! But terrible will be your doom when the great giver of the gospel feast says concerning you and those like you, "None of those men which were bidden shall taste of My supper."

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"Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world."
John 1:29.

[Two other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text are #1987, Volume 33—
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BEFORE we plunge into our main subject, it is necessary to notice what is implied in our text, which is that "the world" was lost through sin and that all mankind had become guilty before God. You, therefore, my dear hearer, are one of those who are thus guilty. Though you may never have broken the laws of your country, nor even the rules of propriety. Though you may be both amiable and admirable in your general deportment, yet, for all this, as "there is none righteous, no, not one," you, also, are included among the unrighteous! It matters not what religious professions you may have made, or what outward forms of godliness you may have observed—unless you have a better righteousness than your own, you are a lost sinner! I believe there is now present a brother who, when he was first convicted of sin, tried hard to make himself a better man under the mistaken idea that this was the way of salvation. And when, one Sabbath night, he heard me say that all the reforms you could ever make upon your old nature would be useless as to the matter of salvation, but that, "you must be born again," he felt very angry and made a vow that he would never be found listening to me again! Yet here he is, rejoicing that the Lord has taught him to see himself as a lost, ruined sinner and to put his heart's trust in Jesus Christ, the sinner's Savior!

It is very likely that if I had time to explain to you, my hearer, the fullness of your sin and the utter ruin of your natural state, you, also, would grow angry. You would have no cause to be angry, for all that I could say would fall far short of the truth about your real condition in the sight of God! And it is most solemnly important for you to know that however high you may stand in the ranks of merely moral men, you are a lost soul and a condemned soul, as long as you remain without living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! If you are angry with the minister of the gospel who tells you this truth of God, you are as foolish as a certain Brahmin whom I have heard of. His religion consisted chiefly in not eating any animal food or destroying any kind of life. The missionary told him that it

was impossible for him to carry out such a "religion" as that, "for," he said, "in every drop of water that you drink, you swallow thousands of animals and so destroy vast quantities of animal life." Then he put a drop of water out of the cup from which the Brahmin had been drinking, under his microscope and so convinced him of the truth of what he had said. When the Brahmin saw the creatures moving in the water, instead of abandoning his false theory, he grew very angry and dashed the microscope upon the ground! He was not angry, you see, with the *fact*, but with that which *revealed the fact!* Like the lazy housemaid who said she was quite sure that she always kept the rooms clean but, it was the nasty sun that would shine in and make everything look so dusty! The fault is not in the gospel which we preach—so you should not be angry with it, or with us—the fault is in yourselves, in your own hearts and lives, and if you do not like to be told the truth about sin, it is a sure sign that your heart is not right in the sight of God! It is still true that "everyone that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

Well then, with that truth of God taken for granted—that you, whom I am now addressing, have sinned and are, therefore, under God's condemnation unless you are trusting in Christ—we now come directly to our text. We shall take it not merely as though John the Baptist were speaking it, but as we may now use it from our point of view. It appears to me to be the whole gospel in a very brief form. You may sometimes write much in a very few words and here you have an epitome of the whole gospel of God in these few syllables—"Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." I am going to ask and try to answer three questions. First, *what is to be beheld*? Secondly, *what is to be done*? And thirdly, *why should we do this*?

I. First, then WHAT IS TO BE BEHELD?

The text mentions a *Lamb*, by which is meant a sacrifice. Under the Jewish law, those who had offended brought sacrifices and offered them to God. These sacrifices were representations of our Lord Jesus Christ who is, "the Lamb of God." Listen, my dear hearer, and I will tell you the gospel in a few sentences. As God is just, it is inevitable that sin should be punished. If He would pardon you, how can this be righteously accomplished? Only thus—Jesus Christ, His Son, came to earth and stood in the place of all those who believe on Him and God accepted Him as the substitutionary sacrifice for all those who put their trust in Him. Under the Jewish law, the lamb was put to death that the man might not be put to death and, in like manner, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, suffered the pangs of death by crucifixion and the greater agony of the wrath of God that we might not suffer the pangs of hell and the eternal wrath which is due to sin. There is no other way of salvation under heaven but this! God cannot relax His justice and He will by no means clear the guilty. But He laid upon Christ the full punishment that was due to sin and smote Him as though He had been the actual offender, and now, turning round to you, He tells you that if you trust in Jesus, the merits

of His great atoning sacrifice shall be imputed to you and you shall live forever in glory because Jesus died upon the cross of Calvary. If any of you would have your sins forgiven, and so enjoy peace with God, you must look by faith to that sacrifice which was offered upon Calvary and keep your eyes of faith fixed there—and sooner or later you will certainly receive the blessings of peace into your souls!

But the text not only mentions a Lamb, it says, "Behold *the Lamb of God*," and I draw your special attention to that expression. It is not merely a sacrifice to which you are to look, but *the* sacrifice that God has appointed and ordained to be the one and only sacrifice for sin! This is an all-important point. "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all…It pleased the Lord to bruise Him, He has put Him to grief." If Christ had not been sent of God to be the Savior of sinners, our faith would have had no firm foundation to rest upon. But as God Himself has set forth Christ to be the propitiation for human guilt, then He cannot reject the sinner who accepts that propitiation! I need not raise any questions as to whether Christ's atonement is sufficient, for God says that it is and as He is satisfied with the sacrifice offered by His only begotten and well beloved Son, surely the most troubled conscience may be equally satisfied with it! Your offense, my friend, was committed against God. If, then, God is content with what Christ has done on your behalf, and so is willing to pardon you, surely you need not inquire any further, but with gratitude you should at once accept the reconciliation which Christ has made! It is "the Lamb of God" whom I have to bid you, "behold." It is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who died on Calvary, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." It was God who appointed Him to die as the substitute for sinners. It was God who accepted this sacrifice when He died and now, Jehovah, Himself, speaking from His throne of glory, says to the sinner, "Believe on My Son whom I have set forth as the propitiation for human sin. Trust in Him and you shall be eternally saved."

Still further, to bring out the full force of the text, notice the next words, "*Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world*." When Jesus Christ was put into our place, our sin was laid upon Him and sin, like anything else, cannot be in two places at one time. If, then, I, being a believer in Jesus, know that all my sin was laid upon Christ, it necessarily follows that I have no sin left upon me! It has become Christ's burden. He has taken it away from me. "Yes," you say, "but then the sin is still on Christ." Ah, but my hearers, if our Lord Jesus Christ, "Himself bore our sins in His own body up on the tree," He there endured all the punishment that was due to us, or an equivalent for it, and those sins were by that means put away—that is to say, they ceased to be—so they do not exist any longer! All my indebtedness to God was transferred to Christ and He paid all my debts! Then where are my debts now? Why, there are none! They are all gone forever. This is what Christ does for everyone who truly trusts in Him—He takes that man's sins absolutely out of existence so that they cease to be! Christ has accomplished the

great work described to Daniel by the angel Gabriel—He has finished the transgression, made an end of sins—what a strong expression that is!—made reconciliation for iniquity and brought in everlasting righteousness! How gloriously He has put sin right away for all who believe in Him! "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." Of all sinners in the whole world who believe in Jesus Christ, it may be truly said that all their sins are gone past all recall—God has cast them into the depths of the Red Sea of the Savior's blood and they shall not be remembered against them any more forever! It is thus that the Lamb of God takes or bears away sin!

But *whose sin does He take away*? The text says, "*the sin of the world*." By this expression I believe is intended the sin not only of the Jews, but of Jews and Gentiles, alike—the sin not only of a few sinners, but of all sinners in the whole world who come to Jesus and put their trust in Him! He has so taken away "the sin of the world" that every sinner in the world who will come to Him and trust in Him, shall have all his sins put away forever! Whether he is Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, Barbarian or Scythian, bond or free, if he truly believes in Jesus, it is certain that Christ took all his sins away. Whether he was born 1800 years ago, or whether he shall be born in the ages that are yet to come, does not make any difference to this fact—Christ has borne his sins if he trusts in Jesus as his own Savior. This is the sign and token by which he may assuredly know that he has a saving and eternal interest in the precious blood of Jesus—"He that believes on Him is not condemned." The gate of divine grace is set very wide open in our text—if it were not, some poor sinners would be afraid to enter! "Oh," asks one, "is this mercy for *me*? Is it for *me*?" Well, friend, I will ask you a question—will you trust Christ? Will you come to Him this very moment and take the mercy that He freely presents to all who will accept it? If so, I am sure that it is yours—as sure as I am that it is mine!

Possibly someone has come in here tonight hoping to hear something new, but I have nothing new to tell, nor do I wish ever to have anything more new than this—"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." 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." When Dr. Judson went home to America from Burma, there was a large congregation gathered together and they requested the returned missionary, the veteran of so many years of service, to address the assembly. He stood up and simply told the story that I have again told you tonight—the story of Christ suffering in the place of sinners and of Christ saving all who trust Him. Then he sat down and one who sat next to him said to him, "I am afraid the friends are rather disappointed—they expected to hear something interesting from you." He said, "I have spoken to them to the best of my ability upon the most interesting subject in the whole world! What could I have done better than that?" "Yes," said the other, "but after having been so long abroad, they thought that you would tell them some interesting story. They did not think you would

come all the way from Burma just to tell them only that." The missionary then rose and said, "I should like to go home feeling that although I have come all the way from Burma, I do not know anything that I can tell you that I think is half as good for you to hear, or half as interesting, as the story of the love of Christ in dying to save sinners."

The good doctor was right and I feel just as he did—that there is nothing so interesting as the story of the cross! You need to hear it, you who are already saved. And you need to hear it, you who are not yet saved! You *must* hear it, for there is no hope of salvation for you except as faith shall come to you by hearing—and especially hearing that portion of the Word of God which deals most closely with the cross of Christ!

One night, a dissolving view lecture upon the Holy Land was being given and, as the audience, sitting in darkness, looked at a picture of Jerusalem, they were startled by a voice asking, "Where is Calvary?" Ah, and that is the question that many of you need to ask—"Where is Calvary?" There must you turn your eyes where, between the two thieves, your Savior died. If you really look to Him as He dies there for guilty sinners, you are saved! And then whatever else you do not know, you know enough to save you, for you are wise unto eternal life! May the Lord graciously make you thus wise through the effectual working of His ever blessed Spirit! So then, God in human flesh, the divinely appointed sacrifice for human guilt, "the Lamb of God," is what you are bid, in our text, to "behold."

II. But now, secondly, WHAT ARE WE TO DO?

How are we to have a part and lot in that great sacrifice which Christ offered on Calvary? The answer of the text is, "*Behold"*—that is, look to "*the Lamb of God*."—

"There is life in a look at the Crucified One!"

"Behold the Lamb of God" means believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, trust in Him as your Savior, accept God's revelation concerning Him and rely upon Him to save you. This is the way of salvation!

Notice *how opposed this is to the idea that we are critically to understand the doctrines of the gospel before we can be saved*. How many persons there are who want to know this and to understand that! They come to us and say, "Here are two texts that do not seem, to us, to square with one another, and there are those two doctrines of divine sovereignty and human responsibility which do not appear to be consistent with each other. Must we understand all the mysteries before we can be saved?" O foolish people! They remind me of one who is shipwrecked and who, as the lifeboat comes up to the sinking ship, or to the spar upon which he is floating, says to the captain, "Before I can get on board that lifeboat, I want to know the exact number of planks there are in it. And I really do not think that knowing that would content me—I would also like to know how many rivets and bolts there are in the boat. And I also need to know what is the theory of the operation of the oars upon the waves and how it is that boats are propelled." If a man ever did talk thus, I am pretty sure

that the captain of the lifeboat would exclaim, "What a fool that man is! He is in danger of drowning, yet he talks like this! Come into the boat at once, or we must leave you to perish!" And I also feel that you unconverted sinners have no business to set yourselves up as critics of the Word of God! There is something much simpler than that for you to do—and the text bids you do it—"Behold the Lamb of God." Do not sit down to manufacture difficulties—"believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." There are various ways of using a piece of bread. One man may take it and employ it in rubbing out the pencil marks which he has made upon a sheet of paper. Another man may take it to an analyst and ask him to see how much alum the baker may have put into it. But the really hungry man—the one who gets the most good out of the piece of bread—eats it! And that is what I recommend you to do with the gospel—not begin to turn it about this way and that, not ask all manner of questions concerning it—but feed upon it! And the way to feed upon it is to accept it, believe it and especially to put your trust in Jesus Christ, who is the very essence of the gospel!

"Behold the Lamb of God," says the text—then *that command is opposed to the question that troubles so many—whether they are elect or not!* That is like wanting to read Hebrew before one has learned to speak English! Such people are not content to learn the A B C, the elements, the rudiments of the gospel, first—they first want to know the gospel's classics, or mathematics, or metaphysics—but that cannot be! During the recent hard frosts I have struck up an acquaintance with a little friend who, I am afraid, may desert me, by and by, but our friendship has been exceedingly pleasant to each of us thus far. On the little balcony outside my study windows, I observed a robin frequently coming, so I took an opportunity, one morning, to put some crumbs there and I have done the same thing every morning since. And my little feathered friend comes close up to the window frame and picks up the crumbs. And I do not perceive that he has any difficulty about whether the crumbs were laid there for him, or whether I had any electing love towards him in my heart. There were the crumbs—he needed them and he picked them up and ate them! And I can tell you that in doing so, he exactly fulfilled my purpose in putting the crumbs there! I thought that he acted very wisely and I think that if a poor sinner wants mercy—and he sees that there is mercy to be had—he had better not pause to ask, "Did God decree me to have it?" But go on and take it and he will then find that in doing so, he is fulfilling God's decree! My little robin friend is very wise in his way, for he has called a friend of his to join him at the feast on the balcony. How he did it, I do not know, but he managed to tell a blackbird all about the crumbs—and he brought him last Friday morning to see them for himself. The blackbird was rather shy at first, and stood for a while on the iron bar of the balcony. But after looking in at the study window, he happened down and neither he nor the robin asked whether it was my purpose that the blackbird should have any of the crumbs! But there were the crumbs and they were both hungry, so they came and fed to-

gether. So, if any of you find Jesus Christ for yourselves and you know some poor soul who needs Him, do not begin asking whether it is God's purpose or decree that he, also, should find the Savior—go and invite him to come to Jesus and then both of you come to the Savior together—and then, just as the robin and blackbird exactly fulfilled my purpose in throwing out the crumbs, so, when you and your friend come to Christ, you will rejoice to find that you have, both of you, fulfilled the eternal purpose of the divine decree of the great heart of God! It is not your business to look into the book of God's secret purposes, but to look to Christ, or, as our text puts it, to, "behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world."

Ah, but this beholding of the Lamb of God is a thing to which men cannot readily be brought! I know many whose consciences are truly awakened and who see themselves as sinners in the sight of God, but instead of beholding the Lamb of God, they are continually beholding themselves! I do not think that they have any confidence in their own righteousness, but they are afraid that they do not feel their guilt as much as they ought. They think that they are not yet sufficiently awakened, sufficiently humbled, sufficiently penitent and so on, and thus they fix their eyes upon themselves in the hope of getting peace with God! Suppose that yesterday or the day before, you had felt very cold and, therefore, you had gone outside your house and fixed your gaze upon the ice and the snow—do you think that sight would have warmed you? Now you know you would have been getting colder all the time! Suppose you are very poor and you studiously fix your mind's eye upon your empty pocket—do you think that will enrich you? Or imagine that you have had an accident and that one of your bones is broken—if you think very seriously of that broken bone, do you think that your consideration will mend it? Yet some sinners seem to imagine that salvation can come to them through their consideration of their lost and ruined condition! My dear unconverted hearers, you are lost whether you know it or not! Take that fact for granted. If you would be saved, look not at yourselves, but "behold the Lamb of God." He has been sent by His Father to be the Savior of sinners and it is by trust in Him that peace and pardon will come to you! I pray you not to suppose, for a single moment that your repentance, your tears, or your softened heart can prepare you for Christ! Do not come to Christ because you have a tender heart, but come to Christ to *get* a tender heart! Do not come to Him because you are fit to come, but because you need to be *made* fit! And remember that—

"All the fitness He requires
Is to feel your need of Him.
This He gives you –
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam!"

Give up looking at yourself and "behold the Lamb of God."

Let me also, dear friend, warn *you against the notion that your prayers can save you apart from beholding Christ.* I believe that it is both the duty

and the privilege of every living soul to pray—but that the first command to a sinner is to pray, I deny! Their first command is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." And when you have done that, you will soon get to praying. I think it is stated in McCheyne's life, that after an earnest sermon, he found a man under deep concern of soul. And after saying a word or two to him, he said, "I cannot stay longer with you, myself, but there is one of my elders who will pray with you." The elder did so and he prayed in so fervent a fashion that it was remarked that he seemed to be like Jacob wrestling with the angel until he prevailed. The man afterwards came to see Mr. McCheyne and said to him, "I am very thankful that I was at your church that night. I feel very happy and I believe I am saved." "Well," said McCheyne, "what makes you feel so happy?" "Oh," he said, "I have great faith in that good man's prayers." McCheyne at once said, "My friend, I am afraid that good man's prayers will ruin you! If that is where you are putting your confidence, you are utterly mistaken." He was quite right. And your own prayers will be just such an obstacle in your way if you trust to *them* instead of trusting to Christ! "I know I pray," says one, "and I am very earnest in prayer." Well, I am glad of that as far as it goes, but if you have not something better to trust to than your own prayers, your prayers will ruin you— for the look of faith is not to be given to prayer, but to Christ! Our text says, "Behold the Lamb of God." I have told you what that means—look by faith to the sacrifice that Christ made for sinners on the cross at Calvary—but if you look to anything else for salvation, you will not find it! Even your prayers, apart from faith in Christ, will not save you from everlasting destruction! O sinner, get away from everything else and come to Christ—

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good!"

This great truth of God, that *believing* is the divinely appointed means of salvation, may be illustrated by the old story of the children of Israel and the serpent of brass. [Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon this subject, are as follows—#153, Volume 3—THE MYSTERIES OF THE BRONZE SERPENT; #285, Volume 5—MAN'S RUIN AND GOD'S REMEDY and #1500, Volume 25—NUMBER 1500—OR, LIFTING UP THE BRONZE SERPENT—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] You have heard it scores of times, yet I beg you to listen to it once more! When the people were bitten by the fiery serpents in the wilderness, they were commanded to look at the serpent of brass that was lifted upon a pole—and whoever looked, lived. They had nothing to do but look! Moses lifted up the serpent and pointed to it and cried, "Look! Look! Look! And be healed." Possibly there were some who said they were bitten too badly to look. Well, if they could not or did not look, they would die. They might think it was a proof of their humility to say, "We are too sick to be cured," but if they did so, they would die whether they were humble or not! O my hearer, do not be lost through a mock humility which is really abominable pride! You are not too great a sinner to be saved! I will venture to say that you will dishonor Christ if you ever think such a thing! So let not that sinful thought destroy you!

There may have been others who said, "We shall not look to the bronze serpent for we have only got a mere scratch—it will soon be gone." But you know a poison scratch means death and if your sin were only a scratch (it is much more than that) it would mean eternal damnation for you! So look to Jesus, I implore you, just as you are! Look now! Look and live!

Perhaps there was one who said, "My father had a famous recipe for serpent bites. It was given to him by a celebrated doctor in Egypt, so we will mix up the proper ingredients and so get cured." Well, if any who were bitten were to act and speak like that, they would all die—the deadly venom would certainly destroy them, whatever ointments they might use! A look at the bronze serpent gave life, but the refusal to look brought death.

There may have been some fine gentlemen there who had imbibed skeptical notions during their life in Egypt. They were so clever that they thought they knew a great deal more than the Lord's servant to whom God had specially revealed the only effectual remedy, so they turned on their heels and said, "Such a remedy as this is utterly ridiculous! It is not according to the laws of physics that the mere looking at a piece of brass can heal people of the bites of snakes!" So they perished. Notwithstanding all their learning and wit, notwithstanding their jeers at the divinely appointed remedy, they perished. And nobody in the whole camp was healed except those who were simple enough and wise enough to take God at His word. Then, though they were terribly bitten, though their blood was set on fire by the poison and though some of them were in a truly desperate state—when they just looked at the bronze serpent—in a moment their blood again flowed healthily through their veins and their strength returned to them in all its former vigor! And, dear friends, there shall be no soul saved in the whole world except by looking to the crucified Christ of Calvary! All trust in christening, (or even in baptism), in confirmation, in sacraments, in ceremonies, in priests, popes and relics—are all lies—but as long as God's word remains true, he who looks by faith to Christ, alone, must and shall be eternally saved! Oh, how can I utter this truth of God so as to make it plainer, or how shall I plead with you so as to bring you all to trust in Christ? I cannot do this, but I pray the Holy Spirit to do it, for He can—and then you will believe in Jesus and so receive everlasting life!

III. I must not detain you longer, as our time has fled. Otherwise I was to have answered a third question, WHY SHOULD WE THUS LOOK?

The answer would have been that God has appointed this as the only way of salvation, that those who obey the command of the text will obtain immediate salvation and that, being saved, they shall have joy and peace in believing! But you who neglect or refuse to "behold the Lamb of God" must, without doubt, everlastingly perish! Of His infinite mercy, may God graciously grant that none whom I am now addressing may refuse to be-

lieve in Jesus, but may everyone look to Him and live—live now, and live forever!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *JOHN 1:1-34.*

Verse 1. *In the beginning was the Word.* Christ the Word has existed from all eternity! He is the eternal Son of the eternal Father. He is really what Melchisedec was metaphorically, "having neither beginning of days, nor end of life." "In the beginning was the Word."

1. *And the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* The Word was as truly God as the Father was God, and as the Spirit was God. "These three are one," and have always been one. "Very God of very God" is that Jesus whom we trust, love and adore!

2-5. *The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.* The light of Christ shone many times amid the darkness that enshrouded the world before His coming to live here in the flesh, yet comparatively few recognized that light and rejoiced in it. Christ's light shines more brightly now, but the dark, benighted soul of man perceives not the brightness of our spiritual Lord until the Holy Spirit works the mighty miracle of regeneration and so gives sight to those who have been blind.

6. *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.* What a descent it is from, "The Word of God," to the "man sent from God, whose name was John." Jesus Himself said concerning John, "Among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist." Yet, from the greatest of prophets, what a climb it is to get up to Jesus Christ, the Son of God! "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John."

7-9. *The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world.* John could not do *that*—he could only bear witness to Christ, the true Light, who alone is able to illuminate, in a larger or lesser degree, "every man that comes into the world."

10. *He was in the world, and the world was made by Him and the world knew Him not.* Oh, what terrible estrangement sin has caused between God and man! What dreadful ignorance sin has created in the human mind! The world was made by Christ, yet "the world knew Him not."

11. *He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.* To those who were chosen as "His own" out of all the nations upon the earth, to those to whom He was especially promised of old, to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—to these Jesus came, yet they "received Him not."

12. *But*—This is a blessed, "But." Though Christ's own nation, the Jews, as a whole "received Him not," there was "a remnant according to the election of grace," there were some who received Him. "But"—

12. *As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.* How came those persons to receive Him when others rejected Him? There must have been some great change worked in them to make them different from the rest of their countrymen. And truly there was, for these were twice born men—

13. *Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* [See Sermon #2259, Volume 38—THE SIMPLICITY AND SUBLIMITY OF SALVATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] So that those who receive Christ, those who truly believe on Christ, are people who have been born, as others have *not* been born, by a new birth from heaven—a supernatural birth, so that they are a people set apart by themselves as those who have been created twice—first as human beings just like others, and then as new creatures in Christ Jesus!

14-18. *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth. John bore witness of Him and cried, saying, This was He of whom I spoke, He that came after me is preferred before me: for He was before me. And of His fullness have we all received, and grace for grace* [See Sermons #858, Volume 15—THE FULLNESS OF JESUS THE TREASURY OF SAINTS and #1169, Volume 20—THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST THE TREASURY OF THE SAINTS—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *for the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.* There is no way of knowing God and being reconciled to God except as we receive Jesus Christ, His Son, into our hearts and learn of Him all that He delights to reveal to us concerning His Father through the Holy Spirit's teaching.

19-23. *And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who are you? And he confessed, and denied not but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then, Are you Elijah? And he said, I am not. Are you that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, who are you, that we may give an answer to them that sent us? What say you of yourself? He said, I am the voice*—Not the Word, but "the voice" by which the Word was to be made known—"I am the voice"—

23-27. *Of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the lord, as said the prophet Isaiah. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why do you baptize, then, if you are not that Christ, nor Elijah, neither that prophet? John answered them saying, I baptize with water: but there stands one among you, whom you know not. He it is, who coming after me is preferred before*

me, whose shoe laces I am not worthy to unloose. See the true humility of this faithful servant of Christ! He does not dream of putting His own name side by side with his Master's. The unloosing of shoe laces was work for a slave to do, but if we are privileged to perform this work for Christ, it will make us as kings before Him! To do *anything* for Christ—to have even a menial's place in His palace is better than being an emperor among men! May we have the portion of those who are not ashamed to unloose the laces of Christ's shoes!

28-31. *These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day John saw Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world. This is He of whom I said, After me comes a man which is preferred before me: for He was before me. And I knew Him not*—"When first I saw Him"—

31-34. *But that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bore record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.* Since John's time, many others have borne similar testimony. We, also, have received Him and rejoice to say that He has baptized us with the Holy Spirit. All that John said of Him is true—and much more than John said is also true. He is the Lamb of God who has taken upon Himself the sin of all who believe in Him and, therefore, He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. Oh, that all men would receive the testimony concerning Him which we find in this blessed book—and which we delight to repeat in His name!

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"Whom having not seen, you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."
1 Peter 1:8, 9.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is #698, Volume 12—
SEEING IS NOT BELIEVING, BUT BELIEVING IS SEEING—
Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

WE usually speak of the greater benefits of salvation as being in the future. We desire that we may be found in Christ in the day of His appearing and that we may have a share in His eternal glory. But, beloved, salvation is not altogether a thing of the future—it is very decidedly a present matter, a blessing to be possessed now and to be enjoyed now—and our text brings out that idea very clearly! Peter does not write about the elect strangers hoping to receive salvation, by and by, but putting it all in the *present* tense, he says, "Whom having not seen, *you love. Though now…you rejoice*… receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." The perfection of salvation is reserved for the second coming of the Lord, for at present the body is mortal because of sin—it is subject to pain and it will die unless the Lord should first come and it will, for a while, lie in the grave. But at His appearing shall be a resurrection of the body and then body and soul reunited shall experience the fullness of salvation! In that respect, therefore, salvation still remains in part a matter for the future, yet with the true child of God, the essence of salvation is a thing of today. Even now we rejoice with unspeakable joy and full of glory, receiving the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls!

I am going to speak upon this matter in the following way. First, we will inquire, *what part of salvation do we receive here and now?* Secondly, *how do we now receive salvation*? And then, thirdly we will make the solemn inquiry for all here, *Have we received salvation, and if so, how far have we gone in the reception of it*?

I. My first question is, WHAT PART OF SALVATION DO WE RECEIVE HERE AND NOW?

My first answer to the question is that, *in a certain sense, we already possess the whole of it*, for all salvation is wrapped up in Christ and Christ is ours if we are truly believing in Him. He is this day our Savior

and our all in all—He is already "made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption." There is nothing of salvation that is outside of Christ and, therefore, since Christ is ours, the whole of salvation is ours. It is ours by the grip of faith and the grace of hope—that living hope which is sure of realization—that well-grounded hope which cannot be disappointed. Our expectation is of so vivid a character that it brings not only near to us, but into actual present possession, joys which as yet are not revealed! So again I say that, in a sense, it is true for us to say that we have received in faith and hope the salvation of our souls if we have truly believed in Jesus, for—

"The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Redemption in full through Christ's blood."

But, secondly, if we are to answer the question distinctly and in detail, we should say that if we have really trusted in Jesus, we have so far received the salvation of our souls that we have, at this moment, *the assurance of the perfect pardon of all our sins*. Let me repeat those words—if we have really believed in Jesus, we have, at this moment, the assurance of the perfect pardon of all our sins! And I will venture to put it as strongly as this and to say that yonder white robed spirits before the eternal throne of God are not more clear of the guilt of sin before the bar of infallible justice than was the dying thief the very moment that he turned his eye in faith to Christ upon the cross of Calvary—or than you are if you are now trusting to the same Savior, or than I am as now depending alone upon the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior! The pardon which God gives to believers in Jesus is not a semi pardon. It is not a putting away of some of their sins, or a putting them away for a time—it is a perfect putting away of their sins forever, a casting of them, once and for all, behind God's back into the depths of the sea so that they shall never be found again! Yes, they shall be so completely put away that they shall cease to be, according to that divine declaration, "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none." Oh, what a glorious truth of God is this, that although a poor tried child of God may feel the force of his inbred sin and have to continually struggle with it—and though he may, from day to day, be conscious of his many imperfections, yet before those eyes that see everything, there is no spot to be seen upon the believer in Christ—I mean no spot in this respect—that he can never be condemned or punished for his sin! His sin is finally and forever pardoned! God has blotted it out like a cloud that has been blown away and completely dispersed. Therefore let our spirits rejoice if we are truly trusting in Jesus! And oh, that some who have never done so before, would now look believingly unto Him! If they do thus look this moment, they shall obtain perfect pardon and so shall receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls! I cannot help repeating that sweet verse of Kent's which I have often repeated to you, which sounds so strange, but which is, I believe, absolutely true—

"Here's pardon for transgressions past,

It matters not how black their cast.
And, O my soul, with wonder view,
For sins to come, here's pardon, too."

And next, beloved, we have received the salvation of our souls in this sense, that *the alienation of our hearts from God is now effectually removed*. We are saved from that alienation and that is a very great part of salvation. Once our backs were turned towards God, but now our faces are turned towards Him. At one time we did not admire His character, nor desire to imitate Him, nor wish for His friendship nor, perhaps, even so much as think of His existence, much less did we aspire to give Him honor! But now, having believed in Jesus, we have undergone a complete change! We are not yet what we ought to be—we are still a long way off what we expect to be one day—yet we do desire to be what we should be. We admire the character of God even though we have to prostrate ourselves in the dust when we see how far our own character is from likeness to it, and the whole set and current of our desires is towards purity and holiness. If we could have our way, our way would not be a sinful one. If our will could be gratified, our will would be that God should have His will with us and that we should be in all things conformed to the divine will! All true Christians are conscious that it is so with them and this is a great part of salvation. Indeed, it is destruction to be alienated from God, and it is salvation to be reconciled to Him! It is destruction to anyone to be a lover of sin. The man who loves evil is a destroyed man—a man who is broken in pieces—that which should be the glory of his manhood is absent from him. But when he is brought to love God, the ruins are rebuilt! And though, as yet, every part of the renovated building may not be finished, the divine architect who drew the plans of it from eternity, will never leave the work till the last stroke of the sacred hammer and chisel shall have been given—and the completed structure shall have had the headstone placed upon it amid shouts of, "grace, grace unto it!" Blessed be God that we have this salvation, now, in that we are saved from our former alienation of heart from God!

In the next place, we have received the salvation of our souls in the sense that *we are saved from the killing power of sin*. Before we believed in Jesus, we were not capable of those sacred actions which are now our daily delight. We could not pray. We may have "said our prayers," as so many do, but the living breath of true God inspired prayer was not in us. How could it be in us while we were still dead in trespasses and sins? We could not believe. How could we do so when we had not received the gift of faith from the ever blessed Spirit? The fact is, we were under a terrible bondage and just as a corpse is under bondage to death and cannot stir hand or foot, lip or eye, so were we under bondage to sin and Satan. But we are under that deadly bondage no longer, for we are living men, free men in Christ Jesus our Lord who has overcome that death for us! Now we can pray! Now we can praise—not always as we would like to do, but still, the aspiration is there and the power is there—and when God gra-

ciously helps us by His Holy Spirit, we rise to a high degree of vigor in both those sacred exercises! So, when the killing power of sin is gone, what a mercy it is! What a bliss it is! And in this sense, also, we receive the salvation of our souls.

More than that, beloved, *the reigning power of sin has now gone from every believer*. Once we were slaves to sin, under sin's domination. Sin said to us, "Go," and we went, or sin said to us, "Stay! Obey not God," and we stayed and at sin's bidding disobeyed God. But now, sin no longer has dominion over us, for we are not under the law, but under grace. And though we even now sometimes hear sin's mandate and the flesh inclines us to yield obedience to it, there is a blessed spirit of rebellion against sin within our heart so that we will not obey sin's commands, but seek after that which is just and holy and right in the sight of God!

Now I am going to take another step and possibly some of the feebler folk among us may think it is too long a step for them to take. Yet I pray God that many of us may practically prove that we have taken it. Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, it is possible and it ought to be the general rule for Christians to enjoy present salvation in the sense of *being now free, to a very high degree, from sin in their daily life and conduct*. No, more—they ought not to be satisfied without aspiring to be absolutely free from it! It is after this that they should seek, even though they do not attain to it. I am fully persuaded the perfection in the flesh is not attainable here, yet that truth of God, as I believe it is, has been used by a great many persons as a sort of damper to the sad ambition of renewed spirits! I do not think it ought to be so used, nor that it would legitimately be so used. Suppose I am a sculptor? If it is not possible for me to attain to the perfection of Praxiteles or Phidias, yet I must come as close to them as I can—and I shall not be a master of the sculptor's art unless I seek to imitate those who have been the most proficient in it. Suppose, also, that through the infirmity of the flesh, I shall never in this life be perfect, like Christ—yet I must have no lower model, nor must I say to myself, "I cannot imitate that perfect model," but, crying to the strong one for strength, I must believe that the omnipotence of God can overcome every sin! And I must also believe that it is possible for me, by the grace of God, to get every sin beneath my feet. And I must never say to any one sin, "I shall have to spare you, for you are too strong for God to slay." It would be blasphemy to talk like that!

I fear that some brothers and sisters think that a quick temper can never be overcome. But it *must* be overcome! The reason why so many professors so often fall into that sin is that they do not believe that it is conquerable and, therefore, they do not pray it down! Another person, perhaps, has a sluggish disposition and he thinks, "I must always be so. It is my nature and the flesh is weak." It is true that the flesh is weak, but it is equally true that God is almighty! And it is not our own strength but divine strength that is to procure the deliverance of our soul from sluggishness! So we must cry mightily unto the Lord for divine grace to overcome this or any other sin to which we are peculiarly prone. God has

not put us into Canaan and said to us, "You may spare some of those Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Gergashites, Hivites and Jebusites!" His command to us is, "Slay them all! Let not one of them escape!" There must be no sin tolerated in any believer in Christ! And though you are not perfect, you must never say, "Up to this point, I am perfect, and that is as far as God can make me perfect." Dear friends, do you believe in an infinitely powerful God? Do you believe that the Holy Spirit is able to work in you anything and everything that He wills to work? Then, brothers and sisters, stop not short of the highest point that is attainable by mortal men and seek to be "holy as God is holy!" Alas, some professors of religion are hardly even moral! Their pretended Christianity is a stench even in the nostrils of worldlings, for they do not conform to the common rules of ordinary decent society—and what true Christians long for is to possess real holiness, to walk with God as Enoch did, to abide in Christ, to shun every false way, to have—

"A heart from sin set free"—

and a conscience tender as the apple of the eye! Oh, that we could all come up to this standard! And we can! It is possible! This is attainable, by the grace of God, through the effectual working of the Holy Spirit. I again say that I do not think that *absolute perfection* can be reached here, but I cannot tell how near we can come to it. *That* I would like to prove by happy personal experience—and I beseech every brother and sister in Christ here to join with me in seeking to know how we may, even now, receive the salvation of our souls from the power of sin!

I am quite sure that there are many Christians who have been completely delivered from sins into which they readily fell in their early days. You know that infants suffer from a great many diseases. All through the period of babyhood, they are liable to various ailments which no longer afflict us who are grownup men and women. So it is with some Christians—when they have grown in grace to the stature of men in Christ, they do not have the little complaints of babyhood. I do not say that this is true of all professors of Christianity, for alas, there are many of them who have to be wheeled about in baby carriages although they are 50 or 60 years of age! While they were little children, we had to dandle them on our knees and carry them in our arms and give them milk—and they still want milk, and still want dandling now that they are getting gray—gray bearded babies! But we need to get them out of that state of babyhood, for there is something far better even on earth than being spiritually mere babes all our lives! May all of us who are in Christ grow to the stature of men and women in Christ! The more of such any church shall have among her members, the better will it be for her and the more will God be glorified! Let us who are the Lord's, resolve that everything that is to be had of God this side of heaven, we will have! Let us not be content to get just inside Christ's house and to sit down there and say, "Thank God, we are safe. We have got over the threshold," but let us seek to press onward to the chief table of rich refreshment and inner fellowship

with Christ and to know the secret of the Lord which is with them that fear Him, that so we may find that "glory begun below" of which Dr. Watts so truly sings—

"The men of grace have found
Glory begun below!
Celestial fruits on earthly ground
From faith and hope may grow."

II. And now, secondly, (and with greater brevity, not professing to dive into the depths of the text, but merely skimming its surface, as the swallow touches the brook with its wing)—HOW DO WE NOW RECEIVE THE SALVATION OF OUR SOULS?

First, it is entirely from Jesus Christ—"*Whom* having not seen, you love, *in whom*, though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." Everything of salvation that a believer receives, comes to him out of the one storehouse wherein all fullness abides—that is in Christ Jesus! Never believe, Christian, that you will ever get any divine grace out of yourself! It is a dreary and useless task to send the bucket down into the dry well of our nature in the hope of drawing up a supply of grace. Oh no, beloved, look away from self and look alone to Jesus, for from Him, and from Him, only, do we receive the salvation of our souls!

Then note that the channels through which we receive salvation from Christ are first, *faith*—"in whom, though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice." None of us have seen Christ. We sometimes foolishly wish that we had, but *believing* in Him is better than merely seeing Him—for many saw Him when He was upon the earth—and yet perished! But no man ever truly believed in Him and then perished. Faith is that eye which savingly sees Christ on the cross. And it is only as we continue to look to Him by faith that we receive the present salvation of our souls from sin. You can never kill any sin if you turn your eyes away from the cross. There is no stream that can cleanse from inward lusts but the precious blood of Jesus that flowed on Calvary. Whoever has been victorious over any temptation, it may truly be said of him, "he overcame through the blood of the Lamb." So that there is no way of receiving the blessings of a present salvation except through believing in Jesus!

Our text also tells us that another channel of salvation is *love*—"Whom having not seen, you love." The love of Christ is the great force that enables grace to kill sin! The love of Christ and sin are like the two balances of a pair of scales—if sin goes up in our esteem, our love to Christ is going down! And whenever our love to Christ goes up, sin must go down in the same proportion. With little love to Christ, you will walk unwarily, but with great love to your Lord, you will walk carefully before Him and your practical holiness will become manifest to all around you. Though we have not seen Christ, we love Him! And through that love we receive a further assurance of the salvation of our souls from inward as well as outward sin. This is the precious golden conduit through which the pow-

er of divine grace flows freely into our souls. Oh, for more fervent love to Christ!

Then our text stays that we also receive this present assurance of salvation through *joy in the Lord*—"In whom…believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." This joy is a flaming sword like that which the cherubim waved at the gates of the Garden of Eden! It blazes, it cuts, it kills. Once let us really rejoice in Christ as our Savior and we become immediately guarded from sin. I believe that many sins are hatched beneath the wings of doubt and fear, but when we get away from those ugly things and live rejoicing in God, then we say, "Down with sin! We cannot endure to have it in our lives." He who has sweet flowers in his hand flings away evil smelling weeds! And he who has such a diamond of heaven as "joy unspeakable and full of glory" casts away the pebbles of earth with which He was pleased before. He who rejoices with joy unspeakable is not likely to be allured by the paltry joys of earth—they have lost all their former charm to him. Their siren songs have no attraction to his ears for he has heard the celestial note of the harps of heaven! What bliss it is to be able to rejoice in Christ as our Savior, for this guarantees to us the salvation of our souls, not only now, but to all eternity!

Why does the apostle say that we rejoice with *joy unspeakable*? Is it not, first, because this joy is too great to be told? He is indeed rich who cannot count his wealth. He has so much that he does not know how much he has and he is indeed full of joy who has so much joy that he cannot tell anyone how much he has!

I also think that Peter calls our joy, "unspeakable," because if we were to try to explain or describe it to carnal men, they could not understand us. You cannot explain to a person who has never tasted honey, how sweet it is. Neither can you explain to a man who knows not the joy of the Lord, how joyous a thing it is. He could not comprehend what your words meant—you would be talking to him in an altogether unknown tongue!

Moreover, brothers and sisters, you all know the old proverb, "Still waters run deep." The worldling joy barely covers the stones of his daily sorrow and, therefore, it babbles like a shallow brook as it runs along in its narrow bed. But the Christian's joy is broad and deep and it scarcely makes any sound as it majestically rolls on like some great river on its way to the sea! The Christians joy is unspeakable because it is unfathomable even by those who enjoy it! And wherever this joy comes, it has a purifying effect, delivering us from sin and making us thus receive the salvation of our souls.

This joy is also said to be "full of glory." Now, the joys of this world have no true glory in them. Look at the worldly man who is most joyous and glad—what glory is there about him? Any so called joy that comes through sin is just the opposite of glorious! The drunk's joy puts him below the level of beasts. But there is an elevating power about the Christian's joy—the joy of salvation, the joy of adoration, the joy of gratitude,

the joy of love to God, the joy of being made like Christ, the joy of expecting His coming—all this is glorious joy and it is "full of glory!" I saw lately a picture representing the coming man, the Lord Jesus Christ. It represented Him as having in His hands cannons, triumphant arches, flags, kings, emperors and all the insignia of royalty—and blowing them away as chaff is driven before the wind! Come, O blessed coming man! You know how we need You! Well, He will come at the right time—and all the glory of this world will fly away just like that when He comes! But our joy is full of a glory which the coming man who is, "over all God, blessed forever," will keep on increasing so that it shall be to us the fuller of glory forever and ever! Such joy as this glorious joy is, makes us look down upon the world's joys and sin's joys as utterly despicable! And so, by lifting us up above them, it further enables us to receive, here and now, the salvation of our souls!

III. There was much more that I wanted to say, but my time has almost gone. In the good old Puritan times, they had an hourglass on the pulpit and when the sands were running out, the minister was warned that it was time to stop. But he often turned it over, again, and went on for another hour! I cannot do that, so I must hasten to a close with the solemn inquiry, HAVE WE RECEIVED THE SALVATION OF OUR SOULS? AND IF SO, HOW FAR HAVE WE GONE IN THE RECEPTION OF IT?

The first and most vital question for you, my hearers, is this—*have you received the salvation of your souls*? I know that you have heard about salvation and many of you know what the Bible says about it. But that is not enough. "I know what salvation means," says one, "I know the way." Then take heed that you do not perish in the light! If two men have to go out in the dark, which is the one to whom the darkness is the more dense? Why, the one who has been sitting in the light! If you go out of your brilliantly illuminated room, you realize how dark it is outside where there is no light above or below. Take care, you who are sitting in the light of God today, lest for you there should be "reserved the blackness of darkness forever" because you shut your eyes to the light and will not receive the salvation of your souls.

"Ah, but," say some, "we profess to be saved." I am glad to hear that and I would not even hint that your profession is not sincere, but I would urge you to hint to yourself that there is a possibility that all may not be well with you! Are there not many who think they have received the salvation of their souls, but who have not really done so? In St. Peter's, at Rome, I saw monuments to James III, Charles III, and Henry IX—kings of England—but these potentates were quite unknown to me! Certainly they never reigned in this land, so the royal names upon their monuments are only a subject for ridicule and scorn! And you profess and call yourselves Christians? If you really are so, it is well, but if you are not so, I can conceive that in the next world there may be spirits that shall say to you, "You professed to be Christians, yet you are in hell! You sat at the Lord's Table and ate the bread and drank the wine in memory of His death—that death in which you had no saving interest—the atonement that nev-

er redeemed you!" O no, my hearers, may this never be true of any of us! But may God, in His infinite mercy, save us and so may we really and truly receive, and not merely profess to have received the salvation of our souls! If we have really cast ourselves upon Christ, though we have not seen Him—if we do truly love Him and if we have, to some extent, at least, the joy unspeakable and full of glory within our hearts—then, indeed, we have received the salvation of our souls!

Then comes the other question, *how far have we received this salvation*? If we had a sacred thermometer given to us in order to measure our spiritual heat, what would our temperature be? Are you, brother, above freezing? I fear that some here are below zero! Have any of you come up to anything like blood heat yet? What a wondrous heat of love that must have been when the lifeblood of Jesus flowed from His wounds as He hung upon the cross of Calvary! Oh, that we could always have our religion at such blood heat! Have we reached that spiritual temperature yet? There have been saints—and there are still saints willing to suffer the loss of all things for Christ's sake. Nothing has been too hot, too hard, or too heavy for them to endure in His blessed service. They have counted shame and loss to be honor and gain if they might but "glorify God and enjoy Him forever." Have we come anywhere near to them? We do have occasional communion with Christ, but have we *abiding fellowship* with Him? Do we dwell near to Christ?

But what about these who have not yet believed in Him? I heard an evangelist say one night in this Tabernacle, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life. H—A—S—that spells, 'got it.'" That is an odd way of spelling, but it is sound divinity! The Lord enable you all to believe in Jesus! Then you will have "got it," as our friend said. Or, as Peter, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote, "Believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 PETER 1.

Verse 1. *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.* It must have been very pleasant to his heart to write those words—not "Peter, who denied his Master." Not, "Peter, full of imperfections and infirmities—the impetuous and changeable one of the twelve," but, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ," as truly sent of God as any of the other apostles and with as much of the Spirit of his Master resting upon him! "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ"—

1, 2. *To the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.* You might go for 50 years to some places of worship and never hear the word, "elect," ever mentioned! Modern ministers seem to be ashamed of the grand old doctrine of election, but it was not so with the apostles

and the early Christians! They were accustomed to speak of one another as the elect of God. The doctrine of election was most precious to their hearts and, therefore, Peter writes, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father"—

2. *Through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.* We not only need grace, but we need much grace! And also peace. And we need a greatly increased measure of both those blessings. Do not be satisfied, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, with the grace that you already have. Be thankful for it, but ask for the divine multiplication of it—regard the grace which you have already received as being like the boy's loaves and fishes—and expect that Christ will continue to multiply it for you and for thousands of others round about you! "Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."

3-5. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which 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, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.* [See Sermon #948, Volume 16—A STRING OF PEARLS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] What a vast mass of meaning is packed away in these words! Men's books, even when they are good, are like gold leaf—a little precious metal is very thinly hammered out so as to cover a wide surface—but almost every word in the Bible seems to contain a whole mine of heavenly wealth! Note, beloved, what Peter says concerning your new birth—you are begotten by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! At your first birth, you were born in sin. But now you have been born again, through grace, by the almighty power of God! Notice, also, unto what you are born—unto a hope that is full of life, a lively hope, a hope of immortality, a hope whose root is in the grave of Christ, the empty grave from which He has risen and which is the assurance that because He has risen, *you also shall rise*. See, further, to what you have been born—"to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away." See, also, how that inheritance is entailed upon you, for it is "reserved in heaven for you." And see, too, how you are kept for it, for you "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

6. *Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if necessary, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations*: [See Sermon #222, Volume 4—THE CHRISTIAN'S HEAVINESS AND REJOICING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] What? Can there be rejoicing and heaviness in the same heart at the same time? Oh, yes! Our experience has taught us that we can be at the same moment in heaviness of heart and yet rejoicing in the Lord!

7-9. *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it is tried with fire, might be found unto praise and*

honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, you love; in whom though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. You have that already if you have believed in Jesus! You have received a present, immediate salvation! There are some who do not understand or realize this. They miss the whole joy of our holy religion. They are always hoping to be saved, by and by, but those who are in Christ Jesus by a living personal faith, receive here and now the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls!

10-12. *Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what or what manner of the time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.* [See Sermons #1524, Volume 26—YOUR PERSONAL SALVATION and #2697, Volume 46—ANGELIC INTEREST IN THE GOSPEL—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Observe, dear brothers and sisters, that the prophets did not speak without due consideration, but they "inquired and searched diligently" into the meaning of that salvation of which they "testified beforehand." Holy Scripture must not be read by us carelessly. We ought to peer, pry and search into it to get at its hidden meaning. And the prophecies as well as the rest of the word are to be searched into by us upon whom the ends of the earth have come. Observe, also, that this divine revelation is of great interest to the holy angels before the throne of God—they stand gazing down as if they were trying to understand the wondrous mystery of redemption and the great and glorious gospel of the grace of God.

13-16. *Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which has called you is holy, so be you holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, be you holy; for I Am holy.* Be not only moral, upright, truthful and so forth, but, "be you holy." That is a very high attainment! "Be you holy" and observe the reason for obedience to the command—"for I Am holy." Children should be like their fathers. There are many children who bear in their very faces, evidence of their sonship. You know who their fathers were by the image that the children bear. Oh, that it were always so with all the children of God! "Be you holy; for I Am holy."

17. *And if you call on the Father, who without respect of person judges according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.* You are only here for a while. You are sojourners, foreigners, pilgrims passing through a country where you have no abiding place. Be,

therefore, careful and even fearful lest you should become like the people among whom you dwell! Have a holy dread of the contaminations of sin—"Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."

18-21. *Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.* What a well of joy this always was to Peter, that God had raised His Son, Jesus Christ, from the dead! And this is our joy today! This is one of the facts which are proved beyond all question, that Jesus Christ, who died upon the cross and was buried in Joseph's tomb, did actually rise again! This is the cornerstone of the Christian faith—one of the great facts upon which we found our confidence as to salvation by Jesus Christ.

22, 23. *Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever.* God's word never dies! God's word never changes! There are some who think we ought to get a new gospel every few years or even every few weeks—but that was not Peter's notion. He wrote and he was divinely inspired to write concerning "the word of God, which lives and abides forever."

24, 25. *For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away: but the word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.* [See Sermon #999, Volume 17—THE WITHERING WORK OF THE SPIRIT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

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"REPENTANCE AND REMISSION"
NO. 3224

A SERMON
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 17, 1870.

"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."
Luke 24:47.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is #1729, Volume 29—
BEGINNING AT JERUSALEM
—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THIS verse is among our Lord's last words to His disciples just before He left them to return to heaven. He wished to impress upon them the truth of God that it was His purpose and desire that their lives should be devoted to the preaching of His gospel among all nations upon the face of the earth. In Christ's own words and throughout the New Testament, we find the greatest stress laid upon preaching. Preaching is the great battering ram that is to shake the gates of hell! Preaching is God's chief method of winning souls unto Himself—"for after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." We cannot too often remind this age in which we live of this truth, for this is a time in which it is supposed that rites and ceremonies, human learning and literature and I know not what else, may very properly be allowed to supplant the preaching of the word! Yet our Lord has given no intimation of any change in His purpose and plan—on the contrary, His great commission is evidently intended to cover the whole of this present dispensation—"Go you, therefore, and teach (that is, make disciples of) all nations, baptizing them (that is, those who have been made disciples) in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (or, more properly, unto the end of the age). Amen." So, until this dispensation is brought to a close by the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ, "repentance and remission of sins" are to "be preached in His name among all nations." Blessed, indeed, are those who, in this land or anywhere else, have heard their Lord and Master say to them as He said to His disciples before He left them, "and you are witnesses of these things."

As I have been called, by His grace, to be one of His witnesses, I will now try to put the text to practical use by preaching, first, upon *the subject,* and secondly, upon *the audience* here mentioned by our Lord.

I. First, let us consider THE SUBJECT OF OUR PREACHING as here stated by our Lord—"that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name."

So the first part of the subject is *that repentance should he preached in the name of Jesus*. There is a very important point that must here be noted—and that is that *repentance is not to be preached in the name of Moses as a legal duty*. Undoubtedly, it is a legal duty, for everyone who sins against God ought to repent of doing so. Whenever we have broken any law of God, we ought to be sorry for having broken it. It is the natural, commonsense duty of the creature, when he has disobeyed any command of his Creator, to grieve that he has thus grossly offended his Maker and to resolve that if possible, he will not do so any more. But it is not in this fashion, simply as a legal duty, that Christ has bid His servants preach repentance. If we preach it thus, our labor will be in vain—at least to a very large extent!

Nor are we to preach it merely as a matter of faint hope. There is, indeed, more than a faint hope for any man who is bid to repent because he will suppose, naturally and properly, that the God who bids him repent must have some designs of love towards him. But we are not to preach to sinners in such a fashion as simply to make them faintly hope that they may be saved. You know that when Jonah passed through the streets of Nineveh, his mournful and monotonous message was, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." When that message was carried to the king, he laid aside his gorgeous robe and put on sackcloth, sat in ashes, proclaimed a fast for man and beast and commanded his people to turn from their evil ways! Yet he had no better hope than this—"Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger that we perish not?" When they repented, God *did* have mercy upon them and spared them. But we have to carry to sinners a far more hopeful message than that heathen king's inquiry, "Who can tell if God will turn and repent?" Our Lord Jesus Christ has ordained that repentance should be preached in quite a different fashion than that!

We are not even to preach it after the manner of John the Baptist who preached repentance as a preparation for the coming of Christ. His message was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." To the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to his baptism, he said, "Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance," evidences of a change of life, because there was one far mightier than he coming after him—whose shoes he was not worthy to bear. John was only sent to prepare the way for Him who should baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. There are some, nowadays, who seem to think that repentance is a sort of preparation for faith in Christ, but that is not as we understand the Word of God—as we will try to show you before we have finished our discourse. We have not to preach repentance after the manner or in the nature of Moses, or Jonah, or John the Baptist—we have to preach repentance in the name of Jesus Christ! What does this mean?

First, it means that *we are to preach repentance as the gift of God.* Christ was exalted with His Father's right hand, to be a Prince and a Savior, "to give repentance" as well as "forgiveness of sins." Wherever there is real sorrow for sin, wherever there is an honest determination, by God's grace, to cease from sin, wherever there is a complete change of mind with regard to sin—for that is what repentance means—that repentance has been produced by the Spirit of God and it is as much a gift of the covenant of grace as even the pardon which comes with it is! This is the repentance which we are to preach in Christ's name, and of which Joseph Hart so sweetly sings—

"Come, you needy, come and welcome,
God's free bounty glorify!
True belief and true repentance,
Every grace that brings us near,
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ and buy!"

You are not to seek to draw up repentance from the depths of your own heart, as you might draw up water from a well, but to ask Christ to work repentance in you by His Holy Spirit, through belief of the truth of God as it is recorded in the Word of God, or as it is set before you in the preaching of the gospel. As you learn how terribly Christ suffered because of sin, that truth will, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, be the means of leading you to hate sin. And you will realize how the Holy Spirit, by enlightening the understanding and influencing the affections, produces repentance even in that sterile heart which had never been previously softened and made fertile by the gentle dew and rain of grace. So we are to tell sinners that God gives repentance—that it is one of the free gifts of His grace—and that whoever has it may rest assured that the hand of the Lord has been upon him for good and that, in fact, the work of salvation has been already begun in his soul!

Further, to preach repentance in the name of Jesus also means that *wherever there is real repentance, it is the token of the pardon of sin*—not merely a hopeful sign, but the *sure and infallible sign of pardon.* If any man's heart is turned away from sin; if he prostrates himself in the dust before God because of his offenses; if he looks with true penitence to Christ upon the cross, crying, "Lord, remember me," "Lord, save me," "God be merciful to me, a sinner"—it is not a question whether forgiveness may or may not be granted to him—it is a *fact* that he is already forgiven! David's words are still true, "The Lord is near unto them that are of a broken heart; and saves such as are of a contrite spirit." It was for such as these that Jesus suffered upon Calvary. So let the message ring out through every land beneath the canopy of heaven, that wherever there is a soul that loathes sin and leaves sin, eternal mercy has already commenced its gracious work and that soul *is* forgiven!

I also think that to preach repentance in the name of Jesus means that *we are to preach it on the authority of Jesus.* We are not merely to bid men repent and to try to persuade them to do so by various reasons

that might be urged! We are to take far higher ground than that, as Paul did at Athens when he said, "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commands all men everywhere to repent." The servants of Christ are not to preach repentance on their own authority, or even on the authority of the church of Christ, but they are to preach it on the authority of the church's ascended Head! This was Christ's own message, for we read, "After that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent you, and believe the gospel." So no true minister of Christ need be either afraid or ashamed to tell sinners—even the very worst sinners—that they should repent! When Jesus went into the country of the Gadarenes, a man possessed by an unclean spirit met Him—a wild man whom no mere human being could tame, a man who snapped the fetters and chains with which he was bound, a man who lived in the mountains, or among the tombs, a man who was a terror to the whole countryside and from whom all who could, fled—did Jesus flee from him or pass him by as too bad to be cured? No, the fiat of omnipotence was, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit." And though it was not merely one demon, but a whole legion of evil spirits that possessed the man, they all departed at Christ's command! And the man, himself, was shortly afterwards found "sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind." And soon he, too, was taken into Christ's service, "and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel." In like manner, the true minister of Christ is not only to call upon the most moral and the most hopeful to repent, but he is to give the same message to the most immoral and the most hopeless! On the day of the Pentecost, when Peter had charged his hearers with putting Jesus to death, they were pricked in their heart and said to the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." You know what followed—about three thousands of them gladly received Peter's words, were baptized and the same day were added to the church! Our commission to preach the gospel to every creature was issued by Him to whom all power in heaven and in earth had been given! It is, therefore, under divine authority that "repentance and remission of sins" are to be preached in Christ's name among all nations! "Repentance and remission" are so joined together that wherever we find the one, we are sure to find the other. Where there is no repentance, there can be no remission. But where there is true repentance—that godly sorrow for sin that needs not to be repented of—there is the full and free forgiveness of all sins of the one who has thus sincerely repented!

According to our text, *this remission of sins is to be preached in the name of Jesus*. We have the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ for declaring that "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." And when Paul was preaching at Antioch concerning the resurrection of

Christ, he put this truth of God very plainly—"Be it known unto you, therefore, brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses." We also are to preach, not as unauthorized persons who hope that what we say may possibly prove to be true, but as those who are proclaiming divine truths and certainties on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself! As one of the Lords witnesses, let me tell you, my dear hearers, that there is promised to penitents *a full pardon* of every sin they have ever committed, whether it has been a sin of thought, or word, or deed—whether it has been a sin of omission or of commission! This pardon makes a clean sweep of the accumulated heaps of defilement that have resulted from years of iniquity! It is a pardon *as great as it is full*—pardon for the most horrible and oft-repeated offenses, pardon for uncleanness, for theft, for blasphemy, even for murder if the murderer has truly repented! It is a—

"Pardon for crimes of deepest dye,
A pardon bought with Jesus' blood."

The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses *from all sin,* all who truly repent and believe in Him! It cleanses from the sins that banish men from the presence of their fellows, and from the sins that would banish them forever from the presence of the thrice-holy God! Yes, pardon is to be proclaimed in the name of Jesus for sins such as these—they are not too black to be forgiven by God—they are not too deeply ingrained to be washed out by the precious blood of Jesus!

And this great and full pardon is also a pardon *that is given instantaneously*. In a moment the guilt of the penitent sinner is forgiven! To quote Hart, again, "His pardon at once he receives." The instant that faith is begotten in the soul, we are justified in the sight of God and we can say with the Apostle Paul, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies." The believing penitent turns his weeping eyes to Christ upon the cross, gazes with mingled sorrow and joy upon the blood that flowed from His many wounds, places all his reliance upon the God appointed propitiation, "the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world," and in *that very moment* all his iniquities are gone forever! The Lord has blotted them out and driven them away like clouds that have been dispersed by a tornado, and that can never be found again!

This pardon is realized by the penitent sinner who receives it. "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." Oftentimes, the sense of pardon comes upon a man like a piece of good news that makes him almost leap for joy—he was never before thrilled with so wondrous an emotion! He is half inclined to sing—

"He has lifted me out of the miry clay,
And set my feet on the king's highway"—

but, perhaps, instead of doing so, he bows himself before the Lord in solemn silence, feeling that he could never express the gratitude he feels for

such amazing mercy. Or, possibly, he finds David's words just suited to his experience and, therefore, he says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits *who forgives all your iniquities*." He realizes, as David did, that all his iniquities are forgiven and with the royal Psalmist he sings, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

Nor is this all, for *this pardon is one that is never reversed*. O sinner, if you really repent of your sin and believe in Jesus, the sinner's Savior, you are saved with an everlasting salvation! Remember that you have to deal with a God who never changes—He gives to the guilty penitent full and free forgiveness, not a reprieve or a respite! Once washed in the precious blood of Jesus, you shall never go back to your sin so as to live in it, and to die in it and perish. If you are truly trusting in Jesus, you are saved, not merely for today, tomorrow and next week, but forever. What says the Lord Jesus Christ Himself? "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." Were *you*, my dear hearer, ever pardoned by God for Christ's sake? Then you are pardoned forever! But if not, I pray that you may repent and believe the gospel this very hour.

Perhaps you say, "But all this seems so strange to me. You tell me that my sins can all be forgiven in a moment, and forgiven forever—and that I have nothing to pay for this priceless blessing, but am simply bid to repent of my sin and believe in Jesus." Yes, that is all true. But I do not ask you to believe it because I say it, for I only repeat to you the message that I have received from the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, through His word and by His Spirit. He cannot lie—and it is He who says, "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations." He has given the best proof possible that your sins can be forgiven in the fact that He died in the place of sinners. Jesus Christ, who was God as well as man, suffered as the substitute of all who believe in Him. He bore their sins in His own body up to the tree and away from the tree! And now, for all who truly trust Him, there is no condemnation forever!

"But," says one, "I do not doubt that repentance and remission of sins are to be preached in Christ's name. My difficulty is as to whether they are for me!" Well, that is a point that you must settle under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Have you really repented of your sin? Have you sorrowed over it as the great curse of your life? Have you hated it and turned away from it, and sought to live as the holy God would have you live? Well, then, if the repentance is yours, the remission, also, is yours—for they go together in Christ's own words—"repentance and remission of sins." To hate sin because it slew Christ. To hate sin because God is so good that we ought not to sin against Him. To hate sin because God is so gracious as to forgive it. To weep over sin, not like a child who has done wrong, and so keeps away from his father, but like a penitent child who

lays his head in his father's bosom and sobs out his grief there, and mourns that he has offended such a loving father who is so ready to forgive him—this is evangelical repentance and wherever it is found, there is also the remission of sins! If you do not know experimentally what it is thus to repent, breathe the prayer, "O Lord, show me the guilt of my sin. Teach me to mourn over it, to loath it and leave it. Let me see Your dear Son bearing its penalty on my behalf and then assure me, by Your Spirit's gracious instructions, that my sins, which were many, are all forgiven for Jesus' sake, that so I may go on my way rejoicing as a sinner saved by sovereign grace."

Those of you who were here last Sabbath morning [See Sermon #925, Volume 16—INDIVIDUAL SIN LAID ON JESUS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] will remember that my text was, "All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." And you will also recollect that I tried to describe various characters to whom that verse applies. I hope God gave comfort and blessing to some who listened to the sermon here. But oh, it was a joy to me to hear of one far away in Scotland who had been for years desponding and despairing who was led to find rest and peace through reading the printed sermon! But why should not many more of you be blessed while hearing the Word of God as so many are in reading it? Poor captive soul, why should you not be set at liberty? Arise and shake yourself from the dust, for in Christ's name pardon is preached unto you if you will but repent of your sins and trust Him to save you from them!

II. Now, secondly, we are to think of THE AUDIENCE THAT IS TO BE ADDRESSED UPON THIS SUBJECT—"that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

Why is this gospel to be preached among all nations? Well, first, because all nations need it! And then, *because the gospel is exactly suited to all nations*. And further, *because God has a chosen number in all nations who will receive the word and be saved by it*. And also *because it shall be a witness against those in all nations who hear it but refuse to heed it*.

Some nations were learned, yet when Paul was addressing the Greeks who were proud of their philosophy and were continually seeking after wisdom, he preached repentance and remission of sins in Christ's name—the same A B C doctrine of Jesus Christ and Him crucified that he proclaimed wherever he went! And the greatest scholars of the present day, if they would be wise unto salvation, must stoop to learn the same gospel alphabet! No, rather they will be *elevated* as they acquire these elements and rudiments of heavenly knowledge and become scholars in Christ's school of grace!

Other nations were very ignorant. In the apostles' days there were some parts of the earth where the people were rude barbarians without

any knowledge of books and letters. Yet the apostles went to them and preached repentance and remission of sins—and the gospel was simple enough for them to understand—and many of the heathen turned from their idols to serve the living God! And in later days, many of the greatest triumphs of the truth of God have been won among the savages and untutored tribes of Africa, India and North America—and the islands of the southern seas. Ignorant and degraded as they were, many of them have become new creatures in Jesus Christ, living here to the praise and glory of God and, in due time, going to join the ranks of the blessed above!

There are nations that worship God after a very imperfect fashion, although they know not Jesus Christ, whom He has sent to be the Savior of sinners. To these, also, we must preach repentance and remission of sins in Christ's name, for no man can come unto the Father except by Jesus Christ, His Son! Men cannot know God until they see the brightness of His glory revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. To theists and polytheists, those who believe in one God and those who worship "gods many and lords many," we have but one message, even that which our Lord Himself delivered, "Repent you, and believe the gospel." And already, many of them, by divine grace, have repented and received the remission of their sins in Christ's name!

There are three very important words at the end of our text—"*beginning at Jerusalem.*" John Bunyan has a masterly treatise upon this text, entitled *The Jerusalem sinner saved; or, good news for the vilest of men: being a help for despairing souls, showing that Jesus Christ would have mercy in the first place offered to the biggest sinners.* Those of you who have his works will find the whole treatise well worth reading, but I am going to borrow some of his divisions and speak upon them after my own fashion.

Bunyan's first reason why Christ would have mercy proclaimed first to the biggest sinners is "*because the biggest sinners have most need thereof.*" A surgeon who is caring for the wounded on a battlefield and who has several soldiers awaiting his attention, will be anxious, first, to attend to the man who is the most seriously hurt and whose life seems fast ebbing away. He will leave for a while the one who has only a slight scratch or cut on his flesh, and devote all his thought and care to the man who is so terribly maimed and lacerated that it is a marvel how he manages to live at all! He will have him put in the ambulance and taken at once to the field hospital that his life may be saved if it is possible. And oh, if among my hearers there are some great offenders—some who have sinned very terribly, some who have sinned against God and man, against their own bodies and souls, some who may be truly called, "Jerusalem sinners, the vilest of men"—I want to assure them, first, that my Master has sent me to preach especially to them and to tell them that if they repent of their sins—many and great as they have been—they shall all be forgiven!

Bunyan's second reason why Christ would have mercy preached first to the biggest sinners is "*because when they, any of them, receive it, it re-*

dounds most to the fame of His name." If a doctor cures someone's finger that is only slightly injured, he may get the credit of it, yet no one will say much about it. But if there is a person who is suffering from a disease that is believed to be incurable and a wise physician is the means of his restoration to health, how the whole neighborhood will ring with his praises! When someone else is very ill, friends will say, "You should send for Dr. so and so. You know what he did for that other poor man, perhaps he could do as much for you." And when the Lord Jesus Christ saves some black blasphemer or some leader in vice and iniquity, how fast the news flies throughout the whole region where he lives! Why, even among the lowest of the low, when one of their companions is converted, you know how they talk about it! They cry, "Have you heard what's happened to old Jack?" "No. What is it?" "Why, you know that he used to go along with us, first in all manner of evil—and now he has become a Christian!" That is sure to be repeated among all his old connections and so Christ gets fame and honor through His great work of grace and, therefore, it is that He would have the biggest sinners specially bid to repent and believe the gospel.

Bunyan's third reason is "*because, by their forgiveness and salvation, others, hearing of it, will be encouraged the more to come to Him for life*." When sinners hear that some big black sinner has been forgiven by Christ, they naturally ask, "Then why should not we be forgiven?" A rebel city is besieged and the king threatens to hang every traitor when he captures it. They do all they can to strengthen their defenses and to beat off the besiegers, resolved never to yield. But when one of their greatest captains is captured and the king, instead of hanging him, sends him back to the city loaded with gifts and bids him tell his fellow rebels that if they will only open the gates, he will forgive them and he will give them a royal charter for their city, and will be the patron of all their industries, what do they do? Why, sirs, they fling wide the gates! They ring the bells and they beg the king to enter at once and accept their loyal homage! You can easily apply the parable to your own case. I pray that many of you may do so right now.

The time flies so fast that I cannot take Bunyan's lessons in detail. His next one is that *when the biggest sinners are saved, they weaken Satan's kingdom the most*. Catch the ringleaders and you can soon break up the band. Often one man can twist quite a number round his fingers and make them do as he pleases. When he is converted, he brings his mates to hear the preacher whose word was blessed to him—and thus many are won to Christ and Satan's ranks are thinned!

Besides, *how it strengthens the church when great sinners are converted*! It was a great day for the Churches of England when John Bunyan was saved. It was a glorious day for the apostolic churches when Saul the persecutor became Paul the preacher! And this will be a grand night for the Tabernacle Church if the Lord will turn some great sinner here from the error of his ways and enlist him beneath the banner of the

cross! This is the kind of man who will lead the forlorn to hope in Christ, and plant the victorious banner of the gospel on heights of sin that seem inaccessible to ordinary Christians! Great sinners, when they are converted, are the men to do great exploits in the name of Jesus!

Further, where great sinners are forgiven, *it is a clear proof that the gospel has power to bless other sinners*. When the elephants entered the ark, all the beasts outside could see that the door was wide enough to admit them. As God's grace saved the chief of sinners, that grace can save you, my friend, however great a sinner you have been! There may have come in here tonight, as they often do, those who are not usually found in places of worship. My brother or my sister, for as such I regard you, sinner as you are, I have to tell you that if you will repent of your sin and trust in Jesus as your Savior, you shall go out of this house justified, even as the publican went out of the temple of old after he had, from the depths of his soul cried, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

Thus have I tried to preach repentance and remission of sins in Christ's name to the Jerusalem sinners, the very worst men and women here! But I must not close without also preaching in the same fashion to you who think you are *not* the worst sinners here. O you respectable sinners, you moral and amiable sinners! You also need a Savior! Though you would stand by yourselves and say, "God, we thank You that we are not as other men and as other women are," yet Christ's message to you is, "You must be born again." You, too, need to be washed in the precious blood of Jesus! Therefore, in His name, I preach to you "repentance and remission of sins," just as I have done to the greatest sinners here. May the ever blessed Spirit come to you and take away your pride and your self righteousness, and bring you down where you must come—just as publicans and harlots must come—to the pierced feet of Him who loves sinners, receives sinners and saves sinners—and who will receive you and save you if you will but trust Him! God grant it for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ACTS 2:36-47.

You know that Peter had been preaching a plain, simple, straightforward sermon upon the death, crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who was once such a coward that he trembled before a little maid, now that he is filled with the Spirit, boldly charges this crowd with being murderers and deicides because their kind put to death the Lord of life and glory! If you turn to the 36th verse, you will see the effect of Peter's plain preaching through the power of the Holy Spirit—

36, 37. *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart* [See Sermon #2102, Volume 35—"PRICKED IN THEIR HEART—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] A little later in this same

book, we read of those who listened to Stephen's sharp, sword like sentences, "When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart"—and soon they stoned Stephen to death! To be "*cut* to the heart" is not enough! But to be *pricked* in the heart is to receive a mortal wound! Happy is the man who has had his sin killed through having received a deadly wound from the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God! These people who heard Peter preach "were pricked in their heart" and, first, they were in doubt as to what they should do, but secondly, they were resolved that whatever they were told to do they would do at once.

37, 38. *And said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said to them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sin, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* Nobody but a Baptist minister could have preached that sermon! At least we shall have to wait a long while before we hear any other saying to a whole congregation, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you." This is, indeed, the full proclamation of the gospel—and we have no more right to leave out the *baptism* than we have to leave out the repentance! "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you." Peter was not like those hyper Calvinists who are afraid to give an exhortation to a sinner because he is spiritually dead! He spoke out boldly to those who had asked, "What shall we do?" and said to them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."

39. *For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.* [See Sermon #2586, Volume 44—A FAR-REACHING PROMISE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This is a most blessed verse. The promise is to us and to our *descendants*—not merely to our children, but also to our grandchildren. Yes, and to our race as far as it yet may run! And the next clause, "and to all that are afar off" proves that the promise is made to the far off ones as well as to our children, with only this limitation, "even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

40. *And with many other works did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this perverse generation.* Not, "save yourselves from hell"—that Christ, alone, can do for you, but "save yourselves from this generation" by coming boldly out from among the ungodly, taking upon you the distinctive mark of the Christian and so separating yourselves from those upon whom the sentence of death shall fall.

41-45. *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all men, as every man had need.* What a notable instance this was of the power of divine grace! We would not usually

suppose that the Jewish race would be given to any excess of making common property—but where grace came in the first flush of its dawn, see to what prodigies of liberality it excited the early believers! Would that we had more of this generous spirit nowadays!

46. *And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.* I believe that wherever two or three disciples of Christ meet together it is competent for them to celebrate the Lord's supper. That ordinance is not, as some think it to be, a *church ordinance*, to be confined to the official assembling of all believers—but wherever two or three are met in Christ's name, there He is—and where He is, there may the emblems of His broken body and shed blood be partaken of in memory of Him!

47. *Praising God, and having favor with all His people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.* [See Sermon #1167, Volume 20—ADDITIONS TO THE CHURCH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

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FINDING AND FOLLOWING CHRIST
NO. 3225

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"We have found Him."
John 1:45.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon on verses 43 to 45 is #2375, Volume 40—
FOUND BY JESUS—and FINDING JESUS
—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

I HOPE there are many here who are seeking Christ, but I feel sure that there are with us many more who can truthfully say, "We have passed beyond that stage, for we have found Him." Others may declare that there never was such a person as Jesus of Nazareth, but we know there was and still is, for, "we have found Him," and we are living in happy daily fellowship with Him! We bear our glad testimony to what the grace of God has done for us and we say with Philip, "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph," whom we also worship as the Son of God.

Notice how positively Philip speaks. He had, himself, only just been found by Christ, yet he does not say, "We think we have found the Messiah," or, "We *hope* we have found the promised deliverer." No, without the slightest hesitation he says, "We have found Him." This is a matter about which it is possible for us to be quite as positive as Philip was. There are abundant reasons why we may have a well-grounded assurance that Christ is our Savior if we have truly trusted in Him. Some have thought and said that it is not possible for us to know we are saved. Thank God that is not true and many can adopt the inspired language of the Apostle John and say, "We *know* that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." Such positiveness as this is attainable, by God's grace, by every true believer in Jesus Christ!

Let me remind you, first, that *it ought to be so*. Whether we are saved or not is a matter of the greatest importance to us. We cannot afford to let it rest upon a, "perhaps," or a, "maybe." If I have really found Christ, my sins are forgiven me for His sake—and this is a fact of which I ought to be quite certain. If I have found the Lord Jesus Christ, I am reconciled to God by the death of His Son, I have been adopted into the family of

God, I may confidently look to God for the supply of all my needs, both for this life and for that which is to come—and I may expect to be taken at the right time to dwell with Him forever. Such glorious blessings as these ought not to be mere matters of speculation with us! Our possession of them ought to be the result of clean, unmistakable evidence. If I have not found Christ, I am in danger of death every day and of the hell that is the everlasting prison of all unbelievers. If I have not found Christ, I am still without hope and without God in the world—"condemned already"—because I have not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God! Surely I ought not to go to bed tonight with that all important question unsettled. I can understand a man being in doubt upon this matter, but I cannot understand his resting comfortably while it is a matter of doubt! If you are content to be in doubt as to whether you are entitled to your estates, or as to whether you are mortally diseased or not, well, those are only minor matters compared with the salvation of your souls! God forbid that you should be willing to let the far greater matter remain in suspense! Seek the aid of the Holy Spirit and never rest satisfied until you know assuredly that you have found the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior!

A poor woman, some nights ago, wrapping around herself her poor thin shawl, was walking along the street because she had nowhere else to go. And as she was passing a certain building, she saw written over the door, "For the homeless." "That is the place for me," she said, and in she went. Now, my friend, are you a sinner? Then I have to tell you that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Are you lost? Then I have to tell you that He came to seek and to save the lost. It would have done that poor woman no good at all to sit down on a rich man's doorstep and consider how poor she was—she got what she needed by going to the home for the homeless—and Jesus Christ is a home for homeless souls, so away with you, poor homeless soul, and find in Him the shelter that you need! May God's grace enable you to flee straight away to Christ, for if you do, He will not refuse to receive you!

Remember, also, that *no real spiritual comfort can come to us until we know that we have found Christ*. Perhapses and maybes are like thorns in our pillow—they prevent us from resting. Or they are like stones in a pilgrim's shoes—they make walking very uncomfortable for him. To be able to say with Paul, "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," is to have a fountain of consolation springing up within your heart! But to have to cry—

"'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought—
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"

is to be in continual unhappiness! The man who is in such a state as that may be safe, but he cannot have joy and peace. He must be weak, trembling and tossed to and fro, like the waves of the troubled sea when it cannot rest. It is only when we can say with David, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise," that there is the music of deep and lasting joy in the songs that we send up to heaven!

Let me add that you may confidently hope to attain this assurance of knowledge because *so many others have already done so*. I have reminded you of Philip, John and Paul, but such knowledge as this was not confined to the apostolic age—it is at this moment the priceless privilege of tens of thousands of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ! If I were now to say, "Let all those brothers and sisters who know that Christ is theirs stand up and testify to this fact," I believe that the bulk of this congregation would at once rise! And I pray that you weaker ones, you timid and trembling souls may seek Him who can work this great grace in you, also, so that you, too, may be able to say as positively as Philip did, "We have found Him."

I. Now I am going, with the Holy Spirit's help, to suggest a few reflections for those to bear in mind who can say, "We have found Him." And the first is this—IF WE HAVE FOUND CHRIST, HE MUST HAVE FIRST FOUND US.

Two verses (vs. 43) before our text, we read that this very man who had found Christ, had himself been found by Christ. It is probably true, my dear brother or sister in Christ, that you were brought to know the Lord through some human instrumentality. A godly father or mother, a faithful minister of the gospel, a loving Sunday school teacher or other Christian friend. Or the reading of the Word of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit may have been the means of your conversion. There is a very precious link between the instrument of your salvation and yourself which you ought never to forget. Surely we can never cease to thank God for the man or the woman whom He used to lead us out of darkness into His marvelous light! Yet that holy man did not convert us. That gracious woman could never have given us a new heart and a right spirit. We must trace our new birth to its superhuman origin—*it was the Lord, and the Lord alone* who worked that wondrous miracle of regeneration! "You has HE quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." If the Lord has not turned you from the error of your ways, you are still in the broad road that leads to destruction! If He has not found you as the shepherd finds his lost sheep, you are still wandering on the dark mountains of sin and woe! And, as the sheep would never find its shepherd unless he first found it, so you, if you have found Christ, must first have been found by Christ!

I want you to go still further back and to remember that, inasmuch as you never imagined that it was wrong for Christ to save you, although He

has not saved all other sinners and although some in your own family have not yet found Him— and although some who attend the same place of worship as you do have not found Him, while you have found Him and been found by Him—you have never thought that it was wrong for Christ to make this difference between you and others. I want you to also remember that whatever Christ has done, He must have always meant to do—it must have been His eternal purpose to do it! Unless you are a careless blunderer, you do not do anything without having made up your mind to do it. And certainly, the Lord Jesus Christ has not acted in this great matter of the salvation of souls without thought and deliberation! Do you not see that this brings us to the doctrine of election? Many people do not like that doctrine, but all Christian people, though they may not believe it as we do, must believe that which is the very essence of it—for if there is a difference between ourselves and others, it must have been Christ who made it by His grace! And as He made it, then it must have been right for Him to make it, and it could not have been wrong for Him to purpose to make that difference! We do not believe that Christ does anything without a plan and a purpose. And it makes no difference whether the purpose was in His mind a year ago or from all eternity! I mean that there would be the same difficulty with regard to the doctrine, though I see no difficulty in it at all. Well then, the Lord Jesus Christ purposed from all eternity to work His good work in you by His Holy Spirit—to bring you to repent of your sin and to trust in His atoning sacrifice—and, therefore, it is a part of His promise to bring you home to heaven to dwell with Him forever! Yet there have been and still are many in this world who have not found Him—more eminent than you are, people of greater ability and loftier station. There are wise men who have never become wise unto salvation and rich men who do not possess this heavenly treasure. There are mighty kings who lord it over mighty hosts of men, who know not the Lord of hosts and yield not homage to the Lord Jesus Christ! When you think of all this, do you not marvel that *you* should have been found by Christ and that you should have found Christ? Do you not wonder that God should have chosen *you*, that Christ should have redeemed *you*, that the Holy Spirit should have regenerated *you*? And will you not bless and praise the Lord to all eternity for making you the simple subject of His grace while such multitudes and so many far more mighty ones have been passed by?

This teaching, which seems to me to be so simple and plain, lies at the root of the most profound doctrines of Holy Writ and it is, at the same time, one of the most practical truths of God in the whole of the divine revelation! Nothing makes us love Christ more than knowing that He has loved us with an everlasting love and, therefore, with loving kindness has drawn us unto Himself. Nothing makes us crave for likeness to Him so much as the knowledge that He has chosen us and ordained us, that we should go and bring forth fruit and that our fruit should remain even,

"fruit unto holiness, and the end, everlasting life." I wish that this truth was understood and believed by all Christians, for it is God's truth, and a very precious truth. I feel sure that it is believed by many who have not recognized it or fully understood it. I remember preaching in the open air to a great crowd of miners, most of them Methodists. And as I preached, they shouted, "Glory!" "Hallelujah!" "Praise the Lord," and so on. Just as they were in full cry in that fashion, I paused a moment and then said, "This brings me to the doctrine of election." I could almost feel the cold shiver of disappointment that seemed to pass through the crowd. And it appeared likely that there would be no more "Hallelujahs" during that discourse. But I said to them, "In your hearts you really believe that doctrine, though you imagine you do not. And before I have finished my sermon, I will prove it to you, and many of you will shout, 'Praise the Lord,' for it even more loudly than you were doing just now." I saw the look of incredulity upon their faces, but I went on. "Here is a man who was once a drunk, a swearer, a Sabbath breaker, a thief, a liar and everything that was bad. But a great change has somehow come over him and he is quite a new man compared with what he used to be. There is no such alteration in many of his old companions and friends—who can have made him so different from what he once was? Here is a glorious golden crown and whoever has made this man to be such a contrast to what he was before ought to have this crown placed upon his head!" Then I said, "Shall I put the crown on the man's own head? Did he make this change in himself?" "No, no" came the answer from all parts of the crowd. "Well then," I asked, "On whose head shall I put the crown? Who is to have the glory of this man's conversion?" At once they cried, "The Lord, the Lord alone! Put the crown on His head." So far we were all agreed and I, therefore, asked next, "Was it wrong for God to make this difference?" No one dared to say that it was, so I advanced to my next question, "As it was right for God to make this difference, was it not also right for God to plan beforehand that He would do so? The Lord did not act without a set purpose and, therefore, as He is to be crowned for the action, is He not also to be crowned for the purpose to do it?" "Yes, that He is!" cried the crowd. "Bless His name, hallelujah!" So I won the hallelujahs, by His grace, of my Methodist friends for the doctrine of election as I said I would!

We do not preach, we have never preached and we shall never preach that God has created any man for the purpose of destroying him! But we do preach and shall preach as long as we live, that salvation is of the Lord and all of grace from first to last! And, therefore, that all the glory of it must be given to the divine hand that worked the work, to the eternal mind that planned the work and to the great heart of love that was the fountain and source from which the gracious purpose sprang! The only explanation of the whole matter is the one we have so often sung—

"What was there in you that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
'Twas even so, Father,' you always must sing,
'Because it seemed good in Your sight.'
Then give all the glory to His holy name,
To Him all the glory belongs,
Be yours the high joy to still sound forth His fame,
And crown Him in each of your songs."

II. My second observation is—IF WE HAVE FOUND CHRIST, LET US FOLLOW HIM. Philip found Him and followed Him all his days.

Christ was given to be the leader and commander of His people, so His people should all follow Him. You have followed Him, beloved, but can you not follow Him yet more closely? You are His disciples, but can you not learn more of Him than you have yet learned? Let us follow our Jesus promptly. I want to be in such a state of heart and mind that the moment I know what Christ's will concerning me is, I do it! I would like to be a leaf borne along by the blessed current of His divine purpose—having no will or wish to resist the sacred influences of His unerring mind and loving heart—to obey His commands promptly and cheerfully and, not only to obey cheerfully, but also to *suffer* cheerfully if He so pleases! It is a blessed condition to be in to take anything and everything from Christ, whether it is a kiss or a blow—to do anything for Christ, whether it is pleasing to the flesh or not—to yield up everything for Christ, to be, indeed, a divine sacrifice for Him, which is, after all, only the "reasonable service" which He is fully entitled to claim from us! We read in the revelation concerning some, "These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes." And happy are they who imitate them, even while here on earth! Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, I entreat you to leave no path untrodden where you can see the footprints of your Lord and Master! Jesus went to Jordan's stream and was baptized there by John—have *you* followed Him in this blessed ordinance? Jesus, even while living and laboring among sinners, was separate from them—are *you* living the separated life? What He did, let us do as far as it is in our power! What He was, let us be as far as that is possible! He was reviled, despised and rejected of men—so let us count it an honor to receive similar treatment for His sake. He was content to walk on the bleak side of the hill—let us not seek the sunny side by craving the world's esteem. Is this your heart's desire, beloved? Do you sing—

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

Then mind that you not only *sing* those lines, but make them true in your life! Are any of you following Christ afar off, as Peter did? Then beware lest you fall as Peter did! Are you following Christ in your business, or do you forget Him when you are in the office or in the market? Do you follow Christ in your home, or do you forget Him when you are there? Some of you used to follow Jesus very closely and to be very warm

friends of His—have you been growing cold towards Him? Oh, let this no longer be the case! If you have found Him, follow Him and follow Him "wherever He goes."

III. Now, thirdly, IF WE HAVE FOUND CHRIST, LET US PRIZE HIM. It is no trifle that we find when we find Him, for He is the priceless pearl whose worth no man fully knows!

If I have found Him, how shall I prove that I prize Him? First, *let me be willing to lose all that I have for Him.* Does my present position in life involve me in sin? Then let me leave it rather than grieve my Lord. Is my business an evil one? Then let me renounce it at once, for if I do not, I shall have to renounce Him! Have I any companions who are the enemies of Christ? Then I dare not call them my friends. Is there some dear one with whom I have entered into such close association that it will draw me away from Christ? Then, while I can, let me break the connection, for I must give up all for the Christ who gave up all for me! The captain of a vessel, when his ship is in danger of sinking, will throw the most valuable cargo into the sea if, thereby, he may save the ship and the lives of all on board. And I must be willing to part with my joys, my pleasures, my money, my friends and all that I have rather than give up my Lord and Savior, for I must have Christ at any cost!

Further, if you have found Christ and want to prove that you can prize Him, *study to find out all that you can about Him.* Jesus Christ is a great mine of untold wealth and no man has ever yet perfectly explored that mine. Read the Scripture to learn all you can about Christ. Listen to any preacher or teacher who can tell you anything about Christ—and be sure to meditate as much as you can upon Christ. He is the chief among ten thousand—"yes, He is altogether lovely." At our first sight of Him, we fall in love with Him, but His choicest beauties are the hidden ones which we only find by diligent search and much fellowship with Him. As you get to know more of Him in His person, in His work, in His office, in His promises, in His power, in His love—you will prize Him all the more until you would not set even heaven, itself, in comparison with Him—for what would heaven be if He were not there?

Further, beloved, if you prize Christ as you ought, *you will make all the use you can of Him.* And He loves to be of use to His people. Is there any sin upon your conscience? Run to Him to remove it from you! Is there any trouble on your mind? Go and tell Jesus! Is there anything that is a burden to you? Cast your burdens upon Him and He will relieve you of them, or give you the grace and strength to carry them! Remember that Jesus Christ is an everyday Savior, an all the year round Savior, a whole of life Savior, a Savior for the body as well as for the soul! Whatever there may be lacking in you, there is nothing lacking in Him and He can supply all that you lack! He is the Bread of Life, so feed upon Him!

He is the Light of the World, so see everything in the light that comes from Him! He is your All in All, so look for all in Him!

Show, too, that you prize Christ as you should by *letting others see how you value Him*. A bride who has many precious jewels will wear them where they can be seen and admired by others. And we, too, are to put on the Lord Jesus Christ who is more precious than all the gems in the universe! Some professing Christians are apt to blush at any allusion to their Christianity—but if it is the blush of shame, they have cause to be ashamed of such blushing! I never hear of any man blushing because he is a peer of the realm, though there have been many of the so called "nobility" who might well cause their fellow peers to blush. But to blush because one is a Christian, oh, this must never be! As well might we blush at being likened to an angel! Suppose the ungodly point the finger of scorn at you—that is the only way in which such people can really honor you. Will you strike your colors because the enemy attacks you? No, no! Nail the flag to the mast and fight so bravely for Christ that the enemy has to strike *his* colors! It is the act of a pirate to sail under another flag, so whatever ship you meet on life's wide sea, fly the flag of your King and defy the devil and all his legions to do their worst! At home and abroad, in the house of God or in the street, in the market or wherever you may be, let friend and foe, alike, know that you belong to Christ! I would that all of us who are members of this Tabernacle might love the Lord with a far deeper and more fervent love than we have ever yet experienced. I know that there are some eminently gracious souls among us and I pray that their number may be greatly increased, but I am anxious lest, as a church, we should fall to the low level of so many of the professing Christians of this age! Our Lord Jesus Christ deserves the very best that we can bring to Him, so let us give Him our hearts, our minds, our time, our talents and all we have, to show how greatly we prize Him whom we have found!

IV. Fourthly, and briefly, IF WE HAVE FOUND CHRIST, LET US NEVER PART WITH HIM. Philip became one of Christ's disciples, then one of His apostles—and now he is with Christ forever!

Tomorrow you will go, young man, into the workshop or to the counter and your companions will laugh at you if you say you are a Christian. But do not part with Christ because of the laughter of fools! Some of you will be going to the stock exchange or to the various markets of this great city—but part not company with Christ by doing what is wrong. Hold Him fast and keep to that which is right, honest and true, for he is a traitor to Christ who gets even a penny by an unrighteous action! Tomorrow some of you may hear that which is blasphemous or foul—rebuke it in your Lord's name, for he who is silent when he ought to speak is tacitly denying his Lord and Master. Again I say to you, hold Him fast however much men may scoff at you for doing so, for such a treasure as Christ is well worth holding! Let no man separate you from your Lord. If you are

truly His, I am persuaded that no one and nothing shall be able to part you. Though the devil himself should try to tear Christ away from you, he cannot do it, for Christ is stronger than Satan and He holds you with a divine grip which the devil and all his hosts cannot relax!

I especially urge you not to let Jesus slip away from private prayer, or the reading of the Scriptures, or your intimate personal communion with Him. Make your prayers more fervent, your study of the word more intense and real, and your daily walk with Christ more close and tender. Abide in Him! Never give Him or anyone else cause to think that you have left Him. The good soldier of Jesus Christ never has a furlough; he is like the knights of old who slept in their armor and were ready for the fray at any moment. A Christian is to always be a Christian and in every place! He may not do wrong once a year, nor once in a lifetime. What would you say to a man who told you he was only going to poison himself once? What would you think of a wife who said she was going to cease loving her husband just once? We, too, are married to Christ, so we are His and wholly His—and only His! Hold us fast, O blessed lover of our souls, for only so can we continue to hold You fast!

V. My last injunction is this—IF YOU HAVE FOUND CHRIST, TELL OTHERS ABOUT HIM, even as Philip said to Nathanael, "We have found Him."

I have sometimes feared that some professing Christians fancy that they are to keep Christ all to themselves. They seem to have an idea that heaven is just—

"A little spot enclosed by grace"—

where only they and a small select company of likeminded persons will gain admittance! I cannot congratulate them upon harboring such a notion and I very strongly urge them to imitate the example of a man who found that he had a forged banknote in his possession—he threw it over a hedge and ran away as fast as he could for fear anybody should think it belonged to him! Such a spirit as that seems to me to be quite contrary to the mind of Him who wept over Jerusalem and who said, "How often would I have gathered the children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not!"

Have you found this great hive of honey and is it very sweet to your taste? Then tell others of it, for there is abundance for them and you, too. You are not like the poor people in a besieged city who feel that every mouthful that someone else eats leaves so much the less for them. Oh, no! There is "bread enough and to spare" in the great Father's house, so no prodigal son need perish with hunger! At the gospel banquet you may eat as much as you want, but there will be just as much left for others. We have to deal with the God who is infinite and omnipotent, whose supply is inexhaustible and who will be glad and gratified as we spread far and wide the invitations to the great feast in honor of His Son! My

brothers and sisters in Christ, as you love Him, follow His blessed example by going after the lost sheep until you find them! If you had only common humanity, it ought to make you earnest in seeking to deliver others from going down to the pit, by telling them of Him who has paid the ransom price for all who put their trust in Him! A battlefield must present a terrible sight to all who gaze upon it. I wish all those who are so eager for war could see the horrors of which we can scarcely bear to read. Yet this great London presents a still more terrible sight to those whose eyes have been opened to see sinners as they really are in the sight of God! Our streets swarm with the unregenerate! Many of you live next door to them when they are at home. Some of you live in the same house with them. Some even sleep in the same room with them. Plead for your husbands or wives, your brothers and sisters, your parents or children—and plead *with* them as well as *for* them! God forbid that you should be eternally separated from those who are so near and dear to you! Pray for them night and day! You who are the Lord's remembrancers, take no rest and give Him no rest, and give them no rest until they are saved! Next to your own relatives, plead with and for your employees, your employer, your neighbors and all with whom you come in contact! And then widen your sympathies and supplications until they shall embrace all of woman born! Remember Richard Krill's question, "Brethren, the heathen are perishing, will you let them perish?" Do not neglect the heathen abroad or the heathen at home! An earnest minister said to his people one Sabbath, "I am going, this week on a mission to the heathen." The deacons looked at one another, for the pastor had not mentioned the matter to them. And the members thought, "We are about to lose our dear minister, but whatever has made him think of going as a missionary to the heathen?" While these thoughts were passing through their minds, he quietly added, "But I am not going out of this town in order to be a missionary."

And there is no need for anybody to go out of town in order to be a missionary to the heathen! There they are, brothers and sisters, all around you! And you are the missionaries. There is your work—go and do it—and may God bless you in it—and so may many precious immortal souls through you be led to find Jesus and to trust in Him for salvation, for His name and mercy's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ACTS 2:1-21.

[The following Exposition is the earlier portion of the one published with Sermon #3224, Volume 56—"REPENTANCE AND REMISSION"—
Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

Verses 1-8. *And when the day of Pentecost* [See Sermons #511, Volume 9—PENTECOST and #1783, Volume 30, also named PENTECOST—Read/download both ser-

mons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was told abroad, the multitude came together and were confounded because every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying, one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak, Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?* These men, so far from being able to speak many languages, could not, by themselves, speak even one correctly! The Galileans dialect was a base degradation of the true Jewish tongue, so that the Galileans were always the subject of sneers and scoffing on account of their mispronunciation. There are several stories in the old Rabbinical writings, all intended to ridicule the Galileans—yet these men had now been taught to speak their own language perfectly and, what was still more marvelous—languages that they had never heard now came pouring forth from their lips with the greatest fluency! How wide the range of those foreign tongues was, we learn from the following verses—

9-11. *Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts in Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.* Babel's curse was now removed—not by a reversing of God's curse, for God's curses and blessings are both like the laws of the Medes and Persians which never can be altered. Men still spoke the tongues of confusion, but the apostles were able to speak to them all after receiving that miraculous gift of tongues. Thus was fulfilled that promise of Jesus, "He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do because I go unto My Father." Christ never spoke with many tongues, nor did He enable His disciples to do so during His life on earth! But when He had gone back to heaven to His Father and had received gifts for men, they were enabled to do greater works than He had accomplished by His personal ministry here below.

12,13. *And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What means this? Others mocking, said, These men are full of new wine.* That is to say, if a Libyan, for instance, had been listening to one who was preaching in the language of Cappadocia, he might think that the man was merely babbling strange sounds without any meaning

in them. To others, the inspired speech of the apostles was only like the incoherent utterance of drunken men!

14-20. *But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said to them, You men of Judaea, and all you that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: for these are not drunk as you suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions* [See Sermon #806, Volume 14—A YOUNG MAN'S VISION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *and your old men shall dream dreams: and on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy: and I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord comes.* Doubtless this refers first to the siege of Jerusalem, when those strange portents were seen in the heavens, and afterwards to that far greater and more notable day of the Lord, the Day of Judgment, when the moon shall become as blood and the sun shall become black as sackcloth of hair.

21. *And it shall come to pass, that whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.* What a glorious gospel verse this is! This is one of the great lifeboat texts of the Bible. He who can get into this boat shall certainly sail to glory in safety! "Whoever"—there is no exception of character, whatever his past life may have been! "Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord"—here are no hard conditions—prayer, trust, confession of that trust—all these make up calling upon the name of the Lord. And whoever shall do this, not only may be but, "shall be saved." There is no perhaps, no maybe about it—"Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

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FIGS AND OLIVES
NO. 3226

A SERMON
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"Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives?"
James 3:12.

[This is one of the series of Sermons upon the olive tree that Mr. Spurgeon had intended to make into a volume if he had been spared long enough. Others which have been already published are #s1569, Volume 26—THE GOLDEN LAMP AND ITS GOODLY LESSONS; #3175, Volume 55—THE BEAUTY OF THE OLIVE TREE and #3208, Volume 56—THE FAITHFUL OLIVE TREE—Read/download all the sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THERE is only one answer to the question, of course, the fig tree can do nothing of the kind. It would be quite contrary to its nature and, therefore, the apostle argues that Christians ought to act according to their nature. If we are, indeed, the children of God, we should act as His children and always act as His children. We are not consistent if at one time we speak as heirs of heaven should speak and at another time speak as the heirs of wrath speak! James truly tells us that a fountain cannot, at the same time pour forth sweet water and bitter, salt water and fresh and he, therefore, rightly argues that from the same mouth there must not proceed blessing and cursing—there must be consistency of conduct in those who are the Lord's.

I am going, in the first place, to take the question of our text out of its literal context. And in the second place to come closer to it. And, perhaps, in the third place to come still closer!

I. So, first, "can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, bear olives?" No. And IT IS VERY UNDESIRABLE THAT IT SHOULD! There is no need for it to do so, and there would be no gain if it should do so! I am, of course, taking the question altogether apart from its context. A fig tree is better employed in bearing figs than it would be in bearing olives. The olive tree is meant to bear olives and the fig tree to bear figs. And it would not be any advantage if it were to leave off bearing figs and begin bearing olives, or if it alternately bore figs and olives.

Now, beloved friends, all of us that are as trees of the Lord's right hand planting are bringing forth fruit to His praise and glory. If we are carrying out His great purpose concerning us, we are producing the peaceable fruits of righteousness, the fruit of the Spirit, fruit unto holiness—but this fruit does not always take the same shape in every one of us. We cannot all do the same work! And even when our work is similar, we have various ways of doing it. I cannot do your work, my brother or

sister, and you cannot do mine—and the two of us together cannot do a third person's work! There is a certain tree that produces a particular kind of fruit and a certain plant on which a special sort of seed is found, but no tree produces all kinds of fruit and no plant bears all sorts of seeds. So it is in the church of God—all true believers are members of the mystical body of Christ, but all the members have not the same office. It would be very foolish if any one member of the body were to attempt to perform the work of all the organs of the body or, indeed, of any beside its own. The best thing is for the eye to see and let the ear do the hearing, for the ear to hear and let the mouth do the speaking, for the feet to carry the body wherever the brain directs, and for the hands to perform their own special handicraft and not to usurp the office of the organs of locomotion!

But why is it that the fig tree cannot bear olives and that one Christian cannot do all kinds of work? I answer, first, *because the variety is, itself, charming*. If anybody had the power to destroy all the fruit trees in the world and then to make a tree that would bear all the fruits at once—what a pity it would be! It is much better to have three trees to bear figs, olives and grapes than to have one tree bearing figs on one branch, olives on another and grapes on a third. It might seem a fine thing to have Christians who could do everything—men who could preach and pray and sing, who could be entrusted with great wealth and great talents, who could lead the church and who could, at the same time, control the world, but that is not God's plan for any of His children! There is a beautiful variety in the church of God—one exercises this gift and another exercises that. One is entrusted with one form of grace and another is entrusted with equal grace but in quite a different form. It would be no improvement if all flowers were of one color, or if all precious stones were of equal brilliance or if all stars gave exactly the same amount of light. Variety is a great part of beauty and God delights to have it so.

We have here, in the next place, *a display of divine sovereignty*. It is God's will that makes yon bird that looks the sun in the face into an eagle! And that other whom sits moodily on the ivy mantled tower into an owl! It is He who makes one of His creatures into an archangel and another into an aphid crawling on a rose leaf. None may ask Him why He acts thus, for He has the right to do as He pleases and, as Elihu said to Job, "He gives no account of any of His matters." Or, as Paul put it to the Romans, "Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" It is quite certain that there are great differences among men. In the very size and shape of our bodies and in the natural conformation of our minds, we are not all alike. Let us say what we may, there are differences of capacity which are with us from our birth, even as God intended that there should be. He is in this matter, as in everything else, both Lord and King—so what folly and sin it is for us to quarrel with Him about our condition, or to attempt to arraign Him before our judgment seat! If God makes some other brother to be like the fruitful tree that bears olives,

shall I be jealous of him if my fruit is of another kind? Shall I not rather be thankful to resemble the tree that bears figs? And if we two see another brother whose fruit is like the grapes of Eshcol, shall we envy him because we cannot bring forth such welcome clusters? Oh no! But let us all three bless the Lord for the sweetness of the figs, the fatness of the olives and the lusciousness of the grapes that He enables us severally to produce to His praise and glory!

Further, *these diversities of gifts should excite in us humility*. What if the olive tree does bear its rich purple berries? It cannot bear sweet figs—and sweet as the figs are, they cannot supply the oil which gives a relish to the peasants' bread, feeds the lamp which lights his cottage in the evening hours and furnishes the medicine which heals him when he is sick or wounded. When the Lord entrusts you with talents, my brother, you are naturally inclined to be proud. But when you hear of another whom the Lord has honored far more, do not quarrel either with the Lord or with your brother, but rejoice that there is someone whose Master thinks he may be trusted to a very high degree! And remember that the responsibilities of your own position are quite sufficient for you. I am often amazed at the stupidity of certain Christians. They will not do what they *can* do—and they want to do what they *cannot* do! They are not satisfied with walking, so they take up David's cry, "Oh that I had wings like a dove!" The Lord knew that they would not make a proper use of wings so He did not give them any! No doubt they think, if they had wings, they would fly away and be at rest, but I question whether they would be able to rest if they flew away from their right place and the work God has committed to their charge! Many a man is a first rate Sunday school teacher, but that does not satisfy his ambition—he must be a preacher! When he gets into the pulpit, the only part of his discourse that is appreciated by his hearers is the end of it—yet he says that he must preach! Many a good worker has been spoiled through imbibing the notion that he must do something for which God has not fitted him. There is a humbling truth that we cannot do some things which others can do well, just as the fig tree cannot bear olives though the olive tree growing close beside it is laden with the precious oily berries!

This fact ought also *to promote in us brotherly admiration*. It is one of the most beautiful exhibitions of a Christian spirit when a Christian man admires the gifts and graces of others more than he admires his own! When, instead of thinking of anything in which he excels others, he delights in those things in which they excel him. We ought to emulate the spirit of that noble Roman who, when he was beaten at an election, said he was glad that his country had so many better men than himself. It is not always easy to feel, "I am happy in knowing of a brother who is so much more brilliant than I am, for the world sadly needs far more light than I can give." It is not always easy to play the least important instrument in the band and to rejoice that somebody else can beat the big drum, or blow the silver cornet, yet that ought to be our feeling. You re-

member how prettily Bunyan speaks of Christiana and Mercy admiring each other after they had been in the bath—"They could not see that glory, each one on herself, which they could see in each other. Now, therefore, they began to esteem each other better than themselves. 'For you are fairer than I am, said one. And you are more comely than I am,' said another." So should Christians see and admire the work of the Spirit in other Christians and should bless God that there are such gracious men and women in the world! While those who are thus admired should, in their turn, see greater excellence in others than they see in themselves.

And once more, *this variety of gifts and graces helps to foster fellowship*. I often feel, when I am conversing with some of the poorest and feeblest members of this church, that I am greatly profited by what they say to me. They usually speak very kindly concerning the comfort they receive from my preaching and the advice I am able to give them when they come to see me. But I am certain that I derive benefit from them! It is impossible for two Christian men or women who are in a right state of heart, to converse with one another about the things of God without both of them being thereby spiritually enriched! As different countries have different products, and one nation sends its produce to supply the needs of another nation and thus, by mutual exchange, commerce is created and each nation's wealth is increased, so is it in spiritual things. You with your olives and this brother with his figs, and that other brother with his clusters of grapes will interchange your various fruits and all of you will benefit by the transaction! It is a great blessing for a bold and confident believer to have a talk with a trembling, desponding Christian—and the poor timid soul will be strengthened by coming into contact with the more fully established saint. The man who has a very sweet disposition is apt to develop a sweetness which is most nauseating, so it will do him good to meet with a Christian who is very straightforward and outspoken—while *that b*rother—by associating with the more gentle spirit, may be kept from becoming too rough and coarse. I need not multiply instances of this helpful fellowship beyond just reminding you of how often, in God's mercy, a Christian husband and wife are the counterpart and complement of one another, so that what is lacking in one of them is supplied by the other and *vice versa*—and thus they both become the better, the holier, the happier and the more useful in the service of their Lord!

II. Now, in the second place I am going to take the text more nearly in the way in which it was used by the apostle. "Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives?" No. IT WOULD BE ALTOGETHER CONTRARY TO ITS NATURE.

It would be a monstrosity, a thing to be wondered at and stared at as unnatural and absurd if a fig tree started bearing olives! And *it is just as unnatural for a Christian to live in sin*. Can he so live as to bear the fruits of iniquity instead of the fruits of righteousness? God forbid that it should be so! If the fig tree should ever bring forth olives, we might have good reason to question whether it was a fig tree, for a tree is known by

its fruits. So, when one who professes to be a Christian lives as worldings live, there is grave reason to fear that he is a worldling, notwithstanding his profession! If we are to know him by his fruits, which is our Lord's infallible test, how can we imagine that he is a partaker of the divine life when he acts as he does? Inconsistency of life casts a very serious doubt upon many who call themselves the children of God. No wonder they are, themselves, often the subjects of doubts and fears—as they *ought* to be—for if they judge themselves by their fruits, they may well question whether they have ever been born again! Those who are new creatures in Christ Jesus seek to live as He lived as far as it is possible for them to do so.

Besides, if a man for a while brings forth the fruits of righteousness and then bears the fruits of iniquity, *he casts a slur upon all his former goodness*. Suppose I saw a fig tree bearing olives and its owner assured me that it bore figs last year? I would say, "Well, I should not think the figs were worth much to judge from the look of those olives." So, when a man is in a passion and makes use of very strong language, perhaps even cursing and swearing as Peter did, one naturally asks, "Can that man ever have been a Christian?" "Well," says someone who knows him, "he used to speak very kindly and lovingly, and seemed to be a sincere Christian." That may have been the case with him, but it is a poor sort of Christianity that can even *occasionally* produce such iniquity! May God save all of us from bearing two kinds of fruit in this unnatural and dishonoring fashion! Suppose the whole church of God should act thus and at one time be eminent for holiness and at another time be notorious for sin—what would be the consequence? Suppose, for instance, that certain people were very particular about their attendance at public worship and yet were known to frequent the theater? Would it not be a strange state of things? Should we judge them to be Christians or worldlings? If a man is *sometimes* a sinner and sometimes a saint, we would need to have an almanac to tell us which he was likely to be, or a tide table to let us know whether, like the tides of the sea, he was ebbing or flowing! Think, too, what the consequences would be to such a man if he were to die—or if the Lord were to come just when he was bearing the fruits of unrighteousness!

I am only imagining a monstrous case—such a case as must not be ours. O my dear friends, let it never be so with you! If God is God, serve Him and follow Him! Or if the devil is God, serve him—but to try to serve God and the devil at the same time is to attempt a compromise that God abhors and which even Satan is not mean enough to approve! Even his disciples laugh to scorn those inconsistent professors who seek to serve God and mammon and to walk, at the same time, in the narrow way that leads unto life and in the broad road that leads to destruction! The other day I saw a man trying to walk on both sides of the street at once. Of course, he was drunk and whenever I see a man trying, spiritually, to do the same sort of thing—attempting to serve God and to serve the devil,

too—I know that he is intoxicated, or infatuated under a fatal delusion, or he would never imagine that such a combination could be possible! Oil and water will not mix, nor light and darkness, nor saintliness and worldliness—you must have one or the other, you cannot have both at once, so "choose this day whom you will serve," Christ or Belial—you cannot serve both, for "no servant can serve two masters." The true church of Christ is "fair as the moon, clear as the sun and terrible as an army with banners." But an inconsistent church, a double dealing church, a worldly church, (what an anomaly)—a church that holds with the hare and runs with the hounds, a church that makes a great profession but has little or nothing worth having in possession—such a church is the scorn of the world, a mere blown up football for men and devils to kick wherever they will!

An unholy man or woman who pretends to be a Christian is a stench in the nostrils of the thrice holy God and a byword and reproach among those who make no pretense of being the Lord's. How can you rebuke sin in others while you are living in it, yourself? How can you preach the Christ whom you dishonor in your daily life? How can you reprove worldliness when you are, yourself, worldly? We speak with contempt of Satan rebuking sin and of the pot calling the kettle black, so if in any degree any of us have been guilty of this great crime against God, may we now sincerely repent of our sin and may the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit preserve us from such evil walking for all time to come!

III. Now, thirdly—and this is the point upon which I want most strongly to insist—IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR A FIG TREE TO BEAR OLIVES—and it is impossible for an unconverted man to produce the fruits of righteousness! That is a task which is altogether beyond his power. The real text of this last division of my sermon is this—

"YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN."

Unless you are regenerated, born from above by a new and heavenly birth, you are not Christians, whatever you may be called, and you cannot produce the fruit which is acceptable to God any more than a fig tree can produce olives.

Let us suppose that we are in the south of France and that we are standing by a fine fig tree. We want to make it bring forth olives and we will, for the sake of my argument, imagine that it is quite willing to do so—how shall we go to work?

Well, first, let us label the fig tree, "OLIVE TREE." Get a label, write the word, "olive tree," on it and hang it on the fig tree. We have done that, entered its name on the list of olive trees, and when the next olive season comes round, we will bring our basket and gather the olives. At the appointed time, we do come, but what do we find? I cannot see an olive on the tree! There are fig leaves and figs, but nothing else. Ah, but we called it an olive tree! Yes, but calling it an olive tree did not change its nature, for it is still a fig tree! And calling a person a child of God will never make that person really be a child of God! I remember reading of someone being taught to speak of "my baptism wherein I was made a

member of Christ, the child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." And if I recollect, rightly, that expression is often used by those who do not show any sign of having been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and adopted into the family of God! It is just a case of hanging a label on them—their nature remains the same as it was when they were born and, by nature they are children of wrath! Persons are said to be Christians because "they were born in a Christian country." I have often heard and read that England is a Christian country, but I have never seen any evidence of the truth of that title! Though there are some Christians in England, as there are some in India, China, Africa and other countries which no one regards as Christian! Yet according to some people, all Englishman are Christians, though some of them never enter a place of worship and others are drunk every night in the week—and many do not even believe in the existence of God! To call a horse an angel will not make him an angel. And to call a man a Christian will not make him a Christian. You may label, enroll, number the unsaved as much as you like, but you will not make even one of them a Christian by that process any more than putting the name, "olive tree," on a fig tree will change its nature and make it produce olives!

As renaming the fig tree is no use, *let us try to trim it to the shape of an olive tree*. That will not be an easy task, for the two trees bear very slight resemblance to one another. Still, we will see what we can do with axe, knife and shears, to make the fig tree look like an olive tree. When we come again, at the proper season, to gather the olives, how many shall we find? Not one, though we search diligently from the trunk to the topmost branch. If we have not ruined the tree by our cutting and shaping, we may find figs on it, but we shall gather no olives! So we may be very careful in trying to shape our children's lives and characters. We may teach them to be truthful, honest, upright, amiable, heroic and so on—and we may succeed so far that some of them may even look like young Christians! But if the grace of God has not made them to be new creatures in Christ Jesus, all our training, trimming, shaping and directing will leave them unsaved and we shall then search in vain to find in them, "the fruit of the Spirit." There is far more needed than anything *we* can do! There must be a deeper, more enduring work than making them look and act like Christians—there must be a divine work in the heart, a complete change of nature which can only be worked by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit!

In our next attempt to get olives from the fig tree, *we will treat the fig tree as if it were an olive tree*. When at Mentone, I have often noticed the men in the olive gardens digging a trench all-round the trees and filling it with old rags and, somehow, the trees seem to draw suitable nutriment out of that strange sort of manure. Very well then, let us treat our fig tree in the same fashion and dig about it and fertilize it with all the old rags we can find. We do so and wait patiently for the result—and then we discover that we have wasted all those precious bales of rags which might

have made the olive trees bring forth an abundant crop, for there is not an olive on the fig tree and probably even fewer figs than it would have produced if we had given it the nourishment suited to its nature! So you may take your young people and treat them as if they were Christians and do all that you can to nourish the divine life that has not yet entered their souls—but all your efforts will be in vain, for you cannot give them new natures—you cannot make the children of Adam into the children of God! You will do far more lasting good by entreating the Lord to accomplish the great work of grace which is altogether beyond your power—and by teaching each unsaved one, old or young, to pray David's prayer—"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

Here is our fig tree without a single olive on it! Now *let us surround it with olive trees* and see what a change that will make in it. The tree is very lonely where it is, so we will see what helpful associations will do for it. It will be another difficult task for us, but we will not shirk it, for we are determined to transplant it right into the middle of an olive garden—and we will tie it up to a fruitful olive tree and then, when it has no other trees near it, surely it must bear olives! But will it? Oh no—when the time of figs arrives, it will bear figs unless we have destroyed its fruit bearing power by disturbing it—but there will be no olives on it except those that fall among its branches when the tree by its side is beaten to yield up its thousands of purple, oily berries. So here is an unconverted man right in the midst of Christian people! He is not very comfortable, for he feels that he is out of his element. He would be much more at home in a public house or at a music hall, or at home reading a novel or the newspaper—yet here he is surrounded by Christians. Possibly, like the fig tree tied to an olive tree, the man is united to a godly wife, yet it is not enough to make him a Christian. He has a gracious, loving daughter—she has persuaded him to come with her tonight in the hope that he may get a blessing here, as I most sincerely hope he may. But, my dear friend, let me tell you that it is not sufficient for you to have a Christian wife, or Christian children, or Christian parents unless there is a *work of grace* within your own heart—unless your very nature is changed by the Holy Spirit so that you are made a new creature in Christ Jesus! All these hallowed relationships and associations will only increase your condemnation! I must repeat to you Paul's message to the Philippian jailor, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." And very likely it will then be possible to add in your case as in his, "and your house." God grant that it may be so!

Now suppose we take *that fig tree to the top of a hill, like the Mount of Olives, and plant it there?* It is still a fig tree and it brings forth nothing but figs! Yes, and if the Lord were to take an unconverted man up to heaven, just as he is, he would remain unconverted even there. Unless and until he was born again, the mere change of place, even from earth to heaven, would not make him acceptable to God! He would be like that man without the wedding garment—and the King would say to his serv-

ants, "Bind him, hand and foot, and take him away and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Perhaps someone asks, "But, sir, what is it to be born again?" Well, it is *not* a mere outward change of life. It is *not* simply a giving up of certain sins and a desire to possess certain virtues. It is as great a work as if you were to be annihilated—to pass absolutely out of existence—and God were to make a new man in your place! Everyone who is in Christ Jesus is a *new creation*—old things have passed away and all things have become new.

"But can such a change as that be worked?" asks an anxious enquirer. "It would be a glorious thing for me if it could be worked in me." Yes, my friend, it can be done by the almighty Spirit and if you are ever to be found in the presence of God in glory, this change must be worked in you! I am speaking to some of you who have been very moral and admirable from your youth up, yet you have never experienced a saving change of heart, so to you I must repeat those solemn words of the Lord Jesus, "Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

"Well," says some self-satisfied person, "I feel quite good enough already." Ah, that is the very strongest possible proof that you are *not good enough*. Do you remember the people, in our Lord's lifetime on earth, who thought they were good enough, and do you recollect what Jesus said concerning their righteousness? "I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." And that is what He says to you who think you are good enough. The man who has been born again confesses with sorrow and shame that he has no goodness of his own—and he ascribes all that is good in him to the almighty grace of God, alone. With Toplady, he sings—

"Because Your sovereign love
Was bent the worst to save—
Jesus who reigns enthroned above,
The free salvation gave."

"Ah," says another friend, "but if that is true, it makes my case so hopeless." That is just what I want you to feel, so that you may look right away from yourself and look alone unto Jesus! You cannot regenerate yourself any more than that which is not in existence can create itself! It must be a work that is accomplished by omnipotence and, therefore, no power less than that which is divine can accomplish it. So you are obliged to acknowledge your absolute dependence upon the grace of God. If He leaves you to yourself, you will be most certainly lost—and He is not bound by anything but the love of His own heart to interpose to rescue you. Therefore if, in His infinite sovereignty, as King of mercy and of grace, He deigns to smile upon you and to create you anew in Christ Jesus, you will have reason to praise and bless Him forever and ever, will you not? That is the point to which I want to bring you so that you will

admit that if you are ever saved, it will be all of God's grace and all God's work from first to last!

"Oh, that I had this new birth!" cries one. That very wish, if it is the sincere desire and prayer of your heart, may be the first evidence that you have already been born again, even as the Lord's testimony concerning Saul of Tarsus, "Behold, he prays," proved that he had already uttered the first cry of a newborn child of God! Remember that text which the Lord blessed to my conversion so many years ago, "Look unto Me, and be you saved all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else"—and do as I did, then—look and live! Look this very instant, by faith, to Jesus hanging on the cross of Calvary, for—

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

If you will do this, that faith look of yours will be the evidence that this new life is already pulsating within you! And as this life is everlasting life, you have received that life which neither devils nor men can ever take away from you. "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life," and no man ever truly believed on Jesus and yet remained unregenerate! Faith in Christ is one of the first signs and tokens of the new life within the soul. If I find on you even one olive, I know that it has the oil of grace within it and that is proof positive that you are one of the good olive trees in the garden of the Lord! If I found figs on you, I would know that you were a fig tree. But if I find only one little olive, I know that the hidden life that can produce one olive can produce bushels of the same sort and even larger and richer ones, to the praise and glory of the great owner of the olive garden in which you have been planted by His own right hand! The little feeble faith that You have already exercised is the gift of God—and under the gracious nurture of His ever blessed Spirit, it will grow until you are, like Abraham, "strong in faith, giving glory to God."

May the Lord enable you to have done with yourself and to have begun with Him! The end of the creature is the beginning of the Creator. When you acknowledge that you cannot save yourself and trust Him to save you, He will do it! Cast yourself upon Him this very moment and then, by an act of almighty grace, the fig tree shall be changed into a fruitful olive tree and your fruit shall be unto holiness—and the end everlasting life!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 56; 57.

Psalm 56:1. *Be merciful unto me, O God, for man would swallow me up. Fighting all day he oppresses me.* "Man has no mercy upon me, but, O God, be You merciful to me! If Your justice does for a while let my enemies loose upon me, let Your mercy diminish their power over me, for they are very cruel. They would make a complete end of me if they could, utterly devouring me."

2-4. *My enemies would daily swallow me up: for they are many that fight against me, O most High. What time I am afraid, I will trust in You. In God I will praise His word.* David means, "Through His grace, I will praise His word," for we cannot rightly praise God unless He gives us the grace to do it. To receive from God is most easy for us, but to return gratitude to God is impossible except as His grace enables us to do it. "In God I will praise His word."

4, 5. *In God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do to me. Every day they twist my words.* This is a common calamity of God's servants and a common crime of the oppressors of God's people in all ages—"They twist my words."

5, 6. *All their thoughts are against me for evil. They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps when they wait for my soul.* "They watch to see if they can find some matter of accusation against me, or some opportunity for tempting me to turn aside from my God. 'They mark my steps,' as the huntsman follows the trail of the lion he seeks to kill, so they follow my tracks to see if by any means they may slay me."

7, 8. *Shall they escape by iniquity? In Your anger cast down the people, O God. You number my wanderings.* David's was a life of wandering, from the sheepfolds to his father's house, then to the palace of Saul, then to the camp of Israel, then to the palace, again, then to the cave Adullam, then among the Philistines—I scarcely remember all the places where he went, but there were at least 12 great changes in David's life. And God had them all written down and so He has all yours, you who believe in Jesus—all your wanderings are recorded because God sets a high value upon everything that happens to you! Not a sparrow falls to the ground without being noticed by Him, and not a single step is taken by you without being noted by Him.

8. *Put You my tears into Your bottle.* This is thought by some to have been an allusion to an old Roman custom of catching the tears of the friends of the dying in a lachrymatory, or small bottle, and then burying them in their tomb. I see no reason to believe that David meant anything so absurd! There is probably a very much better meaning than that to be attached to these words. Bottles, large capacious bottles, were used to catch the copious drops which streamed forth from the wine press and David felt that his tears would be, in God's sight, as precious and as plentiful as the grape drops, and that a great bottle would be needed to hold them—such a bottle as the Jews used for holding milk or wine. Though his soul suffered much sorrow, he believed God would treasure it all up—"Put You my tears into Your bottle."

8. *Are they not in Your book?* "Are they not all duly recorded there?"

9. *When I cry unto You, then shall my enemies turn back.* "When I cry, they shall fly, so swift is prayer to reach the ear and heart of God! And so kind is God to me."

9-12. *This I know; for God is for me. In God will I praise His word: in the LORD will I praise His word. In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me. Your vows are upon me, O God.* "I am bound to praise You, I am bound to love You and I *will*, come what may."

12, 13. *I will render praises unto You. For You have delivered my soul from death: will You not deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?*

Psalm 57:1. *Be merciful unto me, O God.* He begins with the same note as in the last Psalm. It is a note that cannot be too often on the believer's tongue—"Be merciful unto me, O God."

1. *Be merciful unto me.* As an old writer says, "The tongue of the bell strikes on both sides, and the note is the same in each case, 'Be merciful unto me, be merciful unto me.'" You cannot have that petition offered too often! David feels his deep need of mercy and the great value of mercy and, therefore, he prays again and again, "Be merciful unto me, be merciful unto me."

1, 2. *For my soul trusts in You: yes, in the shadow of Your wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities have passed over me. I will cry unto God Most High; unto God that performs all things for me.* "That perfects all things for me," so it may be read. "That perfects all His mercies, all His promises—and who will perfect all that concerns me whatever it may be—unto this God will I cry."

3-5. *He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth His mercy and His truth. My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. Be You exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth.* "Exalt Yourself by overcoming all Your enemies. If they are very great, be You greater still. If they are mighty, be You the more mighty in my defense and so glorify Your holy name."

6-11. *They have prepared a net for my steps, my soul is bowed down: they have dug a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. Selah. My heart is fixed. God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. Awake, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. I will praise You, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto You among the nations. For Your mercy is great unto the heavens and Your truth unto the clouds. Be You exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth.*

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THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS
NO. 3227

A SERMON
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"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you."
Matthew 9:2.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon concerning the man sick of the palsy are as follows—
#2337, Volume 39—THE PHYSICIAN PARDONS HIS PALSIED PATIENT; #2417, Volume 41—
FIRST FORGIVENESS, THEN HEALING and #3016, Volume52—
GOOD CHEER FROM FORGIVEN SIN
—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST did not say to the palsied man, "Be of good cheer, your palsied limbs shall be made strong and well again." But before He had cured *that* terrible malady, He bade him be comforted because his sins were forgiven—as if that would be a sufficient reason for rejoicing even if he should remain palsied! If he should be carried away from the presence of Christ upon his bed just as helpless as when he was let down from the roof into the middle of the crowded room, that would be quite a secondary matter compared with the all-important fact that his sins had been forgiven. David truly wrote, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered," and he is blessed even though he is sick of the palsy, or suffering from all the diseases to which flesh is heir! You remember, too, how the prophet Isaiah wrote, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "Comfort, you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her"—what? What shall be the special cause of comfort to the church of God?—"that her warfare is accomplished, that her *iniquity is pardoned*." She might be in great trouble and distress. Her land might be trodden under the feet of invaders. Her sons and daughters might be fainting in her streets, but as her iniquity was pardoned, she had good ground for comfort! To quote another instance that is a close parallel to our text, our Lord said to the woman in the city who was a sinner—who had washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and kissed them, and anointed them with ointment—"Your sins are forgiven...Go in peace." And, truly, when sin is forgiven, we may go in peace!

This is the subject upon which I am going to speak—whatever there may be to cause us sorrow, if our sins are forgiven, we have good reason to be happy. First, I shall try to show you that *the pardon of sin brings true happiness*. Next, that *those whose sins are forgiven ought to be hap-*

py. And thirdly, a solemn warning in conclusion that *there is no true happiness for unpardoned souls.*

I. First, then, as Jesus said to the man sick of the palsy, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you," we learn that THE PARDON OF SIN BRINGS TRUE HAPPINESS.

Time would fail us to show all the ways in which the forgiveness of sin is a perennial fountain of consolation, but note, first, that *it is one of the surest signs of divine favor*—anyone who is in the enjoyment of it, certainly has abundant reason for being glad! God may give a man great riches, but that would not, in itself, be a token of favor. It might even be quite the opposite! God may give a man great success in his enterprises, but that, also, may be no evidence of favor. God may even permit a man to have his heart's desire and to be filled with this world's follies and pleasures—yet that might be a proof of divine wrath rather than of the Lord's favor. He may have said concerning him, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." But if a man's sins are forgiven, there is no doubt about God's favor in his case! That brief sentence, "Your sins are forgiven," is a clearer token of the favor of God than vats bursting with new wine or barns packed to the roof with golden grain! If your sins are forgiven you, you have the King's guarantee to prove that He loves you!

Forgiveness of sin is also *a proof of divine election*—not merely a sign and token of God's present, favorable regard, but an evidence of that ancient favor which God had in His heart towards His chosen even from eternity! There are many common mercies that God gives freely to all sorts and conditions of men. "He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." But the pardon of sin is a special blessing reserved for His own peculiar people, whose names He wrote in the Lamb's book of life and whom He gave to His Son in the covenant of His grace—and whom Christ reclaimed by His precious blood when He "loved the church and gave Himself for it." These are the people in whom God takes a peculiar delight—and these are they whose sins are forgiven them for Christ's sake!

If you, my brother or sister, are one of these highly favored ones, then you have good reason to be happy! Think for a minute or two upon *what this pardon is*, and then you will see what cause you have for happiness. Isaiah tells us that Jehovah has laid upon Christ the iniquity of all His people so that this crushing burden has been removed from all of us who are truly His—and surely he who has had such a load taken off his heart and conscience must be a happy man! In Psalm 85:2, we read, "You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people, You have covered all their sin." If we have believed in Jesus, our sins are covered even from the sight of God by the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, and they are so concealed from our own eyes that we no longer think of them as condemning us! Can any of us realize that this is our case and yet remain unhappy? In Isaiah 44:22, we read, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins." You have sometimes seen the clouds dissipated and scattered so completely that not a vestige of them can be seen—that

is how our sins are driven away by God—so shall we not be happy? Sometimes the pardon of sin is called the casting of sin behind God's back into the depths of the sea. At another time it is said that, "the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for and there shall be none. And the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found." And then there is that wonderful description of the work of "Messiah the Prince" which Gabriel gave to Daniel, "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins." What stronger expression than that could ever be used? If it is Christ's work "to make an end of sins," we may be quite sure that He will do it and that there will be an end of them for all who believe in Him! Therefore let our hearts dance for joy as His gracious Spirit assures us that our sins are as completely annihilated and put away as if they had never been committed!

Observe, also, that the pardon of sin *completely changes a man's position in relation to God*. Before he was forgiven, he was in the position of a condemned man—the wrath of God was abiding upon him. If his conscience had been awakened and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, he felt that the sword of divine justice was drawn from its sheath and hanging over his head as by a single hair. I remember well the time when neither night nor day had I either peace or comfort. I knew that God must be angry with me because of my sin and that I was, "condemned already," because I had not savingly believed on His only begotten Son. But the moment a man's sins are forgiven, his spirit begins to rejoice in God, his Savior! Then his days are full of peace and he can fall asleep at night without fearing death, even should the silent messenger come for him before he wakes! He is no longer the slave of sin and Satan, but a free man in Christ Jesus! He is no longer a rebel, hiding here and there to avoid arrest by the officers of divine justice, but he is welcomed as the King's own son and received with loving embraces into his Father's bosom! Surely there is no greater comfort under heaven than a sense of sin forgiven and of reconciliation to God by the death of His Son! An earthly courtier whose whole life at court depends upon his monarch's favor, feels that if his sovereign frowns upon him, his position is imperiled and all his joy has departed. But when he again basks in the sunshine of his sovereign's smile because his offense has been forgiven, then is his life once more filled with happiness. Even so is it with us—in past days, we were under the frown of our great Lord and King and we were in utter misery—almost in despair. But now that His smile rests upon us and He has forgiven us all our transgressions, we can sing, yes, and even dance for joy of heart that our sins and iniquities He will remember against us no more, forever!

The pardon of sin also *makes a change in all that surrounds the one who is forgiven*. That is a terrible text of Scripture, "I will curse your blessings: yes, I have cursed them already," and many a man has realized in his own life the truth of that divine declaration! The whole world, as far as it is loyal to its great Creator, is against the man who is the en-

emy of God, even as the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. But to the man who is at peace with God we can say, as Eliphaz said to Job, "You shall be in league with the stones of the field: and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you." Paul was not a whit too positive when he wrote, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." Deliverance from sins seems, to the forgiven man, to cause such a change in everything around him that the things which he used to regard as curses now appear to him as blessings, just as before his blessings (as he called them) were transmuted into curses! Blessed is the man who has had his sins forgiven! He is the man who can truly say, "The winter is past, the rain is over and done; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come." And it is to him and others like he that the Lord says, "You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." The saved man is such a happy man that like John Bunyan, when he was converted, he wanted even the crows in the field to share his joy!

In the pardon of sin, too, blessed be God, *there is a reversal of the sentence which had been pronounced upon us as sinners*. As I speak of this great fact, I cannot help remembering the time when I would have cheerfully given my eyes, or anything else that was dear to me, if I might but have been assured that my sins were all forgiven. The dread of the wrath to come filled my spirit and I knew not how soon I might be summoned to appear before the bar of God to hear the sentence that my sins had merited. I felt that I would willingly lie in prison and have nothing but bread and water for my sustenance if I might only have my sins blotted out. And now, trusting to the atoning sacrifice of Christ, I know that my sins are all forgiven for His sake, I find my tongue quite inadequate to tell of the joys I have experienced and still feel through knowing that the sentence justly passed upon me has been reversed! So now, instead of fearing that the messengers of divine justice will arrest me and drag me off to the eternal prison, I join in Paul's triumphant challenge to heaven, earth and hell, and cry, "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." There is no hell for a pardoned sinner! God may chasten him as his loving Father, but He will never condemn as his judge. No penal wrath can fall upon him, for it is contrary to Jehovah's righteous rule to punish those whom He has absolved. The day of wrath has passed for him and his portion is now unspeakable joy and bliss which will culminate in indescribable bliss and glory forever and ever!

Sometimes—and it is true in the case we are now considering, when persons who have been disgraced for high treason have been pardoned by their sovereign, the disgrace is removed and their estates, which had been sequestered, are restored to them and, in like manner, *all that we*

had lost by our treason against the Most High is restored to us. It is true that we find not a literal earthly paradise such as Adam had, but we can walk with God quite a closely as he ever did and in the person of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we can have closer communion with God than our first father enjoyed in his unfallen state! Our soul has fruits to feed upon such as Adam never tasted! We drink from a fountain whose streams are more precious than the river that watered the garden of Eden! In fact, as we often sing—

"In Christ, the sons of Adam boast,
More blessings than their father lost."

Christ has restored to us all that we lost by sin and has added new blessings which Adam never had. So that now, as Dr. Watts truly wrote—

"All things are ours—the gifts of God—
The purchase of a Savior's blood
While the good Spirit shows us how
To use and to improve them, too."

Or, as Paul wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "All things are yours; whether…the world, or life, or death, on things present, or things to come, all are yours and you are Christ's and Christ is God's."

I will only mention one other thing that clearly shows that the pardon of sin brings true happiness. It is this. *To many of us, it is the greatest joy we know to be able to do anything that brings glory to God and extends His kingdom on earth*. But, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, we could not have done this if our sins had remained unforgiven! We would have been incapable of proclaiming the gospel to others if we had not proved its sweetness ourselves. I always feel that I can make Paul's language my own and say, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this *grace* given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Many of you, my brothers, can say the same. Others of you can apply the spirit of the apostle's words to your Sunday school teaching, your house to house visitation, your tract distribution, or any other form of service by which you seek to win souls for Christ and so to bring glory to God! It is most blessed work in which you are engaged, but you could never rightly have engaged in it if you had not yourself first enjoyed the blessedness of the man "whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." What is there of covenant blessing, what is there of experimental godliness, what is there of fellowship with God, what is there of foretaste of the eternal bliss that we could have known if, first of all, the Lord had not forgiven us all our iniquities? This, which is, in itself, a choice blessing, includes many other choice blessings and, therefore, it should make all those who possess it supremely happy!

II. The second part of my sermon is an application of the first part—what I have been saying to you is true, therefore carry it out! Which means that THOSE WHOSE SINS ARE FORGIVEN OUGHT TO BE HAPPY.

First, of all, *is it not most becoming that they should be happy?* Remember our Savior's parable of the prodigal son? He comes home in rags, but he is lovingly welcomed by his father's warm embrace and fond kisses. His rags are taken off and the best robe is put in their place! The fatted calf is killed and there is general rejoicing throughout the house! Now imagine, if you can, this newly received prodigal sitting down and weeping amid the joy of all around him. I can conceive that his tears flowed abundantly enough at first—when he found himself so graciously forgiven and was made to feel that he was at home once more—yet, surely even those must have been mainly tears of joy though some bitter drops of grief for the past wasted years must have been mingled with them! I think that day he could not even have a headache for the joy of his heart must have driven away all his aches and pains! And if, before, he had been footsore and weary with his long journey from the far country, the exhilaration and delight of such a homecoming must have revived and refreshed him! When "they began to be merry," surely there was not one there who was happier than he was! And, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, we are in the same position as he was! Now that God has pardoned us, shall we sit as mourners at the great gospel feast to which we have been so lovingly welcomed? Angels are rejoicing over us! Shall we be moaning and groaning, sighing and crying, murmuring and complaining? All our fellow Christians are glad to hear that we have tasted that the Lord is gracious—shall they rejoice over us and shall not we rejoice?

"Oh, but, I am so poor!" says one. I am sorry it is so with you, my dear friend, but shall a sense of your poverty have more power over your mind than a sense of God's forgiving love? "Ah, but I have a sick one at home!" sighs another. I admire your sympathetic feeling, but shall that be permitted to outweigh your feeling of gratitude to God for saving your soul from everlasting destruction? Is there anything in the world that is worthy to be compared with the incalculable mercy of forgiven sin? What if I am poor? Yet I am forgiven! What if I am sickly? Yet I am forgiven! What if I shall soon die? Yet I am forgiven! Our sin being forgiven, the very sting of death is drawn and, therefore, we can sing, "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Then next, *have we not the very best reason for rejoicing*? John Bunyan rightly says that any man who wears the flower called "heart's ease" in his bosom is a happy man. But where does that flower grow except in the garden of forgiveness of sin? The heart is heavy when sin is resting upon it, but it is light and joyous when sin is removed. I would bear any affliction rather than be burdened with a guilty conscience—would not you, too, my brothers and sisters? As long as conscience is clear and cleansed, other matters are of small account and we need not fear even the devil himself. The principal element in true happiness is a heart at peace with God, and a pardoned sinner has that! Then ought he not to show it in his very face? Ought not his whole manner to be blessedly joyous because he is at peace with God? The Lord, Himself, says that such

a man is blessed, and can His verdict be set at nothing? Shall He say that you are blessed because He has forgiven your transgression and covered your sin—and will you bow your head as if you were a bulrush and that He had forgotten you? When God's declaration is that those who are forgiven are blessed—and when He bids them be glad in Him and even shout for joy—it must be right for them to do as He commands! And it would be wrong for them not to do so! O you pardoned ones, pray the Lord to enable you to shake off the gloom that now enshrouds you and to give unto you "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness"!

Ought we not to cultivate this blessed flower of true Scriptural happiness far more than we do? I find myself frequently depressed in spirit—perhaps more so than any other person here—and I find no better cure for that depression than to trust in the Lord with all my heart and seek to realize afresh the power of the peace speaking blood of Jesus and His infinite love in dying upon the cross to put away all my transgressions! As I gaze upon the incarnate God there made sin for me, that I might be made the righteousness of God in Him, streams of comfort flow into my soul from His many wounds! I could sit at Calvary and weep, but I could not sit there without singing! It is strange, yet is it true that in the hour of our greatest grief, we soon find comfort in the place where grief reached its climax. Calvary was the very summit of sorrow for our dear Lord and Savior, yet it is the death of sorrow to His people! And the Cross which caused Him unspeakable agony, brings consolation and joy to all who put their trust in Him! If we meditated more upon what Christ did to procure peace and pardon for us, we would more fully rejoice over the Redemption that He bought for us when He gave "His life a ransom for many." And if we more clearly realized what the pardon of sin really means and how many other precious blessings are bound up in the same bundle with it—if we continually sought to live as pardoned men and women ought to live—we would find that nine out of ten of the things that depress us would be driven away like clouds before a Biscay gale!

And mark, beloved that *this source of joy will always abide with us.* "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you," is a message that always gives comfort and joy. While we are young, perhaps we are foolish enough to look elsewhere for happiness, but when we grow old and cares and sorrows increase, happy, indeed, are we if we have the happiness that comes from pardoned sin! If we are rich, we are apt to look to our wealth for consolation, but when we are brought down to penury, what a source of happiness it is to us if our sins are forgiven for Christ's sake! The believer's sins are pardoned when he is most joyous on the top of Tabor, but they are equally pardoned when he is in Doubting Castle in the clutches of that grim old tyrant, Giant Despair! He who has once looked by faith to Jesus Christ and Him crucified is pardoned anywhere—and pardoned everywhere, pardoned at all times—and pardoned under all circumstances! The comforts that spring out of growth in grace

are variable, but the comfort which arises from the forgiveness of sin is always full, rich and true! If we are forgiven, we ought to be glad and rejoice all our days—and we should be especially joyful whenever the time comes for us to die! We need have no fear about departing out of this world, for we are not going into the presence of an angry God, but to meet Him who has forgiven all our sins! We shall gather up our feet in the bed as some dear ones who were with us lately did when it was time for them to go—and we shall defy the last enemy and bravely pass through his dominions, not fearing arrest, there, because we have received that plenary absolution which is a passport even through the realm of death!

If we enjoyed this happiness as we ought, I really do not know what there is that would distress us because the joy of being forgiven would override and surpass any sorrow that could come upon us in *any* conceivable circumstances! Our sin being pardoned, there is no cause for our heart to be troubled. The greatest grief is gone, the master sorrow is removed. Dear children of God, let me press upon you and also upon myself the duty of maintaining a sacred cheerfulness of spirit. Let not the men of the world be truthfully able to say of us that we are a sad and mournful lot of people! If any people under heaven have a right to be happy, we have! When all the joys of this life grow dim, ours begin to burn more brightly. I can understand a man in business who only lives to make money, being crushed when he becomes a bankrupt. But I cannot understand your being like that, my dear brother, if you live to glorify God in your business and in everything else! I can comprehend a worldly man saying, "I have nothing left on earth now that my darling is dead." But I cannot comprehend your saying it, my brother or sister, for your sins are forgiven! And now, however God may deal with you, His strokes are gentle and tender, not at all like those that you deserved to have when you were unrepentant and unforgiven! Let all of us who believe in Jesus not only ask that His joy may remain in us, but also that our joy may be full. I wish we could all be so calm, so confident in God, so joyous under all circumstances, that all around us would be compelled to ask, "What is the secret of these peoples' happiness? They have no immunity from trouble—they have as much to vex and annoy them as we have! What is it that makes them even glory in tribulation?" I wish they might often be obligated to ask that question, so that we could give this answer—"Those whose sins are forgiven ought always to be happy—that is the secret of our continual joy."

III. Now we must close with the sorrowful reflection that FOR THE UNFORGIVEN, THERE IS NO TRUE HAPPINESS.

An unconverted man may have what he calls, joy, but it is the joy of madness! If He were rational and thoughtful and saw things as they really are, he could not have any real joy as long as he remained unpardoned. Suppose, sinner, you are in trouble. These are only the first drops before the great storm of divine wrath that awaits you! And that sickness of yours, that bereavement, that poverty—these are only the beginning of

that awful hurricane that will break upon your devoted head! I cannot say to you, "Be of good cheer in your trouble," for there is worse trouble to come to you. "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked."

Perhaps you tell me that you are not in trouble or, on the contrary, you are exceedingly prospering—everything you touch seems to turn to gold. You invite me to pay you a visit and are proud to show me over your princely mansion, your spacious grounds and your lovely gardens. But my principal thought is, "How will you like to leave all this?" As I see how anxious you are to add field to field, and farm to farm, I cannot help remembering what God said to a man who seemed to have been very much like you—"You fool! This night your soul shall be required of you; then whose shall these things be which you have provided?" What a terrible change it must have been for the "rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day," when, "in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom, and cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." And what a terrible change it would be for you, my friend, to go from all your riches into hell! Yet I do not know whether it makes much difference to you if you are rich or if you are poor so long as you are unforgiven!

Possibly your heart is hardened and you mean to brazen it out before God and, like Belshazzar, you would even send for the sacred vessels out of the temple and mingle blasphemy with your intoxicated festivities! Then I would remind you of the mysterious handwriting upon the wall, "TEKEL. You are weighed in the balance and are found wanting." You may be very bold just now, but before long you will be made to crouch in terror before God when He lifts up His rod to smite you! Whether you are hardened or not—whatever your condition may be—I see no road to happiness for you as long as you are unpardoned! There is nothing in life or in death, in time or in eternity that can comfort a man whose sins are *not* forgiven! And there is nothing that you can ever do which will give you true comfort while you remain an unforgiven sinner. You may give up certain sins and make some sort of reformation, but as long as all your old sins continue unpardoned, you will not even have started on the right road! No, there is no hope for you until you fall prostrate before the throne of God, confessing your guilt and beseeching His mercy! *Do it now*. Now, while He sits upon the throne of grace and stretches out to you the silver scepter of His mercy! Come and bow at His feet and cry, "O Lord, for Your dear Son's sake, blot out all my iniquities," and He will do it and do it now! If you will trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, now, you shall go out of this house perfectly forgiven—and in your soul you shall know that you are forgiven, for the Spirit of God shall bear witness with your spirit that it is so! Come, then, to the fountain filled with precious blood—for there your sins can be all washed away!

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," and He will say to you as He said to the man sick of the palsy, "Be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." God grant that it may be so with many here, for Jesus sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 62.

[The Exposition belonging to the above Sermon is too long for the space available so it has been transferred to Sermon #3228, (next sermon), Volume 56—"OH, HOW HE LOVES"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

Verse 1. *Truly my soul silently waits for God: from Him comes my salvation.* Waiting upon God, if not true and sincere, is only a mockery. It is also an insult to the Lord and, so far from bringing us a blessing it would only bring us a curse! The Hebrew has it, "Truly my soul is silent before God," for faith asks no questions, raises no objections, starts no difficulties, but is content to wait quietly in God's time, believing that all will be well. David meant, "My soul in silence waits only upon God: from Him comes my salvation and from no other quarter—not from the Assyrians, nor from the Egyptians, nor from my own might or wisdom, but from God alone." I hope that we have not only come up to this service in our bodies, but that we have brought our souls, also, to wait upon God. It is unutterably sad when we go to a place of worship and leave our souls somewhere else. Soul worship is the very soul of worship, but worship without the whole heart and soul is soulless and dead!

2. *He only is my rock and my salvation.* [See Sermon #80, Volume 2—GOD ALONE THE SALVATION OF HIS PEOPLE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *He is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved.* He may be moved as an old oak is moved in a storm—its branches are shaken, but its trunk stands fast—and its roots get all the firmer grip upon the soil! He may be moved like a ship which is tossed, but which still does not drag its anchor, so He can truly say, "I shall not be greatly moved."

3. *How long will you imagine attacking a man? You shall be slain, all of you. As a bowing wall shall you be, and as a tottering fence.* David's enemies were very many, yet see how he speaks of their enmity—"How long will you imagine attacking a man?" He speaks as if it were nothing but imagination—it would never come to anything more. And, blessed be God, they who think of destroying God's people do but imagine what will never come to pass! Their dreams shall never become facts. Saul and his sons, and his servants were slain upon mount Gilboa—and the prince of darkness and all his hosts must fall before the arrows of our conquering King. "As a bowing wall shall you be." You have, perhaps, sometimes seen a wall which has a mass of earth pressing upon it on the other side and, therefore, it bows out through the excessive weight and through its own weakness. So have you seen a fence which totters and is ready to fall. The wood has grown rotten, the nails have dropped out and the old

posts have perished in the ground. These are true pictures of the enemies of God's people. They are bowing walls—a child may push them over! They are tottering fences—at the blast of God's breath in His wrath, they shall be blown to the ground at once!

4. *They only consult to cast him down from his excellence: they delight in lies: they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly.* This has been the typical character of the enemies of God's people in all generations—oily words on their tongues, but sharp daggers in their hearts! If they would speak as they feel, then they would be easily recognized, but they do not and, therefore, are they like wolves in sheep's clothing. The Lord deliver me from all such enemies! Blessed be His name! If we truly wait upon Him, we shall be delivered from them all in due time!

5, 6. *My soul, wait you only upon God,* [See Sermon #144, Volume 3—WAITING ONLY UPON GOD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] *for my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation: He is my defense, I shall not be moved.* Some people only pray if they are in a good frame of mind, but we ought to pray to get ourselves into a good frame of mind! That is what David did. You notice that he improves as he goes on. In the second verse, he says, "I shall not be greatly moved," but now, in this sixth verse, he says, "I shall not be moved." His faith grows as he prays and as he praises! And we, also, ought not only to pray when we feel most in the spirit of prayer, or to sing when our hearts are merry, but sometimes, like David, we may strengthen our faith while we pray and we may sing our griefs away till the spirit of praise shall fill our souls!

7, 8. *In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength and my refuge, is in God. Trust in Him at all times.* Say, with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." "Trust in Him at all times," even when He seems to be angry and hides His face from you. "Trust in Him at all times" even in the stormy and dark day. It is among the many excellences of faith that it can see in the dark, that it can walk abroad in foul weather, that it can ride at anchor in a storm and that when lions are in the way, it makes nothing of them! Well, then, troubled Christian, trust in Him now, at the present time! Leave your cares, sorrows and afflictions in this house of prayer and go away with a song in your heart, if not in your mouth. "Trust in Him at all times"—

8. *You people, pour out your heart before Him.* The prophet Jeremiah bade the people pour out their heart "like water before the face of the Lord"—not like oil, some of which clings to the glass, but like water which runs away to the last drop. So, sinner, pour out your whole heart before the Lord, for this is the way to be saved! Bring your heart all full of sin and sorrow—turn it upside down, pour the whole of its contents out at the foot of the throne of grace—and then wait until God fills your heart with peace and joy!

8. *God is a refuge for us.* Not for David only, but for all who, by a simple, sincere faith, can find shelter and safety under the shadow of His wings.

9. *Surely men of low degree are vanity.* They promise what they cannot perform.

9. *And men of high degree are a lie.* They often promise what they *will not* perform. The many headed multitude are vanity—put the whole of them into the scales and how much do they weigh? Just nothing! And as for the aristocrats, those great men that would ride roughshod over the whole world if they could, they are worse than nothing, for while the "men of low degree are vanity," the "men of high degree are a lie," and that is worse than vanity!

9. *To be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity.* Put in Caesar and the senators and nobles of Rome—and then put in the populace of Rome—"they are altogether lighter than vanity." Therefore it is no use to trust to men. If any man builds his comfort upon popularity, he builds upon the sand. Or if any build their hopes upon some great noble or prince, they build upon a lie, for he will fail them when most they need help. Blessed is the man who trusts in his God, but cursed is he that trusts in man!

10. *Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.* They will be as deceptive to you as the multitude or as the prince.

11. *God has spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongs unto God.* Hear that, Christian, and from this day forward place no reliance upon yourself, or upon any but your God!

12. *Also unto you, O Lord, belongs mercy: for You render to every man according to his work.* God gives to each Christian grace proportioned to his work, and then He gives a reward—not of merit, but of mercy, in proportion to the work done. God grant us the grace to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest this most instructive Psalm until our souls, like David's, truly wait only upon God!

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"OH, HOW HE LOVES!"
NO. 3228

A SERMON
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"Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved him!"
John 11:36.

IT was at the grave of Lazarus that Jesus wept and His grief was so manifest to the onlookers that they said, "Behold how He loved him!" Most of us here, I trust, are not mere onlookers, but we have a share in the special love of Jesus. We see evidences of that love, not in His tears, but in the precious blood that He so freely shed for us—and so we ought to see further into His heart than they did—and to know more of Him than they could in the brief interval in which they had become acquainted with Him. When we think of His love to us, we may well cry, "Behold how He has loved us!"

These Jews expressed their wonder at the love that Jesus had for His friend, Lazarus. They did not keep that wonder to themselves, but they said, "Behold how He loved him!" In these days, we are too apt to repress our emotions. I cannot say that I greatly admire the way in which some enthusiastic folk shout, "Glory!" "Hallelujah!" "Amen," and so on, in the midst of sermons and prayers. Yet I would sooner have a measure of that enthusiastic noise than have you constantly stifling your natural emotions and checking yourself from giving utterance to your heart's truer feelings. If we were in a right state of mind and heart, we would often say to one another, "How wondrous has the love of Jesus been to us!" Our conversation with one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, would often be upon this blessed subject. We waste far too much of our time upon trifles—it would be well if the love of Jesus so engrossed our thoughts that it engrossed our conversation, too! I fear that many who profess to be Christians go for a whole year, or even longer, without telling to others what they are supposed to have experienced of the love of Jesus. Yet this ought not to be the case. If we were as we should be, one would frequently say to another, "How great is Christ's love to me, my brother! Do you also say that it is great to you?" Such talk as that between the saints on earth would help us to anticipate the time when we shall need no other theme for conversation in the land beyond the river!

I am going to remind you of some very simple truths of God in order to excite the hearts of those of you who are coming to the communion table. My objective is to increase your love to the dear Lord and Savior who has loved you so intensely as to die for you. And first, beloved, let us think of *what the love of Christ has done for us.* Secondly, of *what His love has*

done to us. And then, thirdly, I need to say that I am afraid *our love to Christ will never cause any wonder except on account of the littleness of it.*

I. So first, let us quietly think over WHAT THE LOVE OF CHRIST HAS DONE FOR US.

When did Christ's love begin to work for us? It was long before we were born—long before the world was created! Far, far back *in eternity, our Savior gave the first proof of His love to us by espousing our cause*. By His divine foresight, He looked upon human nature as a palace that had been plundered, broken down and in its ruins He perceived the owl, the bittern, the dragon and all manner of unclean things. Who was there to undertake the great work of restoring that ruined palace? None but the Word who was with God and who was God. "He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor. Therefore His own arm brought salvation unto him, and His righteousness, it sustained him." Before the angels began to sing, or the sun, moon and stars threw their first beams across primeval darkness, Christ espoused the cause of His people and resolved not only to restore to them all the blessings that He foresaw that they would lose, but also to add to them richer favors than could ever have been theirs except through Him. Even from eternity His delights were with the sons of men! And when I think of Him in that far distant past of which we can form so slight a conception, becoming "the head over all things to the church" which then existed only in the mind of God, my very soul cries out in a rapture of delight, "Behold how He loved us!"

Remember, too, that in that eternal secret council, *the Lord Jesus Christ became the representative and surety of His chosen people*. There was to be in what was then the far remote future, a covenant between God and man. But who was there who was both able and willing to sign that covenant on *man's* behalf and to give a guarantee that men's part of that covenant should be fulfilled? Then it was that the Son of God, well knowing all that such a suretyship would involve, undertook to be the surety for His people to fulfill the covenant on their behalf, and to meet all its demands which He foresaw that they would be unable to meet! Then the eternal Father gave into Christ's charge, the souls that He had chosen unto eternal life though ages, of which we can have so faint an idea, were to elapse before those souls were to be created! And the eternal Son covenanted to redeem all those souls after they had fallen through sin—to keep them by His grace and to present them "faultless" before the presence of His Father with exceeding joy! Thus, as Jacob became accountable to Laban for the whole flock committed to his charge, Jesus Christ, "that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the "everlasting covenant," undertook to redeem and guard the whole flock entrusted to His care, so that when, at the last great muster, they should pass under the hand of Him that counts them, not one of them would be missing and the blessed shepherd Son would be able to say to His Father, "Those that You gave Me I have kept, and not one of them is lost." It was in the everlasting covenant that our Lord Jesus Christ became our representative and surety, and engaged on our behalf to fulfill all His Father's will! And as we think of this great mystery of mercy, surely all of us

who are truly His must exclaim with grateful adoration, "Behold how He loved us!"

I have been speaking of very ancient tidings, but let us now come to matters that we can more clearly comprehend. In the fullness of time, our Lord Jesus Christ left the glories of heaven and took upon Him our nature. We know so little of what the word, "heaven," means that we cannot adequately appreciate the tremendous sacrifice that the Son of God must have made in order to become the Son of Mary. The holy angels could understand far better than we can what their Lord and ours gave up when He renounced the royalties of heaven and all the honor and glory which rightly belonged to Him as the Son of the Highest—and left His throne and crown above to be born as the babe of an earthly mother—yet even to the angels there were mysteries about His incarnation which they could not fathom. And as they followed the footprints of the Son of Man on His wondrous way from the manger to the cross and to the tomb, they must often have been in that most suggestive attitude of which Peter wrote, "which things the angels desire to look into." To us, the incarnation of Christ is one of the greatest marvels in the history of the universe, and we say with Paul, "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh." The omnipotent creator took the nature of a creature into indissoluble union with His divine nature and, marvel of marvels, that creature was man! "He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham." For an angel to become an ant, if that were possible, would be nothing at all in comparison with the condescension of Christ in becoming the babe of Bethlehem! For, after all, angels and ants are only creatures formed by Christ working as one of the persons of the ever-blessed Trinity, for John, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, expressly says, "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." O glorious bridegroom of our hearts, there never was any other love like Yours! That the eternal Son of God should leave His Father's side and stoop so low as to become one with His chosen people, so that Paul could truly write, "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones," is such a wonder of condescending grace and mercy that we can only exclaim again and again, "Behold how He loved us!"

Then, "being found in fashion as a man," *He took upon Himself human sickness and suffering*. All our infirmities that were not sinful, Jesus Christ endured—the weary feet, the aching head, and the palpitating heart—"that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, "Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses." This was a wondrous proof of love—that the ever blessed Son of God, who needed not to suffer, should have been willing to be compassed with infirmity just like any other man is. "We have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

But if you want to see the love of Jesus at the highest point it ever reached, you must, by faith, gaze upon Him when *He took upon Himself the sins of all His people*, as Peter writes, "who His own self bore our sins

in His own body on the tree. Oh, how could one who was so pure, so absolutely perfect, ever bear so foul a load? Yet He did bear it and the transfer of His people's sin from them to Him was so complete that the inspired prophet wrote, "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all," and the inspired apostle wrote, "He has made Him who knew no sin, to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." When a man marries a woman who is deeply in debt, knowing well the burden that he is taking upon himself—even though it is enough to crush him all his life—we may well say, "Behold how he loves her!" That was what Christ did for His church when He took her into an eternal marriage union with Himself although she had incurred such liabilities as could not have been discharged if she had spent all eternity in hell! He took all her debts upon Himself and then paid then unto the utter most farthing. For we must never forget that when Christ bore His people's sins, He also bore the full punishment of them! In fulfillment of the great eternal covenant and in prospect of all the glory and blessings that would follow from Christ's atoning sacrifice, "it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief." We cannot have the slightest conception of what that bruising and that grief must have been! We do not know what our Lord's physical and mental agonies must have been, yet they were only the shell of His sufferings—His *soul* agony was the kernel—and it was that which made Him cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Then it was that the precious "corn of wheat" fell into the ground and died. And dying brought forth "much fruit" of which heaven and eternity, alone, can tell the full tale! I cannot speak of this wondrous mystery as I would like to do, but you who know even in part what it means must join me in saying, "Behold how He loved us!"

Further than that, *Christ has so completely given Himself to us that all that He has is ours*. He is the glorious husband and His church is His bride, the Lamb's wife. And there is nothing that He has which is not also hers even now, and which He will not share with her forever! By a marriage bond which cannot be broken, for He hates putting away, He has espoused her unto Himself in righteousness and truth, and she shall be one with Him throughout eternity! He has gone up to His Father's house to take possession of the many mansions there, not for Himself, but for His people. And His constant prayer is, "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." Jesus has an ever flowing fountain of joy in His heart, but He desires that His joy may be in you if you belong to Him—and that your joy may be full! And everything else that He has is yours as much as it is His, so surely you will again join with me in saying, "Behold how He loved us!"

II. Now, secondly, let us consider WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE TO US, for each of His acts of love should cause us to exclaim, "Behold how He loved us!"

Think, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, *how the Lord dealt with us in the days of our unregeneracy*. He called us again and again, but we would not go to Him. And the more lovingly He called us, the more reso-

lutely we hardened our hearts and refused to accept His gracious invitation. With some of us, this refusal lasted for years—and we now wonder why the lord waited for us so long. If a rich man invites a pauper to a feast and the poor man is indifferent to the invitation, or positively refuses to accept it, he gets no second invitation, for man does not press his charity upon the needy. But when we even scoffed at our Lord's call and made all manner of excuses for not coming to the gospel banquet, He would not take our, "No," for an answer, but called, and called—again and again—until at last we could hold out no longer and had to yield to the sweet compulsion of His grace! Do you not remember, beloved, how you received pardon, justification, adoption and the indwelling of the Spirit—and how the many "exceeding great and precious promises" were brought to you like the various courses at a royal festival served upon golden dishes adorned with priceless gems? Oh, that blessed, blessed day in which you first came and sat among the guests at the great King's table! As you look back upon it, your heart glows in grateful remembrance of Christ's mercy to you—and you cannot help saying, "Behold how He loved us!"

Many days have passed since then, and I ask you, now, to remember *what Christ has done to us since we first trusted in Him*. Has His love for you cooled in the slightest degree? We have, all of us, tried that love by our wandering and waywardness, but we have not quenched it—and its fire still burns just as vehemently as at the first! We have, sometimes, fallen so low that our hearts have been like adamant, incapable of emotion, yet Jesus has loved us all the while and softened our hard hearts as the glorious sun melts the icebergs of the sea! We were like the insensible grass which calls not for the dew, yet the dew of His love gently fell upon us. And though we had not sought it, our hearts were refreshed by it. Our Lord has, indeed, proved how He loved us by the gracious way in which He has borne with our many provocations. And think, too, beloved, with what gifts He has enriched us, with what comforts He has sustained us, with what divine energy He has renewed our failing strength and with what blessed guidance He has led and is still leading us! Take your pencil and paper and try to set down in figures or in words your total indebtedness to His love—where will you begin and when you have begun, where will you finish? If you were to record only one out of a million of His love gifts to you, would the whole world be able to contain the books that might be written concerning them? No! All you can say is, "Behold how He has loved us!"

There have been times—of which I will not say much just now, for some here would not understand what I mean—when we have seemed to stand in the very suburbs of heaven! Where we could hear the bells pealing forth celestial music from the invisible belfries and our hearts were ravished with the sound of the heavenly harpers harping with their harps and the ten thousand times ten thousand white robed choristers singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. No, more than that—the King Himself has brought us into His banqueting house and His banner over us has been love! He has not only permitted us to sit at His feet, as Mary

did, but He has allowed us to pillow our head on His bosom, as John did, and even condescended to let us put our finger into the print of the nails in our rapturous familiar fellowship with Him who is not ashamed to call us His brethren! I must not continue in this strain—not for lack of matter, but for lack of time in which to speak concerning Him, so I must again say, "Behold *how* He loved us!"

I must, however, mention one more proof of Christ's love, and that is this—*He has made us long for heaven and given us at least a measure of preparation for it*. We are expecting that one of these days, if the chariot and horses of fire do not stop at our door, our dear Lord and Savior will fulfill to us His promise, "if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." To a true believer in Jesus, the thought of departing from this world and going to be "forever with the Lord," has nothing of gloom associated with it! This earth is the place of our banishment and exile—heaven is our home! We are like the loving wife who is separated by thousands of miles of sea and land from her dear husband—and we are longing for the great reunion with our Beloved Lord, from whom we shall, then, never again be separated! I cannot hope to depict the scene when He shall introduce us to the principalities and powers in heavenly places and bid us sit with Him on His throne, even as He sits with His Father on *His* throne. Surely, then, the holy angels who have never sinned will unite in exclaiming, "Behold, how He loved them!" It is a most blessed thought to my mind, that we may be up there before the second hand of that clock completes another round! But if not as soon as that, it will not be long before all of us who love the Lord will be with Him where He is—and then the least among us shall know more of His love than the greatest of us can ever know while here below! Meanwhile, we have much of the joy of heaven even while we are upon this earth, for, as Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ, (by grace you are saved), and has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

III. The closing portion of my sermon is to be very practical. Did anybody ever say of anyone of us here, "Behold how He loves Christ"? If someone did say that of *you*, my brother or sister, was it true? I think I hear your answer, "Oh, I do love Him! He knows all things and He knows that I love Him." But do you love Him so fervently that strangers or even your more intimate acquaintances would say of your love to Jesus what the Jews said of His love to Lazarus, "Behold how He loved him! "I wish," says one, "I could do so." Then listen for a minute or two while I tell you of WHAT SOME SAINTS HAVE DONE TO SHOW HOW THEY LOVED THEIR LORD.

There have been *those who have suffered for Christ's sake*. They have lain in damp dungeons and have refused to accept liberty at the price of treachery to their Lord and His truths. They have been stretched upon the rack, yet no torture could make them yield up their fidelity to God! If you have read *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, you know how hundreds of brave men, women and children, too, stood at the stake, gloriously calm, and

often triumphantly happy—and were burnt to death for Christ's sake, while many of those who looked on learned to imitate their noble example. And others who heard their dying testimonies and their expiring songs, (not groans), could not help exclaiming, "Behold how these martyrs love their Master!"

There have been others *who have shown their love to their Lord by untiring and self-sacrificing service*. They have labored for Him—at times under great privations and amid many perils—some as missionaries in foreign lands and others with equal zeal in this country. Their hearts were all aglow with love for their dear Lord and Savior. And they spent their whole time and strength in seeking to win souls for Him, so that those who knew them could not help saying, "Behold how they love their Lord!" Some of us can never hope to wear the ruby crown of martyrdom, yet we may be honored by receiving the richly jeweled crown from the hand of Christ as He says to each of His true laborers, "Well done, good and faithful servant…enter into the joy of your Lord."

Then we have known *some saints who showed their love to their Lord by weeping over sinners and praying for their conversion*. There have been gracious men and women who could not sleep at night because of their anxiety about the eternal welfare of their relatives and friends, or even of lost ones who were personally unknown to them—and they have risen from their beds to agonize in prayer for sinners who were either calmly sleeping and not even dreaming of their doom, or else at that very hour were adding to their many previous transgressions! There have been others who could not hear a blasphemous word, as they passed along the street, without feeling a holy indignation at the injury that was being done to their best friend! And at the same time their eyes filled with tears of pity for the poor blasphemers and their hearts poured out a stream of supplication for those who were thus ignorantly or wantonly sinning against the Most High! They have been like Jeremiah weeping over the lost and like Moses and Paul ready to sacrifice their own souls for the sake of others, until men have been compelled to say, "Behold how these weeping and pleading saints love their Lord and love lost sinners for His sake!"

Others have proven their love to their Lord by the way in which they have given of their substance to His cause. They have not only given a tithe of all they had to the great Melchizedek, but they have counted it a high privilege to lay all that they had upon His altar, counting that their gold was never so golden as when it was all Christ's and that their lands were never so valuable to them as when they were gladly surrendered to Him! Alas, that there should be so few, even in the church of Christ, who thus imitate their Lord who freely gave Himself and all He had that He might save His people! Blessed will the church be when she gets back to the Pentecostal consecration which was the fitting culmination of the Pentecostal blessing—"all who believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need."

Another most admirable way of proving our love to Christ is by being scrupulously careful to please Him in little things as well as in the more important matters. One of the worst signs of this present evil age is that so little is thought of even the great things of Christ—His atoning sacrifice, His high priestly character and work, His kingly rule and so on—while the little things of Christ, those that are less by comparison with these, are often utterly despised! There was a time, in Scotland, when men of God signed the Solemn League and Covenant with their blood—how many would do that today? One jewel in Christ's crown, that priceless Koh-i-noor of the crown rights of the King of kings, was sufficient to call into the battlefield the noblest of Scotland's sons. But today, the very crown of Christ, itself, is kicked about like a football by some of His professed servants, for they set up their own fallible judgments against His infallible revelation and practically say, "We will not have this man to reign over us!" In this land, in the most glorious days that England has ever seen, our Puritan forefathers were so scrupulous that men called them straitlaced, sour faced, bigoted and I know not what! But nowadays many of the truths of God for which they contended and for which many of them resisted even unto blood, are said to be unimportant or of no account whatever! The special truth of God which distinguishes us as a denomination is regarded by many with supreme contempt! Not long ago a professedly Christian minister said that he did not care a penny about baptism! If he belongs to Christ, he will have to answer to his Master for that saying! But I could not utter such sentence as that without putting my very soul in peril! He who really loves His Lord will not trifle with the least jot or tittle of His Lord's will. Love is one of the most jealous things in the universe. "God is a jealous God," because "God is love." The wife who truly loves her husband will not harbor even a wanton imagination—her fidelity to him must not be stained even by an unchaste thought—and so must it be with every true lover of the Lord Jesus Christ! God grant that we, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, may do our Lord's will so scrupulously in great things and little things—and in all things alike—that those who see us in our daily life may be compelled to say, "Behold how these Christians love Jesus Christ, their Lord and Savior!"

But, beloved, remember that when our love has reached its climax, it can only be like a solitary dewdrop trembling on a leaf compared with the copious showers of love that pour continually from the heart of our dear Lord and Master! Put all our loves together and they will not fill a tiny cup! And there before us flows the fathomless, limitless, shoreless ocean of the love of Jesus Christ! Yet let us have all the love for Him that we can. May the Holy Spirit fill our souls to the brim with love to Jesus for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 1:28-45; 2:1-12,

Mark 1:28. *And immediately His fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.* "Immediately." That is, as soon as Jesus

had healed the man with an unclean spirit His fame spread like wildfire. The miracle was reported from mouth to mouth till everybody in that region knew of it. It was said that the words and writings of Martin Luther were carried as by the wings of angels, so speedily was everything that he said and wrote made known far and wide. On this occasion, it was so with our Lord's wondrous deed of mercy and power—"Immediately His fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee."

29. *And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.* "Forthwith," or again, "*immediately*." Simon and Andrew and James and John were intimately connected—we are told that they were "partners" in their fishing business. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, seem to have been in a good position in life—we read that their father had "hired servants" employed in the boats. So James and John went with Simon and Andrew into their partners' house when Christ went there after performing that notable miracle in the synagogue.

30. *But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and soon they told Him of her.* There were at least four of Christ's followers in the house, yet the mother of the wife of one of them lay sick of a fever. Divine grace does not prevent suffering in the body—there will still be physical diseases even though in the soul there is spiritual health.

31. *And He came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up. And immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.* [See Sermon #2980, Volume 52—A LIFT FOR THE PROSTRATE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Jesus was very calm. He was not afraid of catching the fever. See how deliberately and with what solemn, kindly dignity He deals with this sick woman. "He came and took her by the hand." I think I see Him doing it, "and lifted her up." He gently raises her and she yields to His tender uplifting hand—and suddenly finds herself cooled of the burning fever and perfectly restored to health and strength! So she rises from her bed and the first thing she does is to minister to them. I am sure that whenever the Lord helps any of His people out of their temporal or spiritual distresses, they feel at once that they must say, "What shall we render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward us?" Her ministering unto them proved that the fever was quite gone—and gone in a way in which it does not ordinarily go, for as you all know, fever usually leaves behind it extreme weakness. It seems to burn up the strength that is in one—and after it is gone, one is not fit even to wait at table for a long while! But Peter's wife's mother, the fever having immediately left her, rose and "ministered unto them." Christ's cures are always complete! If He saves us from the burning fever, He saves us from the weakness that follows it! And when He deals with soul maladies, His cures are equally complete—there are no aftereffects to the soul as there are in many diseases that afflict the body. When the great physician restores the soul, He restores it completely.

32. *And at evening, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased and them that were possessed with devils.* It was the Sabbath and they would not bring out their sick until the day of rest was

over. The Jewish Sabbath ended at the setting of the sun, so these people were all watching and waiting until the sun dipped below the horizon and then, straightaway, they brought their suffering ones to Jesus! What a mass of misery filled the streets of Capernaum that memorable night! The whole city was turned into a hospital.

33. *And all the city was gathered together at the door.* It seemed as if everybody had come either to be healed or to witness the healing of others—"All the city was gathered together at the door." Oh, when shall we see our places of worship thronged in this fashion with the spiritually sick? When will this great city of London begin to turn towards the Lord Jesus Christ? Will any of us live to see all our fellow citizens gathered together around the Savior to be healed by Him of all the wounds that sin has made?

34. *And He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and allowed not the devils to speak because they knew Him.* They would persist in acknowledging Him—perhaps with the design of injuring His cause, for nothing hurts the cause of Christ more than to have it praised by bad men or evil spirits! I do not know that an outrageous sinner, if he will not repent, can do Christ a better turn than to abuse Him, for then he is speaking after his own natural manner—but when the devil or his servants go into the pulpit and begin to speak in praise of Christ, then is Christ's cause in an evil case, indeed—so He "allowed not the devils to speak, because they knew Him." Or, as the margin puts it, even "to say that they knew Him."

35. *And in the morning, rising up a great while before day.* While it was yet dark, He stole away even from His favored disciples that He might be alone with His Father.

35-37. *He went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.* And Simon and they that were with Him followed after Him. And when they had found Him, [See Sermon #1769, Volume 30—BEFORE DAYBREAK WITH CHRIST—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] For He had endeavored to conceal Himself in the loneliest spot that He could find. Possibly, the disciples overheard His groans, His cries, His supplications as He poured out His very soul in prayer to His Father—"when they had found Him"—

37, 38. *They said unto Him, All men seek for You. And He said to them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there, also, for therefore came I forth.* Jesus Christ came forth from God the Father that He might proclaim throughout the land the message of redeeming grace and dying love!

39, 40. *And He preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils. And there came a leper to Him, beseeching Him, and kneeling down before Him, and saying unto Him, If You will, You can make me clean.* [See Sermon #2008, Volume 34—THE LORD AND THE LEPER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] It is a pity that he could not go further than to say to Christ. "If You will," but it is a great mercy that he could go as far as that. So if you, dear friend, cannot pray a prayer that is full of faith, pray one that has at least some faith in it! If you cannot go as far as some do, go as far as you can! I have often told

you to bless God for moonlight, and then He will give you sunlight, but for anyone to say, "I will not pray at all because I cannot pray as I would like to pray," is a very foolish thing! Say what you can, even as this poor leper said to Jesus, "If You will, You can make me clean."

41. *And Jesus, moved with compassion.* This is a wonderful expression, "moved with compassion." The face of Jesus and His whole person showed that His very soul was stirred by an intense feeling for this poor leper! Jesus, moved with compassion—

41. *Put forth His hand and touched him, and said unto him, I will. Be you clean.* If you or I were to touch a leper, his uncleanliness would at once be communicated to us, but when Christ touches a leper, His cleanliness is communicated to the leper! Oh, how high our blessed Lord stands above us! When we have to deal with certain peculiarly sad cases, we ought to go to the work with much earnest prayer that we ourselves may not be contaminated by contact with gross sinners, but Christ has such virtue in Himself that He can even touch the fevered and the leprous and yet sustain no injury!

42. *And as soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.* This was another very wonderful miracle. All that dryness of the skin, that peeling, that inward foulness that eats into the bones and pollutes the very current of the blood—all this was quite gone—the Lord Jesus Christ made this foul, unclean leper perfectly clean and whole in a single moment!

43, 44. *And He at once charged him, and forthwith sent him away; and said unto him, See you say nothing to any man: but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those thing which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them.* That was all he was to do—to go and show himself to the priest so that it might be officially known and certified that he was clean. And he was not to tell anyone else of his cure. He was disobedient to Christ—perhaps you will think that he was very naturally and excusably so—but we must *never* make excuses for doing what Christ tells us not to do! Our duty is not to judge whether such and such a course will be profitable or beneficial, but to consider whether such and such a course is in accordance with the word of the Lord! This man ought to have held his tongue, for Christ had told him to do so. I have no doubt that he said within himself, "The more I talk about this miracle, the more good I shall do and the more famous Christ's name will become." But He had no business to think that—his business was to obey Christ's command!

45. *But he went out and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter the city.* There were such crowds that He could not work His miracles of healing. The disobedient man was no doubt moved by gratitude, which seems a very proper motive, yet his disobedience caused Christ serious inconvenience and hindered His work. And I have no doubt that there are many things done in the church of God today of which many say, "They are very proper and very nice"—yes, but are they *Scriptural*? Did the Master command them? If not, they will cause Him and His kingdom serious inconvenience

and loss at some time or other. We cannot too fully realize that as Christ's disciples, we are to obey Him implicitly—and the best proof of our gratitude is to do exactly as Christ bids us. This man blazed abroad the news of his cure so that, "Jesus could no more openly enter into the city—

45. *But was outside in deserted places: and they came to Him from every quarter.* [See Sermon #129, Volume 22—GATHERING TO THE CENTER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

Mark 2:1, 2. *And again He entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was heard that He was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, inasmuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so even near the door: and He preached the word unto them.* He could not be hidden—the healed leper had made His name so famous that men crowded to see Him—and He took advantage of their curiosity and, "preached the word unto them."

3-5. *And they came unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come near unto Him for the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, your sins are forgiven you.* Those who brought this man to Jesus believed that He could and would heal Him—and Christ delighted to honor their faith and, perhaps, also the faith of the palsied man himself.

6-9. *But there were certain of the scribes sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, Why does this Man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, He said to them, Why reason you these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Your sins are forgiven you? Or to say, Arise and take up your bed and walk?* It was just as easy to say either the one or the other.

10-12. *But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, (He said to the sick of the palsy), I say unto you, Arise, and take up your bed, and go your way into your house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion!* [See Sermon #1269, Volume 21—THE NEW FASHION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

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***"Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."* (NKJV)**
Acts 5:31.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same verse is #1301, Volume 22—
A PRINCE AND A SAVIOR—
Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

THIS was part of the answer of Peter and the other apostles to the question and declaration of the high priest—"Did not we command you that you should not teach in this name? And, behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine and intend to bring this Man's blood upon us." Then Peter and the other apostles replied, "We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you slew and hanged on a tree." And, in the verse following our text, they claimed to be witness bearers for the risen and reigning Prince and Savior. And, more than that, they declared that they were co-witnesses with "the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to them that obey Him." These apostles were the representatives of Messiah, the Prince, acting under His authority and, as far as they could, filling up the gap caused by His absence. They asserted that their preaching and teaching had been done by divine command which could not be set aside by any human authority—imperial or ecclesiastical—and that the true Prince of Israel, the Son of David, alone, had the power and the right to issue commissions to those who owned allegiance to Jehovah. They declared that Jesus, whom the chief priests had crucified, was still alive reigning in glory, enthroned at the right hand of God and that they were only fulfilling His royal commands when they were "standing in the temple and teaching the people."

Moreover, when the apostles stated that in addition to being a Prince, Jesus was also a Savior, and that He had been exalted with His Father's right hand in order that He might "give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins," they gave the very best reason in the world for their preaching—for they were all engaged in preaching that sinners should repent—and in assuring those who *did* repent that their sins were forgiven for Christ's sake! I cannot conceive of any better argument than this which the apostles used when answering the high priest—"You command us not to teach in Christ's name, but the command of the Son of God, our Prince and Savior, is 'that repentance and remission of sins [See Ser-

mons #329, Volume 6—CHRIST'S FIRST AND LAST SUBJECT; #1729, Volume 29—BEGINNING AT JERUSALEM and #3224, Volume 56—"REPENTANCE AND REMISSION"—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.' So, as we 'ought to obey God rather than men,' we have filled Jerusalem with *His* doctrine. And we mean to go on preaching repentance and remission until, as far as we are able, we have filled the whole world with this doctrine." That purpose of Christ was, at least in part, fulfilled by the apostles in their day. God did give repentance and remission of sins to a chosen remnant of Israel. And when the rest of the Jews rejected the testimony of Christ's servants, they said, as Paul and Barnabas did to the Jews at Antioch, "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you, but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." We must never forget, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ that we owe the first preaching of the gospel to the Jews. They were, in all lands that were then known, the heralds of Christ, publishing the royal proclamation far and wide. Under the old dispensation, "unto them were committed the oracles of God" and the gospel of the New Covenant was, in the first instance, entrusted to them—and it was through the Jews that it was made known unto us Gentiles! Let us remember this fact as we contemplate the glorious future, both of Jews and Gentiles. Israel as a nation will yet acknowledge her blessed Prince and Savior. During many centuries the chosen people who were of old so highly favored above all other nations on the face of the earth, have been scattered and peeled, oppressed and persecuted, until sometimes it seemed as if they must be utterly destroyed—yet they shall be restored to their own land which again shall be a land flowing with milk and honey. Then, when their hearts are turned to Messiah the Prince and they look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn over their sin in so long rejecting Him, the fullness of the Gentiles shall also come and Jew and Gentile, alike, shall rejoice in Christ their Savior!

In taking such a text as this, I think it is always right to first give the actual meaning of the passage before using it in any other way. This I have already done by showing you what I suppose the apostles meant in replying as they did to the high priest. Now let us try to gather other truths of God from this passage.

I. First, let us learn that ALL WHO RIGHTLY RECEIVE CHRIST RECEIVE HIM BOTH AS PRINCE AND SAVIOR. He is exalted this day for many purposes—as a reward for all the pangs He endured upon the cross, as our covenant head and representative—and that He may rule over all things for the good of His church, as Joseph ruled over Egypt for the good of his brethren. Christ is exalted as a pledge of our exaltation, for, "we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is."

But our text declares that *God has exalted Jesus that He may be to His own chosen people a Prince and a Savior*—not that He may be a Prince

only, or a Savior only, but that He may be both a Prince and a Savior! He is a Prince to receive royal honors. A Prince to be the leader and commander of His people. A Prince whose every word is to be instantly and implicitly obeyed. A Prince before whom we who love Him will gladly bow, even as in Joseph's dream, his brothers' sheaves made obeisance to his sheaf and as they, themselves, afterwards "bowed themselves to him to the earth" when he became a great lord in Egypt. The Lord Jesus Christ is a Prince among men, a Prince in His church and a Prince in the highest heavens! Indeed, He is more than a Prince as we understand that word, for He is "King of kings and Lord of lords." But He is also a Savior to be trusted. A Savior to be accepted with our whole heart. A Savior who exactly meets our needs, for we feel that we need to be saved, we recognize our inability to save ourselves and we perceive in Him the ability, the grace, the power and everything else that is required in order to save us! So He is a Savior to be trusted and accepted as well as a Prince to be obeyed and honored!

Let us never imitate *those who talk of Christ as a Prince, but will not accept Him as a Savior*. There are some who speak respectfully of Christ as a great leader among men, a most enlightened teacher and a holy man whose life was perfectly consistent with His teaching so that He can be safely followed as an example. He is their Prince, but that is all. We cannot occupy such a position as that! If we were to say that Christ is our Prince but not our Savior, we would have robbed Him of that honor which is, perhaps, dearer to Him than any other! It was not simply to reign over the sons of men that He came from heaven to earth—He had legions of nobler spirits than those that dwell in bodies of clay, every one of whom would gladly fly at His command to obey His behests! Besides, if He had pleased to do so, He had the power to create unnumbered myriads of holy beings who would have counted it their highest honor to be subservient to His will! Mere dominion is not what Christ craved—from of old His delights were with the sons of men because He had covenanted with His Father that He would save them. Therefore was He called Jesus, because He came to save His people from their sins! In order to accomplish that great purpose, it was necessary for Him to take upon Himself our nature and to live a life of perfect obedience to His Father's will and, at last, to die a shameful death upon the cross that He might offer the one sacrifice for sins, forever, that alone could bring salvation to all who believe in Him! We never read that Jesus said to His disciples, "I am longing for the hour when I shall take the reins of government into My hand and wear upon My head the crown of universal sovereignty." But we do read that He said to them, "I have a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straitened till it is accomplished." We never read that He said to the Jews, "I am come to rein over you." On the contrary, when men would have taken Him by force and made Him a king, He hid Himself from them. He was a King, but not a man-made king, and His rule was to be a contrast to that of every other monarch! Christ's own de-

scription of His mission was, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." I think that our royal Savior puts the saving before the ruling—and if I call Him, Prince, and deny Him the title of Savior, He will not thank me for such maimed and mutilated honors! No, God exalted Him to be a Prince and a Savior—and we must receive Him in both offices, or not at all.

For, mark you, *we cannot really receive Christ as Prince unless we also receive Him as Savior*. If we say that we accept Him as our Prince, but reject Him as our Savior, is there not merely disloyalty, but treason of the deepest dye in that rejection? This gracious Prince tells me that I am lost and undone and bids me trust Him to save me. If I practically tell Him that I do not need Him to save me—and I do that by rejecting Him—I virtually say that He came from heaven to earth on an unnecessary errand, at least as far as I am concerned. If I do not put my trust in His expiatory sacrifice, I say, in effect that His death upon Calvary was a superfluity by which He foolishly threw away His valuable life in needless self-sacrifice! But that would be rank blasphemy! If I reject Christ as Savior, I do by that very act reject Him as Prince. It is sheer mockery for me to say, "I honor Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, [See Sermons #1353, Volume 23—ECCE REX and #3123, Volume 54—"THE KING OF THE JEWS"—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] but I refuse to be washed from my sin and uncleanness in the fountain filled with His blood! I am willing to accept the man Christ Jesus as my exemplar and I will try, as far as I can, to follow His steps, but I will not accept pardon at His hands." If I talk like that, Christ is neither my Prince nor my Savior, and I am His enemy! And unless I repent and bow before Him in real homage, and accept Him both as Prince and Savior, He will at the last condemn me with the rest of His enemies who said, "We will not have this man to reign over us." You may extol Him with your tongue, but the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart would be far more prized by Him than all your empty praises! It is a higher praise to Christ to stoop to kiss His pierced feet and find in His wounds perfect healing for all the wounds that sin has made, than to pronounce the most fulsome compliment upon His spotless character! He needs not the meaningless flatteries of men, but He thirsts for the trustfulness of souls that are willing to be saved by Him! This is the best refreshment He can ever have, as He told His disciples when He had won to Himself the soul of that poor fallen woman at Sychar, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work."

There are *some who seem willing to accept Christ as Savior who will not receive Him as Lord*. They will not often state the case quite as plainly as that, but *as actions speak more plainly than words*, that is what their conduct practically says. How sad it is that some talk about their faith in Christ, yet their faith is not proved by their works! Some even speak as if they understood what we mean by the covenant of grace, yet alas, there is no good evidence of grace in their lives, but very clear proof of sin (not grace) abounding. I cannot conceive it possible for anyone to truly receive

Christ as Savior and yet not to receive Him as Lord. One of the first instincts of a redeemed soul is to fall at the feet of the Savior and gratefully and adoringly to cry, "Blessed Master, bought with Your precious blood, I acknowledge that I am Yours—Yours only, Yours wholly, Yours forever! Lord, what will You have me to do?" A man who is really saved by grace does not need to be told that He is under solemn obligations to serve Christ—the new life within him tells him that. Instead of regarding it as a burden, he gladly surrenders himself—body, soul and spirit, to the Lord who has redeemed him, reckoning this to be his reasonable service. Speaking for myself, I can truthfully say that the moment I knew that Christ was my Savior, I was ready to say to Him—

"I am Yours and Yours alone,
This I gladly, fully own!
And in all my works and ways,
Only now would seek Your praise.
Help me to confess Your name,
Bear with joy Your cross and shame,
Only seek to follow Thee,
Though reproach my portion be."

It is not possible for us to accept Christ as our Savior unless He also becomes our King, for a very large part of salvation consists in our being saved from sin's dominion over us—and the only way in which we can be delivered from the mastery of Satan is by becoming subject to the mastery of Christ! The "strong man armed" cannot keep us under his cruel sway when the stronger one overcomes him and sets us at liberty! In order that we may be rescued from this power of the prince of darkness, the Prince of Light and Life and Peace must come into our soul—and He must expel the intruder and take His rightful place as our Lord and Master, guarding by His own power what He has saved by His own right hand and His holy arm! If it were possible for sin to be forgiven and yet for the sinner to live just as he lived before, he would not really be saved. He might be saved from some part of the punishment due to sin, but he would still be a most wretched man, for if there were other punishment for sin than the slavery and tyranny of sin's own self, that would be punishment enough to make a man's life utterly miserable, like the poor wretch chained to a corpse and compelled to drag it about with him wherever he went. Let a man once know what sin really is and he needs nothing else to make him thoroughly unhappy. I was talking, only today, with a Christian brother about our crosses and I said that I thanked God we were not left without a cross to carry. "Ah," my friend replied, "but, there is one cross we would gladly throw away if we could, and that is the heaviest cross of all—the body of sin and death that is such a burden to us." Yes, that is, indeed, a grievous burden to true Christians! That is the iron that enters into our very soul. That is the gall of bitterness, the deadly venom of the old dragon's teeth and, therefore, brothers and sisters in Christ, we do not really receive Christ as our Savior unless we also receive Him as Prince. But when He comes to reign and rule in our

mortal bodies, the tyranny of the usurper is broken and we know Jesus as the complete Savior of our body, soul and spirit. He would not be our Prince if He were not our Savior—and He would not be our Savior if He were not our Prince—but what a blessed combination these two offices make!

The man who is taught of God to understand this great truth of God will be a wise teacher of others. I believe that many errors in doctrine arise through lack of a clear apprehension of Christ's various relationships towards His spiritual Israel. To some, Christ is only a Prince, so they have a sort of lifeless legality. Others live in antinomian licentiousness because Christ is not the Prince and Lord of their lives. Beloved, he who receives Christ both as Prince and Savior has the blessed and happy experience of resigning his own will and subjecting all the passions of his soul to the sacred control of his glorious Prince and, at the same time he daily realizes in his soul the cleansing power of the precious blood of Jesus and so, as Mary sang, his spirit rejoices in God his Savior! This, also, is the true Christian practice as well as the Christian doctrine and experience—to be always "looking unto Jesus" as my Savior, feeling that I always need Him in that capacity and that I shall need Him to save me even to my last moment on earth—yet also looking up to Him as my Prince, seeking to be obedient to Him in all things as far as I can learn His will from His word and by the teaching of His Holy Spirit. And to conform my whole life to the royal and divine commands that He has issued for my guidance. I have not the time to enlarge upon this truth, but it seems to me that there is a practical lesson to be learned from the fact that all who rightly receive Christ receive Him both as Prince and Savior.

There are preachers who preach mere morality. I trust their number is smaller than it used to be, but there are still too many professedly Christian ministers who are like that notable man who said that he preached morality till there was no morality left in the place. Yet afterwards, when he imitated Paul and preached Christ crucified, he soon found that vice hid her dishonored head and that all the graces and virtues flourished under the shadow of the cross! So have we found it and, therefore, whoever may preach anything else, we shall still stick to the old fashioned theme that Paul preached—that old, old story which the seeker after novelties condemns as stale, but which, to the man who needs eternal life and longs for something that will satisfy his conscience and satiate his heart—has a freshness and charm which the lapse of years only intensifies, but does not remove!

II. The second lesson we learn from our text is that REPENTANCE AND REMISSION OF SINS ARE BOTH NEEDED BY THOSE WHO DESIRE TO BE SAVED. Those needs are clearly indicated by Christ's offices as Prince and Savior. Inasmuch as He is a Prince, we must repent of our rebellion against Him. And inasmuch as He is a Savior, He is exalted with His Father's right hand to give us remission of sins as well as repentance—and we must have both these blessings if we are to be saved!

First, *we cannot be saved without repentance*. No remission of sin can be given without repentance. The two things are so joined together by God, as they are in our text, that they cannot be separated. Many mistakes are made as to what true evangelical repentance really is. Just now some professedly Christian teachers are misleading many by saying that "repentance is only a change of mind." It is true that the original word does convey the idea of a change of mind, but the whole teaching of Scripture concerning the repentance which is not to be repented of is that it is a much more radical and complete change than is implied by our common phrase about changing one's mind. The repentance that does not include sincere sorrow for sin is not the saving grace that is worked by the Holy Spirit! God given repentance makes men grieve in their inmost souls over the sin they have committed—and works in them a gracious hatred of evil in every shape and form! We cannot find a better definition of repentance than the one many of us learned at our mother's knee—

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

I am always afraid of a dry eyed repentance and, mark you, if forgiveness should be granted to those who were not sorry for their sin, such forgiveness would tend to aid and abet sin—and would be no better than the Romish heresy that when you have sinned, all you have to do is to confess it to a priest, pay a certain sum of money according to the regular Roman tariff and start over again on your career of evil. God forbid that we should ever fall into that snare of the devil! If I could keep on living in sin and loving it as much as I ever did, and yet have remission of it, the accusation of the blasphemer that Christ is the minister of sin would be a just one! But it is not so! On the contrary, we must loathe sin, leave sin and have an agonizing desire to be clean delivered from it—otherwise we can never expect the righteous God to say to us, "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven."

Besides, if remission of sins could be obtained without repentance, the sinner would be left very much as he was before. Indeed, he would be in a worse condition than he was in before. If God *could* say to him, "I forgive you," and yet he remained unrepentant, unregenerated, unconverted—he would still be an enemy of God, for "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be." Forgiveness would only make such a man a more impudent, hardened, self-righteous enemy of God than he was before! If there is not such a thorough Spirit worked change in him that he flings away his weapons of rebellion and casts himself penitently at the feet of his offended sovereign, I fail to see in what sense we can call him a saved man. No—repentance is the absolutely necessary prelude to remission!

On the other hand, *we cannot be saved without the remission of our sins following upon our redemption*. God exalted Jesus "with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Note that, "repentance," and, "forgiveness of sins," are separate and distinct gifts of the exalted Christ. Our repentance does not entitle us to claim from God the pardon of our sin apart from His gracious promise to give it to us! If I get into a man's debt and then feel sorry that I owe him so much money, that regret will not pay my debt. If I transgress the law of the land and when I stand in the dock, say how grieved I am that I have broken the law, my sorrow will not pay the penalty that I have incurred! The magistrate or judge, in passing sentence upon me, may remit a portion of it because of my contrition, but I have no right to claim even that clemency on his part! And before God my sorrow for my sins gives me no claim upon Him for the remission of them. No, I must say to Him, as Toplady so truly sings—

"Let the water and the blood,
From Your riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure—
Cleanse me from its guilt and power!
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone—
You must save, and You alone."

Suppose I do now hate some sin that I once loved or that I hate all sin? No credit is due to me, for that abhorrence of sin is what I ought always to have had! God had the right to claim from me the hatred of sin of every sort, but that hatred does not discharge the debt which I owe to God. I will go further than that and say that no one ever repents of sin so thoroughly as he does when he knows that it is forgiven. Hence when Christians begin their new life, they do not repent once and then leave off repenting—but repentance and faith go hand in hand with them all the way to heaven! Indeed, dear old Rowland Hill used almost to regret that in heaven he might not still have the tear of penitence glistening in his eyes, but of course, that is not possible, for of the redeemed in glory it is expressly declared that, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

III. Thirdly, and very briefly, BOTH REPENTANCE AND REMISSION ARE GIFTS FROM CHRIST. God has exalted Him "to give repentance…and forgiveness of sins."

The same Lord who gives the remission also gives the repentance. This is worked in the Holy Spirit, yet it is not HE who repents, He cannot do so—and, besides, He has nothing of which He needs to repent! But *we* repent, and though it must always be our own act, yet it is Jesus' gift *to* us and the Spirit's work *in* us. Jesus bestows this gift upon us in His capacity as Savior—and we never truly repent until we recognize Jesus as our Savior and put our whole trust in His atoning sacrifice. Smitten by the cross, our rocky heart is broken and the streams of penitential tears gush forth even as the water leaped from the rock smitten by the rod of Moses in the wilderness! When Jesus grants the divine grace of for-

giveness, at the same moment He gives the tender heart that mourns that it should have needed forgiveness. I believe that if this truth of God were thoroughly understood, it would help many more to receive the Calvinistic system of theology which now puzzles them. I know that when I first realized that my repentance was the gift of God, the whole doctrine of salvation by grace fell into my soul as by a lightning flash!

The other side of the truth is that *the same Lord who gives the repentance also gives the remission*. No one will dispute the fact that the forgiveness of sins is the free gift of the exalted Savior. This priceless blessing could never be purchased by us, or deserved by us on account of our feelings, promises, works, or anything else. It is a gift—freely, wholly, absolutely a gift of God's grace! It is given *with* repentance, but not given *for* or *because* of repentance! And wherever remission of sin is given, it works in the soul more and more repentance of sin, but it is, in itself, a gift independent of repentance, yet given with it—a royal gift from the royal Savior exalted with His Father's right hand. So what you have to do, dear friends, is to look to Christ, and to Christ alone to give you penitence while you are impenitent, and to give you pardon when you are penitent. So, as Hart sings—

"Come, you needy, come and welcome,
God's free bounty glorify!
True belief and true repentance,
Every grace that brings us nigh,
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ and buy!
Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream—
All the fitness He requires
Is to feel your need of Him—
This He gives you!
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 10.

Verse 1 *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.* They had hunted Paul from city to city, but the only feeling for them that he had was a wish that they might be saved! Such a wish as that should be in the heart of every Christian. His desire for his bitterest enemy should be that he may be saved.

2. *For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge*. We should always give people credit for every good thing that there is in them—it will often enable us all the better to point out other matters in which they are deficient. So Paul put it on record, concerning the Jews of his time, that they had a zeal for God, though it was not a zeal "according to knowledge."

3. *For they being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the*

righteousness of God. [See Sermons #1899, Volume 32—ZEALOUS, BUT WRONG and #2214, Volume 37—BARRIERS BROKEN DOWN—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] They were so busy trying to work out a righteousness of their own that they had never accepted the righteousness which God is prepared to freely give to all those who will receive it at His hands!

4. *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes.* [See Sermon #1325, Volume 22—CHRIST THE END OF THE LAW—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] This is the very essence of the gospel, that believing in Christ brings to sinners a righteousness which they can never obtain in any other way!

5, 6. *For Moses describes the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which does those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith—* Is of quite another sort, for it—

6-9. *Speaks on this wise, Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (That is, to bring Christ down from above). Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (That is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what does it say? The word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.* [See Sermon #1898, Volume 32—MOUTH AND HEART—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Oh, what a blessedly simple plan of salvation is here revealed! "If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." The apostle says this plan of salvation is so near to men that it is in their mouth! When anything is in your mouth, how can you make it your own? Why, by swallowing it! And so near is the gospel to every man that he has, as it were, but to drink it down to make it his very own! It is not up there on the lofty heights, nor down there in the deeps of the abyss, but it is here and wherever else Christ is preached and wherever His word is read! O, sinner, the Word of God is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart"—then put it not away from you, but hold it fast forever!

10. *For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* [See Sermons #519, Volume 9—BELIEVING WITH THE HEART; #520, Volume 9—CONFESSION WITH THE MOUTH and #3011, Volume 52—FAITH FIRST, CONFESSION FOLLOWING—Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] After believing in Christ, the man must confess that he does believe in Him. It would be a shame for any believer to try to sneak into heaven without acknowledging that Christ has saved him. If any man is ashamed of his religion, you may depend upon it that it is one of which he has cause to be ashamed! But he who has true saving faith in his heart should never blush to acknowledge it. What is there to blush about in being a Christian? Let those blush who are not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ!

11, 12. *For the Scripture says, Whoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for*

the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. Whoever they may be, Jews or Gentiles, rich or poor, learned or illiterate, black or white—if they will but call upon God in prayer, He will not be miserly towards them, but He will be generous towards them in the abundance of the blessings which He will give them in answer to their cry!

13, 14. *For whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?* They cannot rightly pray without faith, "for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

14. *And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?* Those who do not hear the gospel are not likely to believe it. And there are many unbelievers who never seek to hear it—and it is always wrong for a man to refuse to believe any truth of God before he knows what it really is. There should at least be a sincere searching of the Holy Scriptures and a candid listening to the preaching of the word before it is rejected.

14, 15. *And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they are sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tiding of good things."* [See Sermon #2327, Volume 39—THE WHOLE MACHINERY OF SALVATION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] The gospel brings gladness wherever it comes. The word which we preach tells of joys that will last forever! The gospel shall make the whole world sing with new music when it is received by all! And it shall roll away the mists that now swathe this poor dusky planet and make it shine out like its sister stars in all the glory of God when once Christ is fully acknowledged here as Lord and Savior!

16. *But they have not all obeyed the gospel.* [See Sermon #2804, Volume 48—DISOBEDIENCE TO THE GOSPEL—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] All who have heard the gospel have not obeyed it.

16. *For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our report?* And what Isaiah said is what we also have to say today, "Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

17. *So, then, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* [See Sermon #1031, Volume 18—HOW CAN I OBTAIN FAITH?—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Salvation comes by faith, and faith comes by hearing, but that hearing must be the hearing of the word of God! Surely there is no great difficulty in understanding the gospel. This is no maze in which a man may lose himself. Here are no puzzling directions which only the learned can comprehend! No, but here stands the plain, simple, soul quickening words, "Believe and live."

18, 20 *But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But, I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses says, I will provoke you to jealousy by them*

that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Isaiah is very bold and says, I was found of them that sought Me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me. Is not that a wonderful text? There are some who have heard the gospel year after year, and who have refused it— and perished. And there are, on the other hand, scattered up and down this world, thousands of people who have never yet heard it, but the very first time they do hear it, they will accept it and be eternally saved!

21. *But to Israel*—To God's ancient people to whom the gospel had been preached when Paul wrote this epistle—"to Israel"—

21. *He says, All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.* It is strange that many who first hear the word and often hear it, turn away from it. While others, to whom it comes as a complete novelty, are blessed the first time they hear it! I sometimes say that there are some hearers who regularly occupy these seats who are just like pieces of India rubber. They are easily impressed, they yield ascent to every truth of God that is uttered, but they soon get back into their old shape again—and they are exactly the same after 20 years of hearing the gospel as they were before—only that they are still more hardened. On the other hand, there will sometimes drop into this house of prayer a thoroughly irreligious man with a heart as hard as a flint—and the very first tap of the hammer of the gospel breaks the flint so effectually that it is never a flint again and God's grace renews his heart then and there! It is our earnest desire, on all occasions whatever hearers are gathered here, that God's saving power may be manifested to all present. So may it be now, for Christ's sake, and to God's 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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THE LAST MESSAGE FOR THE YEAR
NO. 3230

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 29, 1910,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 28, 1873.

"All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out. John 6:37.

[Mr. Spurgeon preached many Sermons upon this verse. Among those already published are #1762, Volume 30—HIGH DOCTRINE AND BROAD DOCTRINE; #2349, Volume 40—ALL COMERS TO CHRIST WELCOMED; #2954, Volume 51—THE BIG GATES WIDE OPEN, and #3000, Volume 52—OR, COME AND WELCOME— Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

WE have come to the last Sabbath evening and the last public Sabbath service of another year. With some of us it may be our last Sabbath on earth and our last public Sabbath service in this life. It becomes us, then, to fix our thoughts upon solemn and weighty themes—those which are of the utmost importance to us—and those which most closely concern our eternal destiny. I pray that the Holy Spirit may cause the deepest possible seriousness to rest upon this whole assembly and that He may very specially guide me to speak as I ought upon the familiar but most weighty words that I trust He has moved me to select once again for your very earnest consideration tonight.

I have preached many times upon this text but, on this occasion, I am going to speak briefly upon three topics that it suggests to me. The first is that *there is only one way of salvation*—"All that the Father gives Me shall come *to Me*." "Him that comes *to Me*." This topic will teach us *the exclusiveness of divine grace*. Secondly, *this way will be used by some*—"All that the Father gives Me *shall come to Me*." This teaches us *the omnipotence of divine grace*. Thirdly, all who come by this way shall be saved—"him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." *This teaches us the fullness and freeness of divine grace*.

I. First, then, we learn from our text THE EXCLUSIVENESS OF DIVINE GRACE—THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY OF SALVATION "All that the Father gives Me shall come *to Me."* "Him that comes *to Me*."

To come to Jesus is the one and only way of salvation. If there could have been any other way, this one would never have been opened. It is not conceivable that God would have given His only begotten and well beloved Son to die upon the cross of Calvary in order to save sinners if there had been any other way of saving them that would have been as consistent with the principles of infallible justice. If men could have entered into everlasting life without passing along the path stained and consecrated by the blood of Jesus, surely that blood would never have

been "shed for many for the remission of sins." The very fact that this new and living way has been opened proves that there is no other, for God would never have provided it unless it had been absolutely necessary. That this is the only way of salvation is again and again emphasized in Scripture with a sacred intolerance which none ought to mistake! Writing to the Corinthians, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul says, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." And to Timothy, his own son in the faith, he writes, "There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." And the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, who had a more loving heart than ever beat in any merely human being's breast, most solemnly said, in almost His last words on earth, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned."

So there is no other way of salvation and sinners are most faithfully warned that however pleasant and attractive any other ways may appear to be, the end of those ways is death and "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." When Jesus said, "I am the Way," He clearly intended to exclude all other ways, so beware lest you perish in any one of them! Be not like the foolish and wicked people of Jeremiah's day to whom the Lord said, "Stand you in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is *the good way* and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your souls." But, alas, they said, "We will not walk therein." Be you not like unto them!

But what is this exclusive way of salvation? In our text it is twice described as coming to Christ. But what is meant by that expression? It does not mean any mere locomotion, any moving of the body from one place to another. There were many who came to Christ in that sense while He was upon the earth—they thronged around Him and pressed upon Him—but the mere proximity of their bodies to Christ did not bring salvation to them, for many of them turned away and walked no more with Him when His heart searching teaching was too faithful for them. Well, then, what does coming to Christ readily mean?

Coming to Christ means, first, *turning away from all confidence in ourselves or in others and trusting alone in Jesus*. In order to come to a certain person, you must turn away from another person who is in a different direction, so if you want to be saved, you must come right away from trusting in yourselves—you must cease to have any confidence in anything that you have ever done, or ever hope to do—you must not place any reliance upon the alms you have bestowed upon the poor, the prayers you have presented to God, the services you have attended, or anything of your own! You must utterly abhor all hope of salvation from yourself, even as Paul did when, after recounting the things in which he had formerly trusted, he wrote, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yes, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, 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."

If you are resolved to come to Christ, you must also give up all trust in others as a means of salvation. If you have up to now been placing any reliance upon your godly ancestry, your Christian father and mother, or if you have been depending upon your close connection with good people. If you have trusted yourself to a man who calls himself a priest; if you have put any dependence upon what he can do towards your salvation—I pray you to cast away all such confidence, and dependence, for if you do not, you cannot come to Christ! If you have been relying upon any rite, or ceremony, or "sacrament" relating to water or bread and wine, any "priestly" performance, or posture, or ritual, or anything apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, I implore you to abandon all those soul destroying delusions, for no one of them nor all of them combined will help you into the one and only way of salvation!

For, observe, that the text speaks—and it is the Lord Jesus Christ who speaks through the text—of coming to a person—"All that the Father gives ME shall come to ME; and him that comes to ME I will in no wise cast out." Note how personal the text is both concerning the one coming and the one to whom he is to come—"*Him* that comes to ME." That is the long and the short of the whole matter—its Alpha and Omega, its beginning and its end—there must be a personal coming to the personal Christ! It will not suffice for you to come to Christ's doctrine—you must, of course, believe what He taught—but believing His teaching will not save you unless you come to HIM. It will not be enough merely to come to Christ's precepts and to try to practice them—an utterly impossible task for you to perform in your own unaided strength! You must first come to Christ and then, trusting in Him for salvation, His gracious Spirit will take of the things of Christ and show them to you, and teach and enable you to walk in His ways and to obey His precepts.

Does someone ask, "Who and what is He to whom I am to come?" Listen. The eternal Son of the eternal Father—He who has made the heavens and the earth and all things that are, whose almighty word fashioned this round globe and sent it spinning on its wondrous course around the sun—the Creator and Lord of all the angelic host before whom cherubim and seraphim bow down in reverent adoration—this great King of kings and Lord of lords, in His amazing love and wondrous condescension, "made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him 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." It is to Him that you are to come! You are to believe in Him as the incarnate God, equally and just as truly Son of man and Son of God! And then, (and this is the *crux* of your faith, your faith in the cross—that "cross" in which Paul gloried—not a cross of wood, or stone, or ivory before which people idolatrously prostrate themselves—but the doctrine of the cross, which is today as great an "offense" as it was in Paul's day), you must believe that God laid upon His incarnate and immaculate son, the sins of all His people whom He had given to Him from all eternity! And you must believe that He even took pleasure in bruising Him because of the wondrous results that were to follow and flow from

His atoning sacrifice on the cross! Do you think I am speaking too strongly? Remember the words of the inspired prophet Isaiah—"All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way, and the Lord has laid on Him (made to meet on Him) the iniquity of us all…It pleased the Lord to bruise Him. He has put Him to grief: when You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." If you, my brother or sister, rely upon this great expiatory sacrifice and believe that when Christ died upon the cross, He died as your substitute and representative, you are saved! You have entered the one and only way of salvation!

But be assured of this, if you reject the incarnate God; if you will not trust in Him; if you will not come to Him that you may have life, there is no other way of salvation and there will never be any other! Never forget that this same Jesus, who was taken up into heaven, shall so come again in like manner as He went up into heaven—and "when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe," there will be others to whom His second advent will bring nothing but dismay and terror, for then, "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and they that know not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." It will be utterly in vain for you to cry, then, to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of His wrath is come and who shall be able to stand?"

II. Now, secondly, we learn from our text THE OMNIPOTENCE OF DIVINE GRACE—SOME WILL USE THIS ONE AND ONLY WAY OF SALVATION. "All that the Father gives Me *shall come* to Me."

So first, *there are some who were given to Christ*. We believe that it is clearly revealed in the Scriptures that long before this earth was created, the Lord looked forward upon the race of human beings that He intended to live upon it, and that out of them He chose unto Himself a people whom He gave to His Son to be the reward of the suffering He would endure on their behalf. Peter wrote to the elect strangers, "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." And Paul wrote to Timothy, "The foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, The Lord knows them that are His." We do not know them, but He knows every one of them and He counts them as His own peculiar treasure! "They shall be Mine, says the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels." These people have been given to Christ by His Father. Again and again, in that great intercessory prayer of His, He spoke of this truth of God! In fact, the prayer begins with an emphatic declaration of it—"Father, the hour is come; glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You; as You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him."

In our text Christ says that these people *shall come* to Him. "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me." There is no question about whether they will come, or will not come—Christ says that they "shall come" to Him. "But," asks someone, "will God force them to come to Christ against their will?" Oh, no—He has a gracious way of making them willing in the day of His power. By His Spirit's divine teaching, He will instruct them, illuminate them, persuade them, compel them so that every one of those who were given to Christ will come to Him. "But they are blind," says another. The Lord says, "I will bring the blind by a way that they know not." "But they are very obstinate." The Lord says, "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness and speak comfortably unto her." "But they are dead." Yes, that is true, but the Lord quickens those who are dead in trespasses and sins. Without violating our wills and leaving us to still act as free agents responsible for our own actions, He makes us willing to yield ourselves up to Christ—body, soul and spirit—to be forever His!

Why does Christ tell us this? I think He does it partly to comfort His ministers. Oh, it is heartbreaking work to keep on preaching Christ to sinners who will not come to Him, holding up Christ before eyes that see no beauty in Him, praising Him to ears that are not charmed with the music of His name! So our Master says to us, "My servants, you shall not labor in vain, nor spend your strength for nothing. 'All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.' If all those who were first invited to the great gospel feast make excuses for not coming, others will accept My invitation and the feast shall be fully furnished with guests. If scribes and Pharisees still reject Me, publicans and harlots will be only too glad to come to Me and I will cast out none who come. So still go on, My servants, publishing the glad tiding of salvation, for all that My Father gave Me must and shall come to Me."

I think Christ also speaks thus as a rebuff to those who seem to imagine that Christ's work will be a failure if *they* do not come to Him! You know how many talk, nowadays, about the gospel being old fashioned, worn out and not adapted to this enlightened age! Oh, yes, sir, I know what you think and how you talk! But are you foolish enough to suppose that Christ's great sacrifice on Calvary will prove to have been offered in vain just because *you* refuse to trust to it? Oh no, "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." Here is a poor silly fly drowning in a glass of water. He might as well imagine that his dying struggles would convulse all the empires of the earth as an atheist might think that he can demolish the whole system of Christianity by the nonsensical whimsies that he harbors in his stupid brain! I tell you, man, that you cannot frustrate the eternal purposes of God, or rob His Son of a single grain of His glory! What if you will not come to Christ? He never expected that you would come, so He will not be surprised or disappointed! But if you will not come to Him, others will. If you will not enlist in the army of the cross and join the innumerable hosts that rally round His blood-stained banner, others will, and the great Son of David will never lack brave soldiers who will do and dare for Him more than even David's

mighty men did for their royal leader! Voltaire said that he lived in the twilight of Christianity, but if so, it was the twilight of the morning, not of the evening! Julian the apostate vowed that he would put down the Nazarene, but his dying cry was, "O Galilean, You have conquered!" Yes, and so He always will—and they who oppose and reject Him will find that the stone which the builders refused will become the cornerstone in the great temple of His church—and also a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to those who reject Him! Woe be unto those upon whom that stone shall fall, for it will grind them to powder!

I think that Jesus also intended these words, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me," to be a cause for jubilation in the hearts of His people. We often feel very sad concerning the times in which we live and there is more than enough to make us sigh and cry because of the abominations and iniquities in the world and, alas, because of the many evils in the professing church! But those who love the Lord and seek to serve Him are not left without many consolations and compensations. The purposes of God shall all be fulfilled! There shall not be one soul the less in heaven notwithstanding all that Romanism, Ritualism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Mohammedanism and every other *ism* may do! Christ shall not be robbed of the reward of His soul travail by anything that infidelity can do! Satan may rage and roar, and all his legions may come up from the bottomless pit and league themselves with wicked men to overthrow the church of God, but founded upon the rock, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The kings and rulers of the earth may take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed, but "He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." And when the history of this poor little planet is finished, it shall be found that Christ was speaking nothing but the truth when He said, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me."

III. Now I come to the last and perhaps the sweetest part of the whole discourse, which is to be concerning THE FULLNESS AND FREENESS OF DIVINE GRACE—ALL WHO COME BY THIS ONE WAY SHALL BE SAVED! "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.

This means that *everyone who comes to Christ shall certainly be saved,* for, if Christ will not cast him out, nobody else can do so! As soon as ever he comes to Christ, he is accepted (not repelled) by Christ! And being accepted by Christ, he is saved with an everlasting salvation—and there is no power on earth or in hell that can ever make him into an unsaved man after Christ has saved him!

"But," says someone, "suppose he comes to Christ and then finds that he is not one of those who were given to Christ by His Father?" You must not suppose what never can be true, for there never was a sinner yet who came to Christ who was not *first given to Christ!* All who come to Christ are divinely drawn to Him and no one is drawn to Him without having been from all eternity given to Him—so there is nothing in our friend's supposition that ought to be a stumbling block in the way of any seeking sinner here! I am quite certain that God has an elect people, for He tells me so in His word. And I am equally certain that everyone who comes to Christ shall be saved, for that also is His own declaration in the Scrip-

tures! When people ask me how I reconcile these two truths of God, I usually say that there is no need to reconcile them, for they have never yet quarreled with one another! Both are true and both relate to the same persons, for those who come to Christ are those who were from eternity given to Christ by His Father!

Jesus Christ still says to us, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." "But, Lord," objects someone, "this man's life has been an outrageously bad one! Will You accept *him* if he comes to You?" "Oh, yes! 'Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.'" "But, Lord, he has been an habitual drunk and he has also been a great blasphemer." Well, suppose you were obliged to add that he has been an adulterer, a liar, a thief, a perjurer, or even a murderer? Jesus Christ would still say, "'Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.' Whatever his past character may have been, if he truly repents of his sin and trusts in My atoning blood to cleanse him from all his guilt, his sins and iniquities shall be remembered against him no more, forever." If I had the biggest, blackest sinner in the whole world here, I would say to him or to her, "My dear friend, if you will here and now trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, the one and only Savior of sinners, I can assure you, on the authority of God, Himself, that 'though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though your sins are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' And that your sins, which are many, are all forgiven! And then, like the woman in the city who was a notorious public sinner, you will love Christ much because you have been forgiven much."

"Ah," says some poor sinner here, "but I do not feel that I have repented enough. I do not feel that my heart is tender enough. I do not feel that I have wept enough over my many offenses." Stop a moment, friend. If you have your Bible open, or if not, listen while I read the text again—"All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." Is there anything in Christ's words about how much you are to *feel*? Is there anything at all about your *feelings*? Not a word! Not even a syllable! If you but come to Christ, which means if you but trust Him, if you rely upon His finished work, if you truthfully say, as we often sing—

"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"—

then that glorious "gospel in miniature"—as Martin Luther called it, applies to you as well as to every other sinner who believes in Jesus—"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whoever believes in Him* should not perish, but have everlasting life." There is nothing in that verse about feelings—everything depends upon *faith*! And then when you have believed in Jesus, right feelings will be given to you by God's good Spirit. Gratitude, love, joy, hope, peace, courage, long suffering, gentleness, meekness, temperance and every other "fruit of the Spirit" will spring from the blessed root-grace of faith in Jesus! And so

you shall have yet further confirmation of the fact that you are saved for the Lord's own test is, "By their fruits you shall know them."

Possibly there is someone here, on this last Sabbath night of another year, who is saying to himself, "I hardly know why I came into this building tonight, for I have been everything that I ought not to have been—and nothing that I ought to have been." But, friend, do you desire to begin a new life even before the New Year dawns on you? Are you willing to leave your sins? Do you long to be a holy man? In a word, is it the one wish of your heart that you may be *saved*? Then I refer you, also, to my text and remind you that the Lord Jesus Christ said, "Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." There is nothing there to shut out the most irreligious man if he will but come to Christ! You say that you are an odd man—well, I have often said and others have said that I am an odd man—a lot that cannot be put in any catalog! You are self-condemned and so was I before I came to Christ. You feel that you are, as George Whitefield used to say, one of the devil's castaways—so bad that even Satan, himself, would not claim you! Why, you and I ought to shake hands, for that is just how I felt when that poor local preacher pointed to me and said, "Look, young man, look! Jesus Christ says to you, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." I did look, and was saved by the same gospel I preach to you! And as this is the last Sabbath night in another year, and as it may be the last gospel invitation you will ever have the opportunity of hearing, I repeat to you the very last invitations recorded in the Word of God, "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." This agrees with John 3:16 which I have already quoted to you, and it also agrees with Christ's words in our text, "Him that comes to Me." John Bunyan said that meant any "him" in all the world—"*I will in no wise cast out*"—that is, for no reason, for no conceivable motive, for no possible cause will Christ cast out one who comes to Him by faith! "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out" is a grand old Anglo-Saxon expression that sweeps round the man who comes to Christ and guards him like a sword of fire protecting him from every possibility of being cast out by Christ!

What do you say, My hearers, to all this? I have pleaded with some of you hundreds of times and now, in this, my last Sabbath message for the year, I ask you once again—Will you come to Christ? *When* will you come? Tomorrow? That means never, for tomorrow never comes. By and by? That means that you do not intend to come to Christ at all! The text is in the present tense, "him that *comes* to me," for, "*now* is the accepted time. Behold, *now* is the day of salvation." Trust in Jesus now, sinner! Trust your soul to Him as you trust your money to your banker and your body to your doctor! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and *you* shall be saved." Oh, that the Holy Spirit may enable you to say, at this moment, "This is a sinner's salvation and, as I am a sinner, it exactly suits my case! I accept it, My Lord, praising and blessing You that I, a poor, foul, lost, condemned sinner coming to You, am saved—saved now and saved forever! Glory be unto Your holy name! Amen!"

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 11:1-26.

1. *And it came to pass, that as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.* It seemed to this disciple as if he did not know how to pray after he had heard Christ pray. The prayer of Jesus was so infinitely above anything that he had ever reached that he said, "Lord, teach us to pray." And as if he felt that he needed a precedent for asking such hallowed instruction, he said, "Teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." We must all feel that if we are to pray aright, we must be taught of God, by his Holy Spirit. We are full of infirmities and if there is any time when our infirmities are felt most, it is when we engage in prayer, but "the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought." Let us, then, breathe this prayer to our great teacher, "Lord, teach us to pray."

2. *And He said to them, When you pray, say, Our Father which are in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.* When we come to God in prayer, we are apt to think first of our own necessities, but if we came aright, in the spirit of sonship, truly saying, "Our Father who are in heaven," we should begin our prayer like this, "'Hallowed be Your name.' May all men honor, reverence, and adore Your holy name. 'Your kingdom come.' We are not satisfied that You should be anything less than King! Our heart's desire is, 'Reign, gracious God over us and over all men.' 'Your will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.' 'Your will be done,' rather than ours." Now comes a prayer for ourselves—

3. *Give us day by day our daily bread.* "Give us, O Lord, what we really need—not that which would be a luxury, but that which is a necessity. 'Give us,' according as we shall need it day by day, what we shall then actually need—'our daily bread.'" We are not warranted in asking much more than this in temporal matters. They are all comprehended in this petition as far as they are necessary, but God has not given us *carte blanche* to ask for wealth, or honor, or any such dangerous things. There is no harm in asking for bread—and He will give us that.

4. *And forgive us our sins.* We also need to pray this prayer. I do not think that our Savior ever anticipated a time when His disciples on earth would not need to pray, "Forgive us our sins."

4. *For we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.* "Lord, do not try us and test us more than is absolutely necessary, for we are so apt to fall! 'Lead us not into temptation,' but if we must be tempted"—

4. *Deliver us from evil.* "If some good end is to be answered by our being thus tested, then let it be so, but, O Lord, 'deliver us from evil,' and especially from the evil one—do not allow us to fall into his hands in the hour of temptation."

5, 6. *And He said to them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.* This man was in a sad plight—his friend was faint and hungry and he was willing enough to entertain him, but he had "nothing to set before him." So he acts very wisely—he goes to a friend, and asks him to lend him three loaves.

7. *And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you.* If the man outside keeps on knocking. If he will not go away without the bread he wants for his friend, what will happen?

8. *I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give to him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needs.* See the power of importunate prayer? And you, beloved, can have all that you really need for yourselves or others if you will only ask for it in the right way. If, summoning every faculty of your being, you resolve to plead, and plead, and plead yet again and again, and never take, "No," for an answer, your heart's desire shall be granted!

9. *And I say unto you, ask, and it shall be given you.* But if asking does not seem to prevail with God—

9. *Seek, and you shall find.* And if, for a while, you do not find, come closer in—

9. *Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* There are different methods of praying and each one has its special adaptation to the state in which you may be—so use that method to which the Holy Spirit guides you—so use all methods until you prevail.

10, 11. *For everyone that asks receives, and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone?* There were many stones in those days that were in appearance wonderfully like the bread which they used in the East, but would any father mock his son by giving him one of those stones to break his teeth, instead of bread that he could eat? Never!

11-13. *Or if he asks for a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that asks Him?* [See Sermon #959, Volume 16—RIGHT REPLIES TO RIGHT REQUESTS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] If you have the Holy Spirit, you virtually have all good gifts, for the Spirit is the earnest of God's love, the pledge of joys to come! And He brings with Him all things that are necessary and good for you!

14. *And He was casting out a devil, and it was dumb.* So that this poor man could not obey the Savior's teaching. He could not pray, for he was under the influence of a dumb devil. How many of that sort there are still in the world! They cannot speak with God, they have never learned to pray, for they are possessed by a dumb devil!

14. *And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spoke; and the people wondered.* When the devil is driven out of men by Christ,

they soon begin to pray. The little sentence, "Behold, he prays," was the indication of a new birth in Saul of Tarsus. The Lord grant that some here who have been possessed by a dumb spirit, may be graciously led to pray! Remember, dear friend, that God will hear your prayer the first time you call upon Him—and there is a text which says, "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."

15. *But some of them said, He casts out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils.* They could not have uttered a fouler lie than this! And if people thus slandered the Lord Jesus Christ, we need not be surprised if they speak ill of us!

16. *And others, tempting Him, sought of Him a sign from heaven.* Yet they had a very striking one in the dumb devil being cast out of the man! What clearer sign than that could they have?

17, 18. *But He, knowing their thoughts, said to them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house fails. If Satan also is divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? Because you say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub.* If Satan cast out Satan, his kingdom would soon come to an end! Note how calmly the Savior met these mockers and quibblers. There is no trace of anger in His words—they said the worst thing they could say about Him and His work and yet, in the coolest manner possible, He closes their mouths in the silence of shame. God grant us grace to be calm and strong even when we are most furiously assailed! It is when we are in a hurry and fret that we grow weak.

19-23. *And if I, by Beelzebub, cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore shall they be your judges. But if I, with the finger of God, cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he takes from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divides his spoils. He that is not with Me is against Me: and he that gathers not with Me, scatters.* Christ had made no compact with the powers of darkness! He was not casting the demons out with the devil's aid—it was absurd to think that He was! He was fighting them and casting them out by His own divine, omnipotent energy. Now comes a very striking parable—

24. *When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man*—Satan does, sometimes, go out of men entirely of his own accord without being turned out. He goes out for a walk, meaning to go back again. Many a man has left off being a drunk, or left off being lascivious—for a time—"when the unclean spirit is gone out of a man"—

24. *He walks through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, I will return unto my house*—You see that he still calls it *his* house. He has gone out for a walk, but he has taken the keys of his house with him. Some people sign the pledge and give up being drunks for a time, but if the devil is still their master, he has only gone away for a while, and he will come back again before long. If he goes out of his own accord, he will come back when he pleases—"I will return unto my house"—

24, 26. *From where I came out. And when he comes, he finds it swept and garnished.* The man has become quite a decent sort of fellow! He has given up his bad ways and is a respectable member of society. The house is swept and garnished, but it is the devil's house all the same!

26. *Then goes he, and takes to him even other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.* [See Sermon #613, Volume 11—"THE STRONG ONE DRIVEN OUT BY A STRONGER ONE"—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] There are, alas, many who have only a sham conversion, a conversion which lasts but a very little while. The devil was not cast out of them, but he went out of his own accord. But where Christ has come—the one who is far stronger than the devil—to cast him out of his house, the devil will never be allowed to come back again, Christ will take care of that! Having won the victory and taken the house, he will keep it by force of arms. But beware, I pray you, of a "conversion" without Christ! Beware of a "reformation" in which the devil, himself, is a coworker with you, for it will come to something worse in the end! Let me read the verse again—"Then goes he, and takes to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in, and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first." He becomes a worse man than ever because once he promised to be better, but only promised it in his own strength, which was utter weakness!

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END OF VOLUME 56